

A FOREIGN VISITOR'S ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT FIRE, 1666

By P. D. A. HARVEY,

Department of Manuscripts, British Museum.

Additional MS. 49977 L was presented to the British Museum in 1958 by Dr. H. T. Güssow of Victoria, British Columbia. Written on five folded sheets of writing paper, probably about fifty years ago, it is an extract from the autobiography of Francisco de Rapicani, containing his eye-witness account of the Great Fire of London. This autobiography was written in German; it seems never to have been published, and the original manuscript, said to be in Rapicani's own hand, has not been traced. Dr. Güssow writes that the extract was copied by a Dr. Hillmann, late of the German Agricultural Society, whose wife was a descendant of Rapicani. It is likely, therefore, that the original manuscript, if it survives at all, is still in private ownership in Germany; and since the account of the Fire is of some historical interest it seems worth publishing the extract now, even though the original autobiography may eventually provide a better text and more information about the author's career and his circumstances at the time of the Fire.

Practically no record of Rapicani has come to light apart from the present manuscript and documents in the Riksarkivet at Stockholm and the Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv at Hanover and Stade.² The date of his birth, 1636, which is noted at the beginning of the extract, was presumably provided by the autobiography itself. He must have been of an Italian family, and he was certainly a Roman Catholic—his acquaintance with the Capuchins of Somerset House, mentioned in the extract, confirms this, but the mere fact of his having been an official of Queen Christina of Sweden would be sufficient evidence. Christina had abdicated in 1654 when she entered the Roman Catholic Church, and thenceforth she lived mostly at Rome. When she died in 1689, Rapicani wrote that he had served her for 23 years, both at her court and in travelling for her on various commissions;³ this means that he must have entered her service in the year of the Fire. The present manuscript reveals him as a man of

scholarly interests, just such a one as Christina would welcome at her court.

But besides, apparently, becoming Christina's principal confidential secretary, Rapicani seems also to have been on good terms with King Charles XI and the Swedish government. In 1681 and 1689 he went to Stockholm with Christina's ambassador, the Marquis Bourbon del Monte, and on each occasion the king gave him a present of 200 rix-dollars.⁴ In 1687 Christina granted him the brewery in Zeven, a small town in the duchy of Bremen, then under Swedish rule;⁵ after her death he was allowed to keep this, and he soon became magistrate at Zeven (1693), then *amtman* or governor (1695).⁶ He still held the post in 1719.⁷

According to a note on the present manuscript, Rapicani was visiting England in 1666 in the company of some Swedish noblemen, and they seem to have been in the suite of the two ambassadors extraordinary, Count Jöran Fleming and Peter Julius Coyet, who were sent to England from Sweden that summer. This embassy was a step in the growing diplomatic cordiality between England and Sweden, which led from the agreement of friendship and trade in 1665 to the Triple Alliance of 1668; its immediate purpose was to try to mediate in the war that England was then fighting against France and Holland.⁸ *The Current Intelligence*,⁹ reporting the ambassadors' formal entry into London on 27 June, said that their whole retinue consisted of '124 persons (amongst whom the Count *Carl-Gustaveson*, Son to the late King of Sweden, the Count *Douglas*, the Baron *Sparre*, Baron *Wachtmeister*, the Lords *Appelbom* and *Lagerfeld*'. Clearly not everyone in this distinguished party was engaged on diplomatic business; probably most of them were simply travelling for pleasure, in congenial company. Thus, the Swedish regent's letter of 23 May to King Charles II, recommending Count Douglas and his brother, makes no mention of the embassy, but merely says that the two young men, having travelled in Germany, the Low Countries and France, now wished to visit England.¹⁰ Probably Rapicani was doing likewise, and there seems no reason to suppose that he was undertaking any mission in England for Queen Christina. Indeed, it is uncertain whether he had yet entered her service. In May 1666 she left Rome for a visit to Sweden, and did not return until November 1668. It may have been that Rapicani was sent north in an advance party to prepare for her coming, and then took advantage of this opportunity to visit England. But it seems more likely that other circumstances had brought him and the Swedish nobles together, and that he joined Christina's household on his

return from England in the autumn. His account of the conversation between the Swedish ambassadors and the chaplain suggests that he already understood Swedish.

There seems no doubt that his account of the Fire is authentic; the fact that the narrator witnessed it from a distance—Lincoln's Inn seems to have been his nearest approach to the Fire while it was in progress—makes the account the more convincing, without reducing its value. The most interesting part of the narrative is its description of the maltreatment of Swedes by the London mob, who thought that the Fire had been started by the French or the Dutch, and seized upon all foreigners indiscriminately.¹¹ The amount of detail (though not completely accurate) makes it certain that Rapicani was writing his account from notes or diaries made at the time. The autobiography as a whole was probably compiled towards the end of his life; the fact that it is in German suggests that he wrote it when he was at Zeven.

The transcript that follows reproduces the manuscript as it stands, including the notes at the beginning and the words of query or explanation in parentheses, which must have been added by the copyist. Most of the extract is written in German script, but for some words, given here in italics, Latin script is used; where these occur in the text, they presumably correspond to the usage of the original manuscript. The extract has every appearance of being a careful and accurate copy, and its many faults of grammar and style must be attributed to the author himself. Notes have been added by a few words which seem likely to have deviated from the original through slips of the copyist's pen. The English translation which is appended is necessarily somewhat free; with it are some notes of comment and elucidation.

British Museum Additional MS. 49977 L.

Franciscus de Rapicani, Erster geheimer *Etats-Secretair* der Königin *Christine von Schweden*, geboren 1636, schreibt in seiner eigenhändig geschriebenen Selbst-Biographie über die *Londoner* Feuersbrunst wie folgt:

[Pencilled note:] (damals Reisebegleiter einiger schwedischen Adligen).

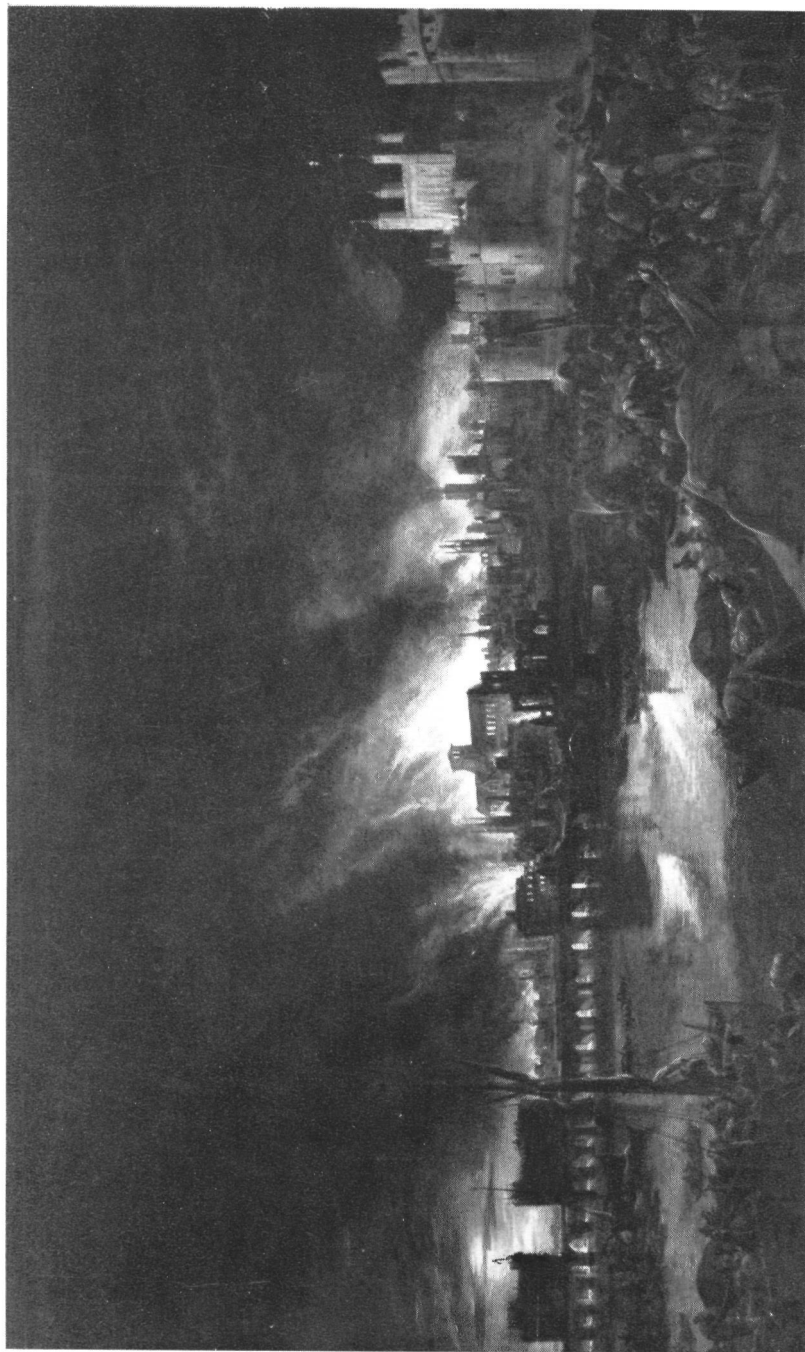
“Diese fröhliche Zeit wurde aber bald in Trauer verwandelt, denn im Herbst selbigen 1666^{ten} Jahres entstand in einer Sonntags Nacht ein so erschrecklicher Brand, nicht weit von der *Thems*-Brücken in eines

Beckers Hauss, davon, wie bekannt, diese grosse herrliche Stadt fast gantz in die Asche geleet wurde. Ich war selbigen Sonnabend mit diesem Freund *Baumann* und noch zweijen andere seiner Bekandten hinüber in *Southwark*, welches die Stadt auff jenseith¹² der *Thems* ist, spatziren gewesen; Sonst war ich noch nicht über die *Thems* brücke gekommen. Wie wir nun hinübergingen, und ich die schöne grösse Reijhe Häuser ansehe, sagte ich: Dass sind recht schöne Gebäude, und wäre es jammer, wenn Brand darin kommen sollte, denn sie waren sehr mit Holtz und Tafelwerk gebauet: Ich gedachte weiter nichts, und vollbrachten wir unsere Spatzier-Reijse biss gegen Abend. Wie wir nun im schummern (*Dämmerung*) wieder über die Brücke zurückkahmen, stürtzete mir auff der Mitte unvermuthet das bluth auss der Nasen, worüber ich sehr erschrak, sagend, dass müsste wass bedeuten, gieng bejseith an der eisernen Lehne an der Brücken, und bluthete wohl ein Paar Vatterunser lang; damit giengen wir wieder forth noch in ein *Caffe*-Haus eine Pfeiff Thoback (*Pfeife Taback*) zu rauchen, biss es spät ohngefehr Glockzehn wurde, und kein Gutsche der Gegend mehr zu finden war.— Weilen ich nuhn in *Commongarden* logirte, und es schon späth war, sagte *Baumann* zu mir "ich sollte bej ihm in *Linc'ons'ind College* übernachten. Wir waren kaum eine Stunde im Bett gelegen, da wir gegen Mitternacht einen grossen Lärm von Trommeln hörten, auss dem Bett aufsprungen, und zum Fenster hinauss nichts als lauter Feuer gegen der *Thems* und selbigen Brücken sahen. Ich wusste des Morgens nicht wie ich nach meinem *quartier* wieder kommen sollte, ein solch getümmel und gross *Désordre* war in der gantzen Stadt; da vergesellschaftete (*begleitete*) mich dieser Freund biss in *Commongarden*, und blieben wir den Sontag daselbst zusammen. Zu mittag führte Er mich noch zur mahlzeit bej einige seiner Freunden, allwo eine recht schöne *Compagnie* bejsammen war, auch Einige aus der alten Stadt, sowohl Frau- als Mans-Persohnen sich befanden. Sie waren (: Gott vergebe es uns :) bej solcher gefährlich und jämmerlichen Zeit recht lustig; Es bekam aber Einigen, so auss der Alt-Stadt zu unss gekommen waren, sehr übel, dieweil, ehe sie ihre Häuser wieder erreichen konnten, waren sie mitten im Feuer und Rauch aufgegangen: So heftig riss das Feuer umb sich, dass man dafor hielte, Es wären allemahl etliche 100 Häusser in einer Stunde abgebrandt. Des Abends schieden wir von einander und haben uns nicht wiedergesehen noch gesprochen in gantzer 8 Tage, da den folgenden Freijtag erst das Feuer sich biss an des *Tourrs'* (*tower's*) Grafften ausgebreitet, und daselbst sich gestützet gehabt. Inzwischen war denen Schwedischen *Ambassadeurs* auch bange, dass das

Feuer gar in *Commongarden* kommen mögte, hielten derowegen beim Könige an, dass sie aus ihrer Behäusung nach demselben, woselbst Sie 3 Tage über, vom 8^{ten} *Maij* (oder *März*) waren tractiret worden, sich mit ihrer *Suite* transportiren mögten, welches Sie auch erhielten, und wurde soforth allen, die sich unter ihrer *Suite* und Schutz befunden, angedeutet, sich bejsammen zu halten, und der *Ambassadeur's* Gutsche zu folgen: Die *Baggage* wurde vorausgeschickt, und folgten wir den Dienstag nachmittag ohngefähr 50 Persohnen stark, denen *Ambassadeurs* zu Fuss nach, so gut bewehrt, als wir's hatten: Wir zogen aus einem Hauss, das grade gegen *Sommersethouse* überlag, da sollte man ein lauffen, reiten, fahren, schreien, fluchen, beten, alles durcheinander von jungen und alten, Mans- und Weibs Personen gesehen haben: Wir konnten kaum durch dass verbooste (*erboste*) Volk hindurch kommen: Da fiel mir der Brand von *Troja* ein, und stellte mir gänzlich vor, dass er eben so möchte aussehen haben.

Als wir nun in dass Hauss bei *Westminster* gekommen waren, gab der König den *Ambassadeurs* eine Wache vor die Thür und die *Ambassadeurs* befehlen, dass Keiner sich aus dem Hause begeben, sondern sich vor unheil hüten sollte. Es war aber mein Stubengesell, Ein Schwedischer von Adel, dessen Nahme ich verschweige, so voller *Impatience*, dass er von seiner *Inclination*, die Er hatte, nicht wegbleiben konnte, der wagte es, und wie Er wieder zurück wollte, wurde er, nebst dem Tafeldecker, der ihn begleitet, von dem unsinnigen Pöbel aufgefangen, und gar, so wie er ging und stund, an einer Eck einer Strassen, an einem Hauss-Steine aufgehangen: Der Tafel-Decker aber war doch noch sein Glück, denn dieser machte so viel Wesens mit dem Pöbel, Indem Sie bald diesen, bald jenen zuerst henken wollten, dass einige Zeit damit zugebracht wurde, und als kaum der Edelmann aufgehangen war, kam eine *Ronde* von des *Duc of York's* Leibwache zu Pferde, sahen diesen Händel, jagen hinzu, und hieben den Strick mit dem degen ab, warffen den Aufgehangenen auff's Pferd und brachten ihn also davon. Folgenden tages kam mein guter Galan wieder bei Hofe, musste sich aber gewaltig mit seinem blauen Ring, der ihm noch umb den Halss zu sehen war, *vexiren* lassen.

Ob nun gleich dieses nachdenkliche *Exempel* vor Augen, und man ohne auffhören vernahm, wie dass rasende Volk unter den frembden Nationen ihre Grausamkeit verübte, so war doch dem Hoff-Prediger auch noch sein Theil verwahret: Dieser, als er hörte, dass sich das Feuer minderte, und man es an unserm Ort so erschrecklich nicht mehr sahe.



By permission of the Trustees of the London Museum.

CONTEMPORARY OIL - PAINTING OF THE GREAT FIRE: DUTCH SCHOOL.

See paper by P. D. A. HARDEY on page 76

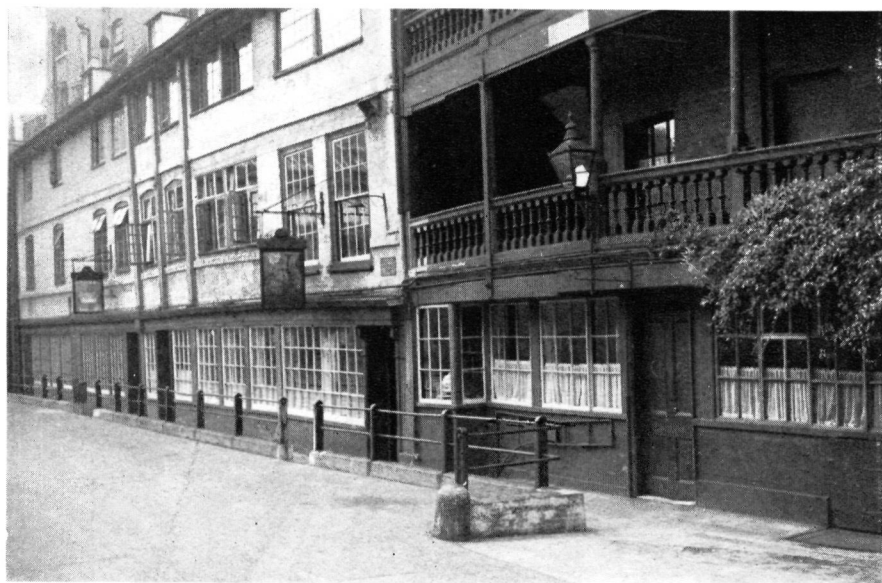


ST. GILES, CRIPPLEGATE
From Site of Wood Street, looking north.

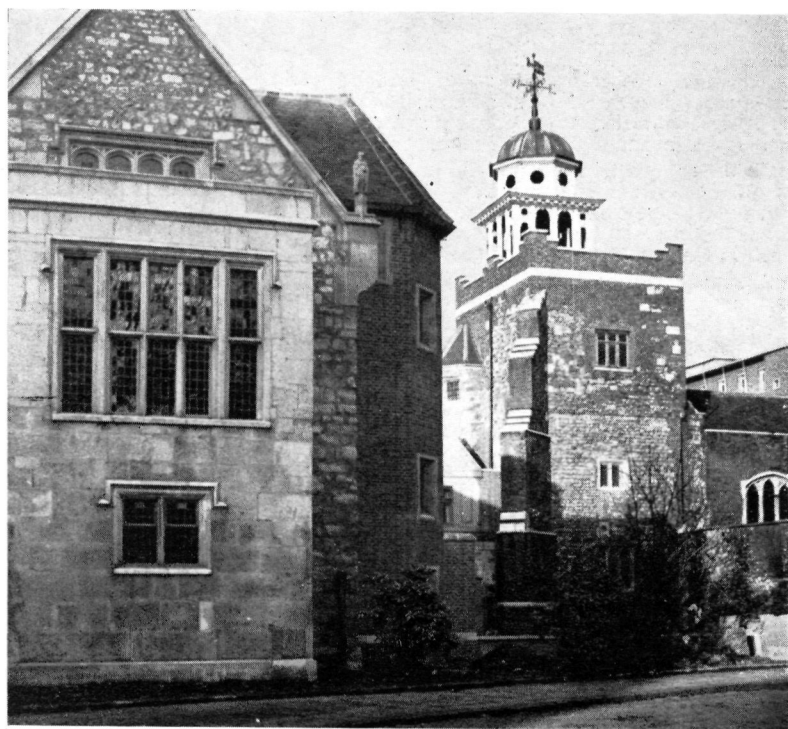


HARMONDSWORTH BARN.
A Tithe Barn of the Former Priory.

BY H. E. CHIOSSO

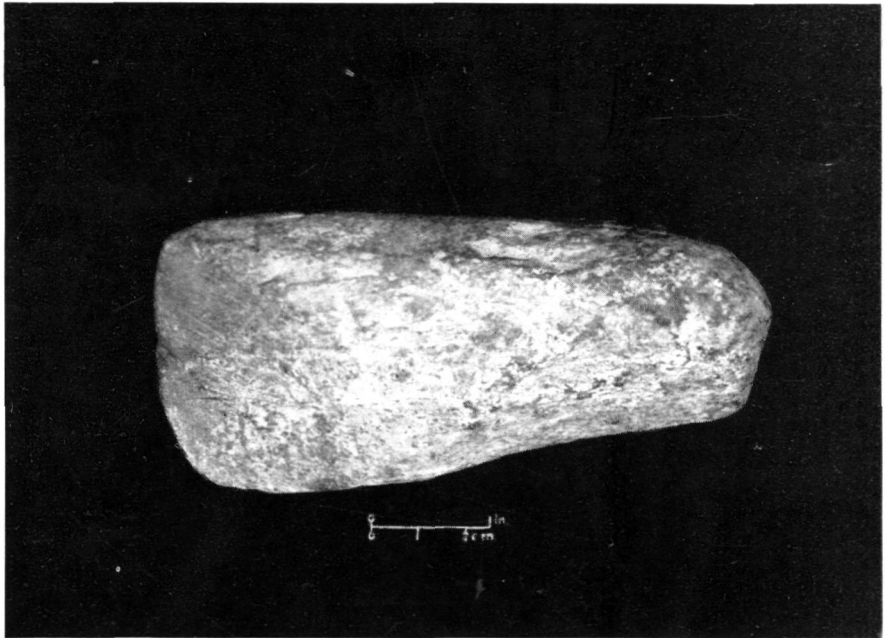


GEORGE INN, SOUTHWARK, FACADE, Ca. 1675.



CHARTERHOUSE CHAPEL, 16th & 17th CENTURIES.

THE MUSWELL HILL AXE



To the short list of prehistoric, ground stone axes from the metropolitan area there can now be added a small specimen found eighteen years ago in the garden of 13 Windermere Road, Muswell Hill. Brought to notice only recently, when it was shown at a meeting of Group 10 of the Council for British Archaeology, the tool was recognized as of probable early Neolithic fashioning. Five-and-a-quarter inches (13.3 cms.) long, it is of the simplest, being but a pebble of roughly elliptical section rubbed down to a cutting-edge at its wide end which measures $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches (5.8 cms.) across.

As it was seen that the material of which the axe is made was a metamorphic rock quite foreign to southern England, the specimen was submitted to Professor F. W. Shotton, F.R.S., Department of Geology in the University of Birmingham. We are indebted to him for his identification, to which great interest attaches. He writes on 10th February, 1960:—

“ . . . The specimen . . . is indeed interesting though I shall have to be little non-committal about where it came from . . . The rock may be described as a fine-grained actinolite-chlorite-epidote-schist. The minerals present in it are epidote (and possibly some clinozoisite), quartz, chlorite, actinolite, plagioclase, sphene and opaque iron ore. It has only feebly developed foliation.

“As this is a metamorphic rock its source can only be looked for very far from London. I imagine something like this could be found at various places in central or north Scotland, and there is a possibility also that it could come from Anglesey. It seems to me, however, that it is just as likely to come from Brittany or Scandinavia, so that it may well be of foreign origin. I would only be prepared to say that it is far-travelled and must come from an area of highly metamorphosed rocks. I would also say that although I have looked at perhaps 500 slices of British axes, I have not seen the like of this.”

In my opinion the axe was picked up not far from where the prehistoric artisan shaped it in a pebble from the local boulder-clay or glacial outwash material. For Muswell Hill, like other north London heights, is in the line of maximum advance of the great Pleistocene ice-sheet which the deposits register. Unless the stone had been brought by man from Brittany, which does not seem at all likely, any of the other regions named by Professor Shotton might be the source of the rock. They are all abundantly represented by ice-borne ingredients of the glacial beds.

A. D. LACAILLE.

wollte seine *curiosité* auch beißsen, und selbst vernehmen, wie es darum wäre, aber Er bekam schlechte Beuthe, und brachten ihn einige wieder zu Hause den ganzen Leib voller (. . . nicht lesbar), den Kopff und dass angesicht voller bluth, sein bäffgen (*Bäffchen*) und Kragen am Hals und vor den Händen in lauter Fetzen, sein Priester Rock gantz umgewend (*umgewendet*) und mit Lappen gesäumt.

Als dieses die *Ambassadeurs* vernahmen, wollten Sie ihn auch gern in dieser *Equipage* sehen, und liessen ihn in den grossen Vorsaal kommen, und als sie ihn fragten, was ihn dazu bewogen, dass er sich aus dem Hauss unter das wilde Volk begeben hätte, antwortete Er: "O, H.H. *Exellentzen*, ich habe die Tage über, dass der Brandt gewesen, Gott auff den Knieen gebethen für diese Schelme, dass er dass Feuer von ihnen abwenden möchte und nun wissen Sie mir es solchergestalt zu danken. O dass Sie dass höllische Feuer nun allemahl gar ewig brennen." Als nun der Priester-Eijffer dermassen begund (*begann*) aus ihm zu rollen, kehrten sich die *Ambassadeurs* umb, und lachten, damit liessen Sie ihn stehen. Also wundere ich mich nicht, dass so viele *Curieuse* leuthe sich in Krieg begeben, denen der Kitzel auff obgedachte Weise muss benommen werden. Mir waren zwar diese 8 Tage lang, und verlangte ich wohl hundert mal den *Virgilien*, dan ich mir seine *Verse* von dem *exidio Trojae* nimmermehr so schön, als ich damals vor Augen hatte, würde haben *imprimiren* und *representiren* können: Des nachts war es allzu abscheulich anzusehen, denn die ganze Luft schien als lauter Feuer über der Stadt. Die *Tems* sah nicht anders aus, als wie lauter Brand, den in der *Tems*-Strasse, da all dass Teer, die Fett-Wahren und wass zu Schiffen gehöret, häufig in den Strom geworffen wurde, kamen die brennenden Balken von den abgebrandten oder abgerissenen Häusern, und steckten eines mit dem andern an, dass man sich nicht so grausam vorstellen kann, als es in der That gewesen. Wie nun der Brandt sich geleet, kahl mein Freund *Bauman* wieder zu mir, und offerirte sich, mit mir durch die abgebrandte Stadt zu gehen, dass wir den Jammer sehen und betrachten könnten; wir gingen sie demnach durch und durch und fanden nichts als Steinhaufen und Keller, noch voller Bohlen und glimmenden Balken. Ein gross Jammern des Volkes und unzählbar viel arme leuthe mit dem blossen Stab in der Hand, die zuvor in guthem Vermögen und Wohlstand gelebt hatten, welche sich hin und wieder auf die Felder begaben und Hütten auffgebauet hatten: Ich sprach einige Buchhändler, bei welchen ich oft pflegte einzusprechen, und etliche Stunden zuzubringen. Die hatten zwar ihre Bücher in die grossen *St. Pauli* Kirchengewölbe gebracht. Es

war aber doch nichts davon gerettet worden, sondern alles war samt der überaus Prächtigen und grossen Kirche vom Feuer verzehret worden. So dass nicht mehr als wie ein klein Teil vom Chor, und dass starke Gemäuer, welches doch alles von der Stärke des Feuers, mit samt dem schönen Portal und den schönen Säulen zersprungen übrig geblieben. Es war ein gross Jammer anzusehen, doch waren die Gemüther der Menschen so trotzig, wie denn die Engelländer von Natur unverzagt sein, dass Sie nicht so sehr von den durch den abscheulichen Brand verursachten Schaden, als von dem Krieg, welchen Sie mit den Holländern zur See hatten, redeten und vor dessen weiteren Erfolg besorgt waren. Es wahrte auch nicht lange, da ging eine Haupt-Schlacht zwischen ihnen auff der Englischen Küste vor, und zogen die Engelländer den kürzesten. Man konnte das Donnern der Stücke in *London* gar deutlich hören, und war ich eben gegen Abend in *Sommersets*-Haus, in dem hintern Garten mit einigen *Patri* bei *Capucinae* dicht an der *Tems*, da die Erde von dem Donnern der Geschütze unter unsern Füssen bebte.

Da sah es nun sehr übel auss und wurden des Friedens Gedanken zur Hand genommen: Auff die frembten (*fremden*) Nationen aber vermehrte sich der Grimm und Hass noch viel heftiger, also dass sich die Frembden, best Sie konnten, aus dem Staube machen mussten.

Es war ohngefähr im *Oktober*, dass wir uns zur¹³ Rückreise anschickten, viele Schwedische von Adel, und andre mehr geselleten sich zu uns, fuhren also in Gottes Namen gegen Abend die *Tems* hinunter biss nach *Greenwich*, allda des Königs Jacht, die Er dem *H. Grafen deputires*¹⁴ hatte, auf uns wartete.

TRANSLATION

Franciscus de Rapicani, born 1636, principal confidential secretary of Queen Christina of Sweden, in his autobiography, written in his own hand, writes as follows about the Great Fire of London:

[Pencilled note:] (at that time travelling companion of several Swedish noblemen)

This happy time was soon changed to grief. One Sunday night in the autumn of the same year, 1666,¹⁵ there broke out in a baker's house, not far from the bridge over the Thames, so terrible a fire that, as everyone knows, this great and splendid city was almost completely laid in ashes. That Saturday I had gone with this friend Baumann and two other

acquaintances of his for a walk to Southwark, which lies on the other side of the Thames from the City; I had not crossed the bridge over the Thames before. As we went over, and I looked at the fine great row of houses, I said: "Those are fine buildings indeed, and it would be a pity if they should ever catch fire"—for they were built with a good deal of woodwork and panelling.¹⁶ I thought no more about it, and we went on with our walk until evening. Coming back in the twilight we were in the middle of the bridge when blood suddenly poured from my nose. I was very alarmed and said that it must signify something; I went aside to the iron rail of the bridge,¹⁷ and bled for the space of a good two Paternosters. Then we went on to a coffee-house to smoke a pipe of tobacco until about ten o'clock, when there was no carriage to be had.¹⁸ As I was lodging in Covent Garden,¹⁹ and it was already late, Baumann said I should spend the night with him at Lincolns Inn. We had hardly been in bed for an hour when, about midnight, we heard a great noise of drums;²⁰ we jumped out of bed and from the window could see nothing but a great fire beside the Thames, near that same bridge. In the morning I did not know how I should get back to my lodgings, there was such an uproar and great commotion in the whole city; but my friend accompanied me back to Covent Garden, and we spent the Sunday there together. At midday he took me to a meal with some of his friends, where there was a fine company gathered, including some men and women from the City. They were (God forgive us!) quite cheerful for so perilous and sorry a time, but some of those who had come to us from the City suffered great loss, for before they could get back home their houses had gone up in fire and smoke. The fire was spreading with such fury that it was thought that about a hundred houses were being burnt every hour. In the evening we parted company and neither saw nor spoke to each other for the next week; it was not until the following Friday that the fire came up against the might of the Tower and there came to rest.²¹ Meanwhile, the Swedish ambassadors were afraid that the fire might reach Covent Garden and requested the king that they and the suite that they maintained might be moved from their present accommodation to that where they had been lodged for three days from the 8th May (? March).²² It was immediately ordered that everyone who was in their suite or under their protection should stay together and follow the ambassadors' coach. The baggage was sent on ahead, and on the Tuesday afternoon, about fifty strong, we followed the ambassadors on foot, as well armed as possible. We set out from a building which stood just opposite Somerset House; and what an angry mob there was to be seen, young

and old, men and women, all together, running, riding, walking, shouting, cursing and praying—we could scarcely pass through them. The burning of Troy came to my mind, and I fancied that it might have looked just like this.

When we had come to the house at Westminster, the king gave the ambassadors a guard at the door and the ambassadors ordered that, so as to keep out of harm, no one was to stir from the house. My room-mate, however, a Swedish nobleman whose name I will not mention, became so impatient at staying away from a lady-friend that he had, that he risked going out; when he wanted to come back again and was just walking or standing in the street, he was seized by a furious mob, together with the steward who was with him, and was hung up from the projecting sign of a house^{22a} at a street-corner. The steward, however, proved his salvation, for he made such a commotion with the crowd that they could not decide which of them to hang first. Thus a little time was gained, and they had hardly got the nobleman strung up when a mounted troop of the Duke of York's bodyguard came by; they saw what was going on, rode up, and cut the rope with a sword, threw the crowd's victim onto a horse, and brought him away.²³ The next day our good gallant came back home, but he was dreadfully teased about the blue ring which could be seen around his neck.

With this notable example before our eyes, we could see without being told, what atrocities the maddened people were committing against foreigners; however, there was also something in store for the court chaplain. When he heard that the fire was lessening, and from where we were it no longer seemed so terrible, he was seized with curiosity and wanted to see for himself how things were. But he got short shrift, and some people brought him back home with his whole body full of . . . (illegible), his head and face covered in blood, his sleeves and collar all in rags round his neck and hands, and his cassock turned back to front and tattered at the edge.

When the ambassadors heard about it, they wanted to see him in this state and had him come into the long ante-room; when they asked him what had led him to go out among the mob, he replied "Why, Your Excellencies, the whole time of the fire I prayed God on my knees that he would keep it away from these rogues; and now what sort of thanks do I get? Oh, may the fires of hell burn them for ever!" When he began to give vent to this sort of priestly ardour, the ambassadors turned round and laughed and let him alone. However, I am not surprised that so

many inquisitive people go to the wars, who have to get rid of the itch for this sort of thing. Certainly I found the week long, and a hundred times I wished for my Virgil, for never again would I be able to impress on myself his verses on the *exidium Trojae* so well as I now could with what lay before my eyes.²⁴ At night it was really terrible to watch, for the whole air above the city seemed to be ablaze. The Thames looked like nothing so much as a sheet of flame; in Thames Street all the tar and fat and ships' stores had been thrown bodily into the river, then burning beams had come from the buildings that had been burnt or pulled down, setting it on fire, so that the sight was more awful than anything one could imagine. When the fire had died down my friend Baumann came to me and offered to walk with me through the burnt-out city, so that we could see and contemplate the distress. We walked and walked and found nothing but heaps of stones, and cellars still full of planks and smouldering beams. There was great distress among the people, and countless poor persons with nothing but a stick in their hands, who had formerly been prosperous and well-placed, were scattered here and there in the fields where they had built huts for themselves. I spoke to several book-sellers with whom I had often chatted and passed the time of day. They had brought their books into the great crypt of St. Paul's, and there nothing was saved; it was all destroyed with the magnificent great church, of which nothing was left standing except a small part of the choir and the strong walls, and even these, like the beautiful portico and pillars, were all cracked by the heat of the fire. It was indeed a pitiful sight, but the people's courage was so resilient, for the English are by nature not easily daunted, that it was not so much the loss caused by the dreadful fire that they were talking and worrying about, as the war that they were waging on the sea against the Dutch. Before long a major battle between them took place off the English coast and the English came off the worse. One could distinctly hear the thunder of the guns in London,²⁵ and towards evening when I was at Somerset House, with some Fathers in the back garden at the Capuchins',²⁶ close to the Thames, the earth shook beneath our feet with the thunder of the artillery.

As things now seemed bad, and thoughts of peace were taken up, the fury and hatred grew far stronger yet against foreigners, so that they had to leave the country as best they could.

It was about October when we prepared for the return journey; there came with us many Swedish nobles and others besides, and it was in the

evening that, in God's name, we set out down the Thames to Greenwich, where the king's yacht, which he had put at the count's disposal, was awaiting us.

NOTES

- 1 I am most grateful to Dr. A. E. J. Hollaender for his advice and encouragement throughout the preparation of this note, transcript and translation; and to Father B. Fitzgibbon, S.J., for some very helpful references and suggestions.
- 2 I am indebted to Dr. Grill of the Riksarkivet and to Dr. Weise of the Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv for kindly giving me details of documents concerning Rapicani in these repositories.
- 3 Riksarkivet; the documents drawn on for information about Rapicani are in the volumes Biographica R4, Bremensia 87, 119, 129 and in the Riksregistraturret, 12.6.1689.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Niedersächs. Staatsarchiv, Hann. 74 Zeven Fach 37 Nr. 1.
- 7 Riksarkivet.
- 8 An account of the embassy's aims is given in the article on Coyet in the *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* (Stockholm; in progress, 1917-), ix, pp. 31-32. No. 8, 25-28 June 1666.
- 9 Public Record Office, Foreign State Papers (Sweden): SP 95, vol. 6, f. 61.
- 10 W. G. Bell, *The Great Fire of London in 1666* (London; 1920), which is the standard work on the Fire, gives a number of references to similar attacks—pp. 33, 73-76, 121-122, 320, 323.
- 11 *sic* in MS.; perhaps "jenseits" in the original.
- 12 *sic* in MS.; perhaps "zur" in the original.
- 13 *sic* in MS.; perhaps "deputiret" in the original.
- 14 *I.e.* the night of Saturday-Sunday, 1-2 September.
- 15 The buildings on London Bridge were mostly of wood; it seems to have been considered that the bridge would not bear the weight of brick or stone structures—G. Home, *Old London Bridge* (London; 1931), pp. 215-216, plate facing p. 352.
- 16 Most of the thoroughfare across London Bridge was a narrow passage between the houses that were built on it, but at the south end there were two gaps between buildings, where the road extended to the edge of the bridge, and at the north end was a section of six arches where the houses had not been rebuilt since a fire in 1633; as this last was fenced with high wooden palings, the incident must have occurred at one of the southern gaps—*ibid.*, p. 218 and plates facing pp. 224, 241, 352.
- 17 Hackney carriages seem to have been a fairly recent innovation; in February 1660 Pepys mentions an abortive attempt of the watermen to petition Parliament against them—*Diary*, ed. H. B. Wheatley (London; 9v., 1903-04), i, p. 41.
- 18 This seems the most likely interpretation of Rapicani's *Common Garden*. The permanent Swedish resident in England, Johan Lyonbergh, was then living at Covent Garden; on Tuesday, 4 September, he petitioned the king for powers to requisition four wagons to move his goods for fear of the Fire, perhaps as a part of the ambassadors' migration that Rapicani describes—*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1666-1667*, p. 99.
- 19 Perhaps sounded as an alarm by the officers of the ward. Actually, the Fire did not break out until nearly 2 a.m.—Bell, *The Great Fire*, p. 22.
- 20 In fact the Fire died down on Wednesday, 5 September, following the fall of the wind on Tuesday evening; although there were some new fierce outbreaks on the night of Wednesday-Thursday, the Fire was over by Thursday morning. The Tower was saved only by blowing up some of the surrounding buildings—Bell, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-160, 165-171.

- 22 The ambassadors entered London on 27 June by the English calendar, but this was 8 July by the new system and Rapicani—or even the copyist—may simply have mistaken the month; the query in parentheses is presumably the copyist's. The house must have been Lady Williams' in Palace Yard, Westminster; it was there that the ambassadors had been taken on arrival—*The London Gazette*, no. 65, 25-28 June 1666; *The Current Intelligence*, no. 8. Lady Williams was paid £300 a year from the Treasury to keep the house ready to receive any ambassadors and their retinues that the Chamberlain of the Household thought fit to lodge there; her husband, Sir Abraham Williams, clerk of the signet and agent of the Queen of Bohemia, had entered into this arrangement in 1634, and she took it over after his death—*Calendar of Treasury Books, 1660-1667*, p. 57; British Museum Add. MS. 34326, f.50.
- 22a This seems to be the most likely meaning of Rapicani's *Hauss-Stein*.
- 23 The incident is mentioned in a contemporary Dutch pamphlet: "Niettemin, zijn verscheyde *Hollanders* en *Franschen* op de straten gevat, en vast gestelt, oock eenige, daer onder 2. of 3. persoonen, van des Sweetschen Ambassadeurs volck, opgehanghen, doch nae een weynigh tijdts wederom afghesneden, die men van verraet betichte, en van dese brandt beschuldighde" (Nevertheless, some Dutchmen and Frenchmen were seized in the streets and taken prisoner, and some, among them two or three of the Swedish ambassador's people, were hung up, but after a short time cut down again; they were suspected of treachery and were accused of starting this fire)—S.V.H.V.—, *Londens Puynhoop, oft Godts Handt over de selve* (Amsterdam; 1666), p.10.
- 24 The comparison with the sack of Troy occurred even more readily to contemporary English writers, who were familiar with the fable of Brutus' foundation of London as the New Troy; see the many references in the poems on the Fire collected by R. A. Aubin, *London in Flames, London in Glory* (Rutgers University Studies in English, no. 3; 1943).
- 25 It is difficult to see what battle Rapicani is referring to. He may have had a confused recollection of the St. James's Fight, from which the noise of guns could be heard in London (*The London Gazette*, no. 73, 23-26 July 1666); but this occurred on 25 July and was an undoubted English victory.
- 26 On the Restoration, Somerset House became the dower house of Charles I's queen, Henrietta Maria, and its chapel became once more a privileged place of Roman Catholic worship, served by French Capuchins. In 1665 Henrietta Maria left England, but the Capuchins continued at Somerset House until her death in 1669 and throughout the decade this was a centre for Roman Catholics in London—R. Needham and A. Webster, *Somerset House Past and Present* (London; 1905), pp. 139-141, 151-152.