



WELCOME
Stationer's Hall
Wednesday 25 November 2015
Sir Anthony Bailey

YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS, GOVERNOR GENERAL, YOUR IMPERIAL AND ROYAL HIGHNESS, YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES, YOUR GRAND DUCAL HIGHNESSES, YOUR SERENE HIGHNESSES, YOUR ILLUSTRIOUS HIGHNESS, YOUR EXCELLENCIES, YOUR GRACE, MY LORDS, REVEREND FATHERS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

It gives me very great pleasure to warmly welcome each of you this evening to this celebratory Banquet.

We have many distinguished guests here tonight and may I begin by welcoming most warmly our guest of honour, His Imperial Highness The Prince Napoleon who is accompanied by his mother HRH Princess Beatrice of Bourbon Two Sicilies and other family members and friends.

I am delighted too to welcome members of the other Imperial and Royal Families from across Europe who honour us with their presence.

May I welcome from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, TRH Prince and Princess Louis, HI&RH The Grand Duke George of Russia, HRH The Princess Elena of Romania, HH Prince Joachim Murat, and Princess Katarina of Yugoslavia and Serbia and from Austria Princess Katarina and Princess Marie-Therese of Hohenberg.

I would also like to extend a hearty welcome to Her Majesty's Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda, HE Sir Rodney Williams and HE Lady Williams who only yesterday returned from Rome following a most successful Official Visit to the Holy Father, Pope Francis and who in a few days will attend an Audience with Her Majesty The Queen and later travel on to visit Paris.

It is my pleasure too to welcome tonight the Ambassadors of the Kingdom of the Belgians, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Kosovo, the Holy See, the Slovak Republic and the High Commissioner of Grenada to the Court of St James's as well as the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the Holy See.

I am also delighted to welcome many of the Masters of the Livery Worshipful Companies of the City of London, including the Master Lightmongers, Master Chartered Surveyors, and Master Tin Plate Workers.

Your Imperial Highness, Sir Gavyn and I were delighted to propose to the Lord Mayor and the Court of Common Council, Your nomination to receive the Freedom of the City of London.

This is felt all the more knowing that we are doing so in the 200th Anniversary year of the Battle of Waterloo.

Events like today's offer an opportunity to reflect on our common history and serve as a reminder that European unity has proved to be a powerful force and has the power to overcome divides.

In May this year, I was honoured to attend the moving state mass held in memory of Emperor Napoleon I and the French War dead at the Cathedrale Saint Louis des Invalides in Paris.

This event held each year is attended by the most senior civil and military representatives of the French Republic and illustrated to me the on-going legacy and relevance of Your Imperial Highness's family to modern day France.

We gather too this evening at a moment of deep and prayerful solidarity with France and the French. Our cities and citizens of London and Paris stand tall and proud as they have and always will, as eternal defenders of freedom and democracy.

Never will we allow the actions of a few who perversely abuse one of the great Abrahamic faiths to harm and shake the very foundation, which our nations and continent are built on. Our message is clear that such murderous actions will never prevail over freedom and democracy.

The granting of the Freedom of the City of London, which we witnessed this evening, is one of the oldest surviving traditional ceremonies still in existence today. But this event isn't just about the past, it is also about the future - a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the historic and contemporary partnership which exists between our two capital cities.

I don't know if Your Imperial Highness is fully aware of the privileges, which come with being a freeman. You can wander through this City with your sword drawn at any time you like; and you have the right, when drunk and disorderly, to be escorted back by the watches - although whether back to Paris I am not clear.

Having myself lived in Paris, I appreciate all what is good about France, I loved especially its atmosphere, lifestyle, food and fine wines, though every time I tried to speak French, Parisians would either ignore me or answer in impenetrable rapid-fire French and walk off before I could ask them to repeat it. Thankfully, your grandmother, The Dowager Princess Napoleon was much more understanding and patient.

Your Imperial Highness,

On behalf of everyone in this hall, I offer to you, Sir, our congratulations and all good wishes for the future and ask that you don't forget this special day and the lifelong bonds that you now have with this city.

I would like to end with two quotes: The first, a rather uncharitable one, by Douglas William Jerrold, a British writer who in the early 19th century acclaimed: "The best thing I know between France and England is the sea."

Sir Winston Churchill however put it better when he said: “We hope to see a Europe where men of every country will think as much of being a European as of belonging to their native land, and that without losing any of their love and loyalty of their birthplace.”

Long live the Entente Cordial.