Épître à Monsieur Grand Maître de l'Ordre de Saint-Lazare

composed by

Jean-Baptiste-Louis GRESSET

Translated by

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with a commentary by

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Grand Prior of the Maltese Islands

Grand Archivist & Historian of the Order



Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands

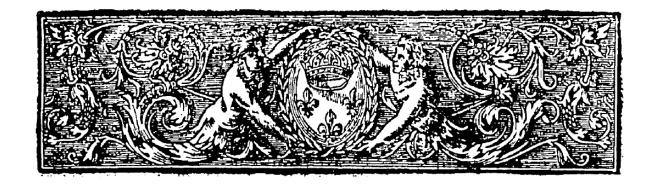
Malta

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Preface

The Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands and its sub-jurisdiction the Commandery of Gozo welcome Grand Master His Excellency Don Francisco de Borbón Graf von Hardenberg, Conde de Handenberg to the Maltese Islands during his first official visit since his election as the 50th Grand Master of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem. The 50th Grand Master's visit to the Islands recalls other occasions when previous Grand Masters of the Order honoured the Islands with their presence.

A number of 16th century Grand Masters of the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem had probably spent time on the Maltese Islands having been first professed as knights of the Order of Saint John in Malta. This was a period in the Order's history when political machinations between the Holy See and the French King resulted in an agreed administrative link between the French branch of the Order of Saint Lazarus and the Order of Saint John, then stationed in Malta. This link led to a series of professed Knights of Saint John being appointed grand masters of the Order of saint Lazarus by the reigning French kings with the approval of the reigning Pontiff and the Council o the Order of Saint John. These grand masters include: Jean de Lévis [professed Knight OSJ: 1532; elected GM OSL: 1557]; Michel de Seure de Lumigny [professed Knight OSJ: 1539; elected GM OSL: 1564/1586]; François Salviati [professed Knight OSJ: 1544; elected GM OSL: 1578]; and Armand de Clermont de Chastes [professed Knight OSJ]. Their sojourn on Malta however would probably have predated their appointment to the post of Grand Master of the Order of Saint Lazarus.

In 1969, a decision was made by the Grand Master to move the Grand Chancellery of the International Order from Paris to Malta. The Maltese jurisdiction quickly took the initiative to

propose suitable sites for housing the Grand Chancellery and suggested the soon-to-vacate Admiralty House and the St. John Counterguard. Other buildings, schedule to be vacated by the British Services, were discussed with the Malta Government Lands Department. ¹ On the 11-15th May 1973, the *Priory of Malta* hosted a Chapter General and the official visit of the 47th Grand Master Prince Francesco Enrique de Borbón who inaugurated *Torri ta' Lanzun* as the Grand Cancellery of the Order establishing Malta as the Administrative seat of the Malta Obedience fraction of the Order. The original purchase of *Torri ta' Lanzun* was made possible through the generosity of LtCol Robert Gayre. ² The legal transfer and restoration of *Torri ta' Lanzun* was carried out under the professional expertise of notary Dr. J.R. Grech LLD BA CLJ and architect Chev Maurice Captur BE&A ArCE KLJ. The restoration was made possible through donation made by various members of the Order, overseas and from Malta. ³

During the Grand Master's visit, on the 13th May 1973, the Priory donated an ambulance to the Hospital of St Catherine of Siena at Attard, Malta. This ambulance had been obtained from the Commandery of Lochore, Scotland through the agency of Messrs. Chalmers and Hardie. The Grand Master made the formal presentation and further invested the Rev. Mothers Columba Camilleri and Celia Bye as officer and member of the Companionate of Merit respectively. A plaque to commemorate the event was unveiled; while the hospital undertook to fly the Flag of St Lazarus on St Lazarus Day (17th December) and name a new wing of the hospital after the patron saint of the Order.

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¹ Archives of the Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands: 1966-1971. Minute notes dated 5th March 1969 and 27th February 1971

² Inauguration of the Grand Chancery, Malta; Report on Chapter General held on 11th and 12th May 1973. MHOSLJ, Malta, p.7; Order of St Lazarus headquarters to be inaugurated. Times of Malta, 12th May 1973, p.20

³ Inauguration of the Grand Chancery, Malta; Report on Chapter General held on 11th and 12th May 1973. MHOSLJ, Malta, p.3, 10-11



Francisco de Borbón flanked by Prince Irakly de Bagration and LtCol Robert Gayre y Gayre: 1973





Unveiling of Commemorative plaque

St. Catherine's Hospital on the 13th May 1973 by the 47th Grand Master Prince Francesco Enrique de Borbón and Chev A. Zammit, then Secretary General of the Priory of Malta, onlooking.

On In 14-16th September 2001, the *Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands* co-hosted together with the *Commandery of the Castello* a visit by the 48th Grand Master-elect, H.R.H. Don Francesco de Borbon y Escasany Duke of Seville who had taken over the leadership of the latter Jurisdiction established as a sub-jurisdiction called *Hereditary Commandery of Lochore in Malta* in 1976 and renamed Commandery of the Castello in 1986. During the visit, the Grand Master-elect visited St Catherine

of Siena Home for the Elderly (previously a general private hospital where his father and predecessor had unveiled a plaque during his visit in May 1973) and made a courtesy visit to the H.E. Guido de Marco President of the Republic of Malta. ⁴



48th Grand Master-elect, H.R.H. Don Francesco de Borbon y Escasany Duke of Seville At Torri ta' Lanzun, 2001

On the 9-10th September 2009, the *Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands* co-hosted, with the *Grand Commandery of the Castello*, the 49th Grand Master H.E. Don Carlos Gereda de Borbón during his visit to the Maltese Islands undertaken with the aim of assuming the leadership of the Grand Commandery. The official ceremony, attended by a representative delegation⁵ of the Grand Priory led by the Grand Prior Chev. J.R. Pace, took place at *Torri Lanzun* on the 9th September. The Grand Priory council members had the opportunity to meet with the Grand Master during a lunch organised on the 10th September. The Grand Priory members had the opportunity to meet with the Grand Master during a gala dinner organized jointly with the *Grand Commandery of the Castello* on the 10th September. For the occasion, the two jurisdictions presented the Grand Master with a model of a Maltese fishing boat in silver.

Cilia.

⁴ Saint Lazarus Newsletter. November 2001, p.3-4,5-6

⁵ Delegation included: Chev. Dr. J.R. Pace, Chev. M. Ciavola, Chev. Prof. C. Savona-Ventura, and Mr. C.



Grand Priory Council delegation lunching with GM Don Carlos Gereda de Borbón 10th September 2009

(*left to right*) Fr. T. Moore, Mr. G. Sammut, GP Chev. J.R. Pace, Mr. J. Grixti, GM Don Carlos Gereda de Borbón, Chev. A. Cutajar, Chev. M. Ciavola, Mr. C. Cilia, Chev. J. Spiteri Audibert

In May 2013, His Excellency Grand Master Don Carlos Gereda de Borbón Marquis of Almazán led a high ranking delegation comprising the Grand Executive Council on a visit to Malta to commemorate the 40th Anniversary since the Order acquired Castello Lanzun as its official headquarters. The anniversary activities, jointly organised by the local jurisdictions, included a reception at the Castello Lanzun hosted by the Grand Commandery of the Castello, where the Grand Master unveiled a commemorative Plaque, and an International Investiture in St. Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral at Valletta. New postulants representing the Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands and its sub-jurisdiction the Commandery of Gozo, the Grand Commandery of the Castello, the Delegation of Norway and the Priory of Belgium, were admitted to the Order. Several other members were promoted or awarded meritorious distinctions for services rendered to the Order's charitable work. International Representatives from various jurisdictions attended the formal Investiture in St. Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral at Valletta. The Investiture was directed by Chev. Clive Bennington, deputy Grand Marshall of the Order. A religious Service, led by the Chancellor of the Cathedral the Rt. Rev. Simon Godfrey assisted by the Chaplains of the local jurisdictions, preceded the Investiture, and Hymns were sung by a 12-strong Choir led by Dame Marie Therese Vassallo. The homily was delivered by Rev. Fr Peter Chappell, Gozo Commandery Chaplain. The evening before the formal investiture - which was held on Sunday 12th May, - the Postulants attended a Vigil Service in the baroque Madonna tal-Pilar Church at Valletta, led by Senior Chaplain Rev. Colin Westmarland and the Chaplains of the local jurisdictions. The Investiture was followed by a very well attended and convivial Gala Dinner at the Grand Hotel Excelsior, sited just outside the fortifications of Valletta overlooking the historic Grand Harbour. Don Carlos was presented with a fine table centre of Gozo Lace containing the Maltese Cross and several motifs. During the following days, the General Executive Council held its meeting.



H.E. the Grand Master making his address regarding the 40th anniversary celebration of the acquisition of Torri ta' Lanzun [Chev. J. Maidens and Chev. J.R. Pace flanking]



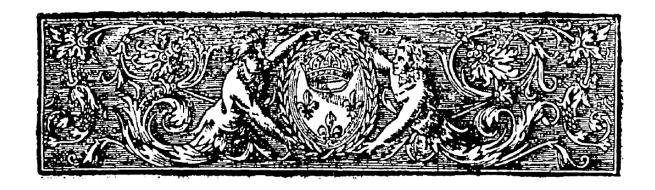
Grand Master unveiling the commemorative plaque in Torri ta' Lanzun

H.E. Don Francisco de Borbon y Graf von Hardenberg is well suited to undertake the rejuvenation of the Order and prepare the Order for the challenges of the 21st century. The jurisdiction promises its allegiance and its full support in these endeavours.

19th October 2018



Chevalier de l'ordre de Nôtre Dame de Mont-Carmel, et de s.t Lazare de Jerusalem.



Épître à Monsieur Grand Maître de l'Ordre de Saint-Lazare composed by Jean-Baptiste-Louis GRESSET COMMENTARY

by H.E. the Chev. Charles Savona-Ventura

The Épître à Monsieur was composed by the eighteenth-century poet and dramatist Jean-Baptiste-Louis GRESSET after King Louis XVI in 1777 appointed him the historiographe to the Order of Saint Lazarus. He was further admitted as a Chevalier of the Order of Saint Michael. The epistle is an honorific poem aimed as a eulogy to the Grand Master and the Order of Saint Lazarus.

The reigning Grand Master in 1777 was Louis Stanislas Xavier de France, Comte de Provence, eventually King Louis XVIII of France and Navarre 1795-1824. He served as the 43rd Grand Master and eventually Protector of the united Orders of St. Lazarus and Our Lady of Mount Carmel during the period 1773-1824. Son of Louis, Dauphin of France and Marie-Josèphe of Saxony, he was born at Versailles on the 17th November 1755. Married: 14th May 1771 to Marie Josephine Louise of Savoy [born: Turin, 2^{nd} September 1753; died exile: Buckinghamshire, England, 13th November 1810]. He died in Paris on the 16th September



1824.⁶ In the late eighteenth century, the Order was enjoying a period of marked prosperity and popularity receiving the support of the French Royal House.

Jean-Baptiste-Louis GRESSET was born in Amiens on the 29th August 1709. He was accepted as a Jesuit novice at the age of seventeen and studied at the *Collège Louis le Grand* in Paris. After two years, he was appointed to the post as assistant master in a college at Rouen. He published his first major work *Vert-Vert, histoire d'un perroquet de Nevers* while in Rouen in 1734. This humorous story centres around a parrot who was the delight of a convent because of its prayers and pious ambitions comments. A decision was made to transfer the parrot to another convent. During the passage, the parrot fell among bad companions. It forgets its convent language and starts swearing profanely. It is sent back to its original home in disgrace where it is punished by solitude and plain bread. The parrot repents and reforms. The writing style and the detailed descriptive interactions of the nuns caused the poem to truly stand out. Because of its apparent ridicule of the religious community, the poem was not well received by his Jesuit superiors.



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⁶ Anon. (2013). Louis XVIII of France. In: *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved 26th September 2013 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_XVIII_of_France.

On the 30th September 1735, Gresset was forced to leave the Order without being ordained priest. He went on to produce further literary works. While resident in Paris, Gresset was in 1748 admitted to the Académie Française. In 1751, he married the daughter of a former mayor of Amiens and settled there. He founded the *Académie d'Amiens* which served to launch his continuing

literary activities. During the last twenty-five years of his life, he went through a moral crisis and regretted the frivolity of his youth, which enabled him to produce his most famous poem. He died at Amiens on the 16th June 1777. His works included: *Vert-Vert, histoire d'un perroquet de Nevers* (1734); *Le Carème impromptu* (1734); *Le Lutrin vivant* (1734); *La Chartreuse* (1734); *Ombres* (1734); *Adieux aux Jésuites* (1735); *Édouard III*, tragedy (22 January 1740); *Sidney, drame en vers*, (3 May 1745); *Le Méchant, comédie en 5 actes, en vers*, (15 April 1747); *Le Parrain magnifique, poème en dix chants* (posthumous 1810). He also published a series of correspondence with Frédéric le Grand.⁷

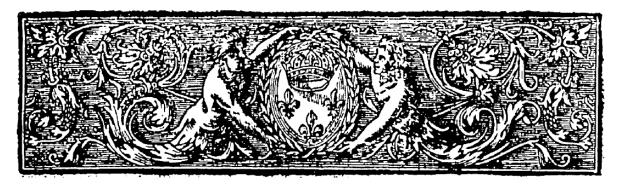




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⁷ Gresset, Jean-Baptiste-Louis (1709-1777). Oeuvres complètes (français). 1811]Oeuvres de Gresset. Tome premier [-tome second.]. 1811. Oeuvres de Gresset. Tome premier - tome second Reliure inconnue – 1811





Fragments d'une Épître à Monsieur Grand Maître de l'Ordre de Saint-Lazare

Fragments of an Epistle to Monsieur Grand Master of the Order of Saint Lazarus

Par Jean-Baptiste-Louis GRESSET

By Jean-Baptiste-Louis GRESSET Translated by Annette Scerri

Malgré votre auguste indulhence,
Je n'aurais point la confiance
Grand Prince, d'offrir à vos yeux
Cette foule de vers immense
Si c'était de ces vers pompeux
D'une monotone cadence,
Marchant gravement deux à deux
Et souvent dans leur consonnance
Solidairement ennuyeaux;
Ou du genre non moins heureux
De ces strophes à tout étage
Si favorables aux vapeurs,
Et dont se forme le nuage
De tant de rimes sans couleurs.

Despite your august indulgence,
I would not have the confidence 8
Grand Prince, to offer to your eyes
This multitude of verse
If it were these pompous verses
In monotonous pace,
Marching solemnly two to two
And often in their unison
Each in turn bored;
Not too pleasing
From these stanzas on any floor
So favorable to vapors,
And from which the cloud is formed
With many colourless rhymes.

J'ai cru, prince aimable, immortel, Que le ton simple et naturel D'une historiette légère Au froid bel-esprit actuel Assurément bien étrangère, Pourrait, Durant quelques moments, Vous intéresser et vous plaire Dans vos nobles délassements ... I believed, kind, immortal prince
That the simple and natural tone
Of a simple story
On cold-witted spirit
Certainly very foreign,
Could, For a few moments,
Interest you and please you
In your noble pastimes ...

Rendu par vos soins protecteurs Aux destins de sa source illustre , On Ordre heureux par vos faveurs, Made by your protective care
For the destiny of its illustrious source,
An Order rendered happy by your favour,

15

⁸ Alternate meaning: "trust"

Est régénéré dans son lustre. Sur les traces du Grand Henri, Et sur le sublime modèle Du monarque auguste et chéri Qui l'imite et nous le rappelé, Du sceau d'une grandeur nouvelle Vous marquez cet Ordre vanté Que la noble hospitalité,

La religion immortelle,
La généreuse humanité,
Depuis huit siècles ont guidé
Dans toutes les roules du zèle,
Et qui, sous un ciel infidèle,
Signalant sa fidélité,
Aux champs sanglants de la victoire,
Défendit toujours avec gloire
La croix sainte et la vérité.
Déjà sur la trace première
De ses plus nobles attributs,
Il renouvelé sa carrière,
Et marche aux antiques vertus
A votre brillante lumière. ...

Is regenerated in its sheen.
In the footsteps of Grand Henri,
And on the outstanding example
From the august and beloved monarch
Who imitates him and reminds us of him,
Seal of a new greatness
You honour this vaunted Order
What noble hospitality,

The immortal religion,
The generous humanity,
Have for eight centuries guided
In all the circles of zeal,
Which, under an unfaithful sky,
Signaling its loyalty,
To the bloody fields of victory,
With glory always defends
The Holy Cross and the truth.
Already on the first trace 9
Of his noblest attributes,
He renewed his career,
And walk to the ancient virtues
In your bright light....



⁹ Alternate meaning "paving the way"