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mark before the report is heard; so that it maketh a noise not by way of warning, but triumph. It is questionable whether the making of gunpowder be more profitable or more dangerous. The mills in my parish have been five times blown up within seven years, but blessed be God, without the loss of any one man's life."

Singular to say there is no documentary statement existing of any fatal explosions of gunpowder in Waltham Abbey mills for nearly a century after the earliest recorded account of their existence. The first fatal explosion is given in the old parish registers, under date October 4th, 1665—"Buried, Tho. Gutridg, kild with a Powder-mill;" and on the following day (5th) was "Buried, Edward Simmons Carpenter—so kild." The Simmonses were old residents in the town. The next entry is rendered peculiar by the omission of the word *by*, viz.:—"Buried, Peter Bennet, of y^e Town, killed y^e Powder Mills, Nov. y^e 27—1720."

Two hundred years ago, John Walton, a relative of Izaak Walton, the celebrated angler, resided in Waltham Abbey, and possessed the Gunpowder Mills in this town. On October 20th, 1675, he married, in the Abbey Church, Lydia Freeman. In the time of the local historian, John Farmer, John Walton was a gentleman of considerable substance and influence in the town; this may be gathered from the respect in which he was held by the historian, who was by profession an attorney, and consequently a wealthy man in his day. In the *preface* to the *History of Waltham Abbey*, by John Farmer, 1735, the author says—"I pay my first compliments to John Walton, Esq., to whom I am obliged, as for a long and beautiful series of favours on this and many other accounts, so in particular for his assiduity and goodness in obtaining me the liberty to take copies from the records in the Tower of London, of the

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time a minister (a certain Doctor of Divinity who held a special license for preaching both within and without our Established Churches), went several times on the Sunday afternoons and preached among the ruins to large congregations. May the like never happen again to our church, is the heart desiring prayer of the compiler, whose ancestors have worshipped within its walls for many generations." * The writer may, however, refer in this passage to the inconvenience experienced by the Parishioners a few years later, when extensive alterations were made in the Abbey Church, although it must be mentioned that Mr. Pickthall, the successor of Mr. Mullens, was then in residence.

On the arrival of the Rev. J. Mullens in October, 1801, the new minister proceeded to attend to the Registers which had been neglected during the vacancy. He carefully made good the omissions in the records, from memoranda left by the former Curate and from information supplied by the faithful Parish Clerk, Mr. John Carr. The last entry in the Register of Baptisms in the handwriting of Mr. Colnett is dated 23rd January, 1801. Thirteen baptisms appear to have been solemnized during his last illness, and his successor after recording the particulars added the following statement: "The above copied from the writings of the late curate Isaac Colnett, found subsequent to his death—what follows up to October 18th, 1801, from the handwriting of the Clerk. Various persons during that Period having performed the duty. *John Mullens*, present curate, October, 1801." This memorandum is followed by seventy-one entries, the first of which is dated March 15th, and then follows a similar statement, namely: "The above from May 15th copied from the handwriting of the Clerk on my taking Possession of the Curacy, October 25th, 1801, *John Mullens, A.B.*" The date *May 15th* is a clerical error, as the first of these entries in the Register is dated *March 15th*. Below the entries inserted at the close of the year he also adds the note: "The above have been duly entered as they appeared at my acceptance of the Curacy of Waltham Holy Cross, September 21st, 1801." In the parallel column the records of funerals were inserted and the entries after 28th November, 1800 (when Mr. Colnett officiated for the last time), until the 18th of the following October (when Mr. Mullens took possession), number fifty-six. The new Curate here also appended the note: "All the above copied from the writings of the Clerk found on my arrival October 25th, 1801. *John Mullens, A.B., Curate.*"

Three months after the death of Mr. Colnett a terrible explosion occurred at the Royal Gunpowder Factory, involving the loss of nine lives. The following account of this sad event was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1801: "April 18th, between three and four in the afternoon, the corning mill, at Waltham Abbey, blew up, with a great explosion which was sensibly felt all round the neighbourhood. Eight men were blown to pieces into the adjoining meadow, and four horses, much mangled, were left near the mill wheels; fragments of a ninth man were found on

the third day. This fatal accident is ascribed to the overheating of one of the gudgeons of the mills, and had nearly happened, a fortnight before. Three of the men have left families, and others only widows. One of these men was the substitute for another who had a narrow escape from a former explosion, and on this occasion had obtained leave of absence. The mill was worked the last time previous to a complete repair. The magazine of dry powder was not 200 yards distant and 400 tons (it must mean *barrels*) of powder had been removed from the mill in a boat not long before it blew up. Sixty-two years ago a similar explosion took place in the same buildings, when one of the men was so completely destroyed that only his clothes were found on Galley Hill." This explosion occurred on the Horse Mill Island in Waltham Marsh, and the names of the unfortunate victims were Henry Hodgson, Thomas Bilton, Richard Ricketts, John Bailey, John Lake, John Miles, Joseph Gibbs, Henry Martin and William Mead. It is said that their mutilated remains were interred together under one mound near the grave of the Rev. I. J. P. Colnett, which adjoins the East path of the Churchyard, but only one name is recorded in the Parish Register in an entry evidently inserted by the Clerk and now almost illegible. It reads as follows: "1801, April 22nd. Henry Martin, one of the eight men killed by the explosion in the Powder Mills on the 18th instant." The writer was probably not aware that nine men lost their lives on this occasion. The son and namesake of John Bailey who was born in the following October, six months after his father's violent death, eventually served the Parish as its last Beadle and occupied the office for many years. His grandson James, a young man of exemplary character, was engaged as Foreman at the Cam House, Lower Island, when the fatal explosion occurred on 13th December, 1893, and he and eight of his men lost their lives. The following entries, with reference to earlier explosions; also occur in our Registers: "Burials, 1665, October 4th. Tho. Guttridg, killd with a Powder Mill; Oct. 5th, Edward Simons, Carpenter, so killd"; "1694, March 6th. Robt. Sherbert, killd by ye Powder Mills"; "1720, November 27th. Peter Bennett of ye Town, killed (by) ye Powder Mills" "1727, May 8th. Francis Shadwick, accidentally blown up by Gunpowder." We do not however meet with any record of an explosion in 1739 as mentioned above in the extract from the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

(To be continued.)

J. H. STAMP, Curate.

22nd December, 1903.

WALTHAM ABBEY.

The *Daily Graphic* of 7th December, 1903, contained an interesting reference to "*Harold's Minster*, and the dangerous condition of the Tower," illustrated by three excellent sketches. In the opening lines the writer remarks: "If there is in the length and breadth

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time a minister (a certain Doctor of Divinity who held a special license for preaching both within and without our Established Churches), went several times on the Sunday afternoons and preached among the ruins to large congregations. May the like never happen again to our church, is the heart desiring prayer of the compiler, whose ancestors have worshipped within its walls for many generations." * The writer may, however, refer in this passage to the inconvenience experienced by the Parishioners a few years later, when extensive alterations were made in the Abbey Church, although it must be mentioned that Mr. Pickthall, the successor of Mr. Mullens, was then in residence.

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