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A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

EARLY MANUFACTURE

OF

GUNPOWDER

IN ENGLAND.

BY

WILLIAM HENRY HART, *L*

OF HER MAJESTY'S PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE,

MEMBER OF THE GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

LONDON:

W. H. ELKINS, 47, LOMBARD STREET.

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PREFACE.

The following pages, which contain a short investigation of the question as to when Gunpowder Mills were first established in this country, are the result of accident, rather than of design. I had occasion, in the course of a topographical enquiry, to extract from the Public Records every document relating to the Evelyn family, and in so doing, met with many of the early contracts for manufacturing Gunpowder, which the Evelyns entered into for supplying the government. I therefore thought that a collection of these and other documents on the same subject might not be uninteresting, particularly to the present manufacturers.

It is my intention, if the following remarks should meet with approval, to print a more complete collection of these documents, wherein I shall be enabled to introduce many additional particulars which, but for their length, I should have inserted here.

W. H. HART.

ALBERT TERRACE,
NEW CROSS,

October 16, 1855.



SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

EARLY MANUFACTURE OF GUNPOWDER.

The exact period when the important article of warfare, gunpowder, was first made use of by our ancestors, cannot now be determined; but from the testimony of various records as shewn by the Rev. Joseph Hunter in a paper printed in the *Archæologia*, volume 25, it is evident that it was used at the Battle of Cressy; for in an account rendered by John Cook, the clerk of the king's great wardrobe of the monies received and expended by him from the 22nd December, 19 Edward III., (1345), to the 31st January, 23 Edward III., (1349) it is stated that 912 pounds of saltpetre and 886 pounds of quick sulphur were supplied to the king for his guns.

On the 25th November, 1346, the king issued a writ, commanding that all the saltpetre and sulphur that was anywhere to be sold should be bought; the total amount obtained was 750 pounds of saltpetre and 310 pounds of quick sulphur.

In September 1347 another quantity was bought, 2021 pounds of saltpetre, and 466 pounds of quick sulphur.

At this period the manufacture of gunpowder would appear to have been quite in its infancy, for notwithstanding the king's anxiety to obtain as much as possible, the whole amount collected is perfectly puerile when compared to the large quantities which at the present day are made both for warlike and commercial purposes.

The conquest which was obtained at Cressy, doubtless owed much of its brilliancy to the use of these novel instruments of war, guns and gunpowder; and they could scarcely fail to be appreciated as a vast assistance in those contests which before were carried on with weapons of a ruder mould and less deadly powers.

In the time of Henry the Sixth an enterprising merchant of London, John Judde, who was skilled in the devising of warlike instruments, made at his own expense sixty guns called serpentines, "and also stuff for gunpowder of saltpetre and sulphur to the weight of twenty ton," which he offered to deliver to the treasurer for the king's use under certain conditions, in consideration of which good service, the king, on the 13th December, in the thirty-fifth-year of his reign, constituted him Master of the Ordnance for life.

It was not, however, till the latter end of the reign of Elizabeth, that public attention was drawn to the necessity of establishing the manufacture at home of this article, which before had been chiefly imported from foreign countries; it had hitherto been, as at the present time, an open trade; but the government being compelled, by the menacing attitude which Spain had assumed, to provide more efficient means of defence, commenced the granting of commissions for the manufacture of gunpowder, which of course constituted it a monopoly in the hands of whomsoever the government thought fit to entrust with the privilege.

The first establishment of gunpowder mills of any importance, appears to have been at Long Ditton, near Kingston in Surrey, by George Evelyn, grandfather of the celebrated Sir John Evelyn. He also had mills at Leigh Place, near Godstone, in the same county. The Evelyn family is said to have brought the art over from Flanders. The mills at Faversham, in Kent, were in operation as far back as the time of Elizabeth, but we cannot say which actually had the precedence as far as regards the date of their erection; suffice it to say, those of the Evelyn's at Godstone, though now extinct, were at that time of the greatest importance. There are still mills in the neighbourhood of Long Ditton, most probably on the site of Evelyn's, which were some time since in the possession of William Taylor, Esq.; but the property is now, I believe, in other hands.

In the particulars for Leases for the reign of Elizabeth, we find the following mention of "a tenement and mill, &c., called the gunpowder-mill, together with the wharf opposite the said tenement, containing by estimation in length one hundred feet, and in width forty-two feet, and a great pond, called the gunpowder-mill pond, in the occupation of Thomas Lee, deceased, and now of Francis Lee, his son, in Rotherhithe, near the Thames."

In one of the Burghley Papers, (Brit. Mus. Lansd. MSS. 58, art. 63) entitled "Commodities and Discommodities, as may grow by the making of peter," and dated 14th January, 1588, certain persons petition for a charter to seek and search for saltpetre, with other powers; and they offer to supply the queen with all the powder they can make at eight-pence the pound.

By letters patent, dated 28th January, 31 Elizabeth, (1589) the queen, in consideration of a great quantity of good corn-powder yearly to be made and delivered into the royal store within the Tower of London, granted to George Evelyn, Esq., Richard Hills, and John Evelyn, Gentlemen, licence and authority for the term of eleven years, to dig, open, and work for saltpetre within the realms of England and Ireland, and all other dominions where the same shall be found, as well within the queen's own lands and grounds, as those of her subjects, except the City of London and two miles distant from the walls of the same, and the Counties of York, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and the Bishopric of Durham; and this saltpetre was to be made into powder for the queen's service. (Patent Roll, 31 Eliz., part 8, m. 10.)

On the 26th April, 31 Elizabeth, George Constable, Esq., had similar licence to dig for saltpetre within the Counties of York, the City of York, Nottingham, Lancaster, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and the Bishopric of Durham, for the term of eleven years. (Patent Roll, 31 Eliz., part 15, m. 10.)

8th January, 32 Elizabeth, (1590) Thomas Robinson and Robert Robinson had a similar licence to dig for saltpetre within the Cities of London and Westminster, and within two miles from the walls of the City of London, or from the old palace of Westminster, for the term of ten years. (Patent Roll, 32 Eliz., part 20, m. 31.)

By a deed dated 15th May, 38 Elizabeth, (1596) the Robinsons assigned all their right in the royal licence to Robert Evelyn, who by deed dated 25th August, 41 Elizabeth, (1599) surrendered the same to the queen; and by the same deed George Evelyn, John Evelyn, and Richard Hills also surrendered their licence of 28th January, 31 Elizabeth. (Close Roll, 41 Eliz., part 29.)

By letters patent, dated 7th Sept, 41 Elizabeth, after reciting that John Evelyn, Esq., Richard Hardinge, Esq., Robert Evelyn, Gentleman, John Wrenham, Gentleman, and Symeon Furner, Gentleman, had undertaken to deliver

yearly into the store in the Tower of London, a greater quantity of good, perfect, and serviceable corn gunpowder meet and serviceable for cannon and caliver shot at a lower rate than before was paid, whereby the queen would not be driven to seek the said proportion of gunpowder out of any foreign countries, and that they had devised means of making saltpetre, whereby the excessive waste and spoil of woods and other inconveniences to the queen's subjects will be avoided, licence was granted to them for the term of ten years, to make and work for all and all manner of saltpetre and gunpowder within the realms of England and Ireland, and all other the queen's dominions, and to have the sole making of all manner of saltpetre and gunpowder, except in the County of York, the City of York, the Counties of Nottingham, Lancaster, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and the Bishopric of Durham. And they had similar licence for these excepted places, from the last day of April next ensuing the date of the patent, for the residue of the same term of ten years. (Patent Roll, 41 Eliz., part 4, m. 8]

An Indenture was entered into the same day, by which the patentees covenanted with the queen to deliver yearly during the term, one hundred lasts of good, perfect, and serviceable corn gunpowder, in this manner: monthly, eight lasts and eight hundred pounds weight; half of which to be caliver corn-gunpowder, and the other half to be cannon corn-gunpowder, at the price of seven-pence per pound. And they covenanted to have as much gunpowder, as together with her majesty's store should be sufficient for the service and defence of these realms, and besides that, to have as much as any persons should be willing to buy at ten-pence the pound, and not above. And, also, that they would during the term, within six months after notice, deliver twenty lasts of gunpowder as before, every month. (Patent Roll, 41 Eliz., part 4, m. 12; and Close Roll, 41 Eliz., part 11.)

The right which these patentees possessed of calling upon persons to provide carriage for conveying the saltpetre at certain rates, was soon called into question, as appears by a suit in the Exchequer, instituted by them, concerning a refusal to supply them with carriage.

The bill, after reciting the patent, "according to which her majesty's said grant your said orators did take upon them the making and working of the said saltpetre and gunpowder, and did and ever sithence have followed and

"attended the same, and did and have also ever sithence yearly delivered into her majesty's store within the Tower of London such quantity of good perfect and serviceable corn-gunpowder sufficiently liked and allowed by those to whom the allowance thereof did appertain and at such times price and rule as they your said Orators did upon the granting of the said letters patent undertake and became bound to her majesty in bonds with great penalties to deliver, and have also ever sithence furnished her majesty's subjects with sufficient store of good perfect and serviceable gunpowder for the use and provision of her highness' said subjects and at such prices or under as were limited to them for the same as aforesaid" states, that the plaintiffs appointed Richard Reson and John Browne as deputies, to search and dig for saltpetre in every city, liberty, and place in the County of Kent, and John Duke and Richard Hill, to do the like in Sussex, and to have and take carriages after the rate of four-pence per mile, for every cart or wain load, after the rate of twenty hundred to the load and thereupon:—

"The said John Browne on the 12th October 1602 repaired to one — Weddingham Constable of the Hundred of Faversham in the said County of Kent and made him privy of the effect of the said letters patent and of the said deputation and of the great necessity of present expedition in that behalf, and required his assistance for the having and levying of four carriages to carry a copper and other vessels necessary for making of saltpetre from Faversham aforesaid to Canterbury, being about seven miles distant for making of the said saltpetre, the said Weddingham for the more expedition of the said service desired the said Browne to go with him to two or three places where there were sufficient carriages whereunto the said Browne condescended, and went on the day and year above said to the house of one Edmund Fagg Gentleman amongst others, near Faversham in the Hundred aforesaid who had a competent waggon and all furniture thereunto belonging for carriage, and then and there the said Weddingham charged the said Fagg to send his waggon to Faversham on the morrow to serve the queen, the said Fagg demanded whereabouts, the Constable answered for the saltpetre man, whereunto the said Fagg answered he had other business for his waggon, the said Browne did then and there tell the said Fagg that he thought there was no private business of such importance as the

"making of saltpetre the provision whereof was for the defence of the kingdom, whereunto the said Fagg, well-knowing of the said letters patents and deputation and the present necessity, very contemptuously answered that he had dung to carry; the said Browne desired him to speak advisedly, the said Fagg answered that he was advised well enough his waggon should not stir about any such business; to which the said Browne replied that if the said Fagg were the queen's subject then he the said Browne did take it that the said Fagg was liable to the said service; the said Fagg answered (so scornfully as it may be disputable whether he meant he were the Queen's subject or no) that indeed he could not deny but that he was her subject; then said the said Browne that except the said Fagg were freed by special words he was to do as other the queen's liege people did in such cases; the said Fagg demanded what he should have paid him for that which was required and said that for five pounds his waggon should go but not one penny under. To which the said Browne answered him the said Fagg that there should so much be paid as her majesty offered to her loving subjects by her highness' said letters patents, an exemplification whereof the said Browne offered presently to shew to the said Fagg, who very contemptuously said he neither cared for the said Browne nor for the said letters patents; the said Browne desired the said Fagg not to care for him and said that if her majesty out of her princely care should not provide that this munition should be had (which was done with saving to her majesty and ease to her highness' subjects) he the said Fagg and a number more should scarcely sleep quietly in their beds. To which the said Fagg desired the said Browne to take the said Fagg's answer and to take no care for him, for he would answer it and care for himself, and so went his way and utterly disobeyed the said commission or letters patent and the service omitted very arrogantly and contemptuously and to the ill example of others."

Browne, then, on the 23rd of October, 1602, repaired to Anthony Deale, deputy to the Mayor of Faversham, and desired his assistance; but Deale refused, and charged Fagg not to provide carriage, stating that without a letter of attendance from Dover Castle he would neither obey Her Majesty's Letters Patent, nor any other commission.

The bill then states that the plaintiffs had appointed the said John Duke and Richard Hill for the same purpose in

the county of Sussex; and they thereupon acquainted the Constable of the Hundred of Buttingshill, near Lewes, with the effect of the patent and deputation, and required him to charge certain carts for carriage of wood out and from that Hundred, to Lewes, provided ready for the making of saltpetre; and the Constable thereupon charged John Beetch, Robert Chatfield, Richard West, Richard Beetch, George Lushmore, and John West, inhabitants of that Hundred, and required them to carry, each according to his strength, wood for the service aforesaid unto the Town of Lewes, being four miles distant, taking the remuneration provided by the letters patent, but they all refused to comply.

The plaintiffs in the month of September last had two tons of liquor fit for making saltpetre, ready made at a place called Ferle, in Sussex, being four miles from Lewes; and Duke and Hill, the plaintiff's deputies, required Robert Alis, High Constable of the Hundred of Totnore to provide carriage for the same from Ferle to Lewes, where the plaintiffs vessels for making saltpetre were; but he delayed from time to time until the liquor was quite spoiled, and finally refused to provide carriage: he also in September gave open warning in the parish church of Ferle, to the parishioners, that none of them should serve the Queen's Majesty about the making of saltpetre, without special license of the Justices of the Peace of that county.

The plaintiffs then, after stating the inconvenience to the crown, and the damage suffered by themselves, pray, not only a writ of subpœna against the said Fagg and Deale, John Beetch, Robert Chatfield, Richard West, Richard Beetch, George Lushmore, John West, and Robert Alis; but also that they may be punished and fined. (Bills and Answers in the Exchequer. Elizabeth, Kent. No. 126 A.)

The before-mentioned patent and indenture of 7th September, 41 Elizabeth, were vacated on 18th October, 2 James I., by John Evelyn, Richard Hardinge, and Robert Evelyn, who on the same day obtained a fresh license for the term of twenty-one years, to make and work for saltpetre and gunpowder in England and Ireland for the King's use, and the defence of the kingdom. (Patent Roll, 2 James, Part 7, m. 25.)

By an indenture of the same date as this last patent, Evelyn, Hardinge, and Evelyn covenanted with the King to deliver every year into the store within the Tower of London one hundred and twenty lasts of good, perfect, and

serviceable corn-gunpowder, in the following manner:—Ten lasts monthly, one half to be caliver corn-powder, and the other half cannon corn-powder, for which they were to receive eight pence per pound; and they were to make and deliver into the store any further quantities of corn-gunpowder, if required for the King's service, one half caliver, and the other cannon-powder. For this additional powder they were to be paid ten-pence a pound; and the rest of the powder over and above the before mentioned quantities, they might sell to any person at ten-pence, and not above, or export the same. (Patent Roll, 2 James, Part 7, m. 20.)

This patent was revoked on the 17th December, 4 James I. (Patent Roll, 4 James, Part 24, m. 13.)

By letters patent, dated 24th January, 18 James I., (1621) after reciting that there was in the kingdom great quantity of the mine of saltpetre, "but by reason of the many abuses of sundry inferior persons that have had the dealing in making of saltpetre we have been so much troubled with many and frequent complaints of the said abuses and misdemeanours that we had once determined to make trial to furnish our store from the parts beyond the seas howbeit finding that the same cannot be performed wholly from foreign parts without much inconvenience to our-self and our kingdoms we have thought it expedient not to exclude the importation of such provision from the parts beyond the seas, and yet to continue the making thereof within our said realms and dominions using such vigilance and care in the ordering and managing thereof as may best tend to the reformation and repressing of those enormities and abuses wherewith such inferior persons did most infest our loving subjects," the King granted to George Marquis of Buckingham, High Admiral of England, George Lord Carew, Master of the Ordnance, and Sir Lionel Cranfield, Knight, Master of the Court of Wards and liveries, license to make and work for saltpetre and gunpowder. (Patent Roll, 18 James I, Part 4, No. 3.)

16th January, 20 James was issued a proclamation which, after reciting that great inconvenience had arisen from the sale of defective and weak gunpowder, commanded that no persons make any gunpowder in England or Wales of any saltpetre but that made by warrant of his majesty's commission; and that no saltpetre man transport beyond the seas or sell any saltpetre but to the king's powder-maker, and that no saltpetre be bought of any but the king's powder-maker. He was to receive ten-pence per pound for gunpowder sold by him, and all gunpowder was to be proved and allowed

by the sworn proof-master, and marked by him, for which he would be paid the fee of six-pence the barrel. "The marks of the proof-master whereby the goodness of the powder may be understood if the barrel be marked with three crowns on the stave heads it is of the best and principal receipt of fine powder which is made; if with two crowns it is new strong and good powder for great ordnance and may serve for muskets also but if you find the cask marked with OW and one crown then it is old powder new wrought yet strong good and fit for great ordnance for one year's service at the least." (Patent Roll, 20 James I., part 16, No. 18 dorso.)

An indenture dated the 29th July, 21 James I, between the king on the one part and Thomas Warricke, Esq., Peter Sparke, Gentleman, and Michael Townshend and John Fells of London, Merchants, of the other part, recites that "whereas the making of saltpetre within his majesty's realms and dominions is a great safety and benefit to his majesty and his subjects in general, for that it effecteth and assureth a certain provision thereof for the furnishing of his majesty's stores for the strengthening defence and benefit at all times and from time to time of his majesty's said realms and dominions, which so needful provisions in time of necessity being to be had from foreign parts are not to be obtained but at the pleasure of other princes at unreasonable rates and prices, and the same being so obtained may happen to be intercepted or by contrary winds hindered in time of need or utterly lost by shipwreck or such casualties on the seas and if no such hazard were yet the same is not usually to be had but for ready money to be transported and paid for the same whereby the treasure of his majesty's realms by transportation of the same should be diminished and other foreign kingdoms thereby enriched. And whereas, for making of the saltpetre which hath been formerly and now is made in his majesty's said realms and dominions, it hath been found a matter of mere necessity to dig houses, cellars, vaults, stables, dovehouses, and such like places, wherewith divers of his majesty's subjects have found themselves grieved, and also for conveying the liquors, vessels, tubs, ashes, and other things needful for that business and employment, from place to place, sundry carts and carriages have been used to be taken, by which, although in a service of such importance it is necessary to be done rather than the service should suffer any let or hindrance, nevertheless the same hath

"occasioned many complaints, not only to the Justices of the Peace in most part of his majesty's dominions, but oftentime to his majesty and his privy council." And reciting that the said Thomas Warwicke, Peter Sparke, Michael Townshend and John Fells had discovered a new way of making and refining saltpetre without digging up of houses, &c., and had undertaken to make sufficient without fetching any from abroad.

"And that the said saltpetre so to be made should be as good and perfect as any hath formerly been, and shall be vented at cheaper and easier rates than formerly his majesty or his loving subjects have paid for the same, which said saltpetre as his majesty is informed is to be or may be made of an artificial mixture or composition of chalk, all sorts of limestone and lime, marl, divers minerals, and other nitrous mines and other kind of ordinary earth, street dirt, or rubbish, stable dung, emptying of vaults, the excrements of all living creatures, their bodies putrified, all vegetables putrified, and rotted, or the ashes of them, and these or any of these mixed together in proportion as they may be most conveniently had, and shall be found most useful in such places where the said works shall be thought fit to be erected, which said artificial mixture or composition of any or all the foresaid ingredients is oftentimes moistened with urine of men and beasts, petre, or nitrous wells, and springs, and all other concrete juices and blood of all sorts as can be gotten, and shall be fit and convenient for it, and divers times turned and removed, by which means the mixture in time digesteth, fermenteth, and ripeneth, from whence there is engendered the seed or mine of saltpetre which afterwards is to be extracted with common water, urine, the water of petre or nitrous wells, and springs, and then either breathed away in the sun or air, or stoved with a gentle heat or boiled with a stronger fire with his proper additament of ashes, lime, and such like for separating the common salt and other mixtures naturally growing in the liquor, and afterwards refined into perfect saltpetre."

The king then granted to the patentees licence to exercise their invention for the term of twenty-one years, and that they might set up houses for preparing the artificial earth, &c. They covenanted not to dig any houses, cellars, or other places, or to take, or carry away any earth, chalk, or limestone to be found in any commons or waste grounds, whereby any persons employed under his majesty's commission of the 24th January, in the 18th year of his reign,

might be prevented from having such usual materials as theretofore had been accustomed to be used for making saltpetre; or do anything whereby the saltpetre works then in use should be hindered.

They covenanted within one year to erect works sufficient to make the yearly quantity of one hundred and fifty tons of good, perfect, refined, and serviceable saltpetre, and to keep the works in good repair for making the same yearly quantity during the rest of the term, and so long after as the king should require. They were to deliver into the king's storehouse, at the rate of fifty-five shillings per cwt., twelve tons and a half of saltpetre every month, and any further quantities required, but not exceeding in the whole five hundred tons a year. (Close Roll, 22 James I., part 20, No. 3.)

December 26th, 22 James I., (1624), was issued a proclamation, commanding that no dovehouses or cellars be paved, except that part of the cellars where the wine and beer is laid, in order that the growth of saltpetre might not be obstructed. (Patent Roll, 22 James I., part 4, No. 9 dorso.)

By an Indenture dated 1st July, 22 James I., (1624), George, Duke of Buckingham, Lord High Admiral; George, Lord Carew, Master of the Ordnance; and Sir Richard Weston, Knight, Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the king's behalf, covenanted with John Evelyn, the younger, of Godstone, county of Surrey, Esquire, that he should for three years, from the 1st day of April last, have the sole working and converting into gunpowder all saltpetre obtained within England by virtue of any royal commission to be granted.

Evelyn then covenanted to provide a storehouse in Southwark for receiving and storing all such saltpetre as should be made, and also, that he would receive all the saltpetre which the saltpetre men should make, paying them £3 3s. 4d. for every hundred weight. This Saltpetre, he was to double refine and convert into gunpowder, of which he was to deliver yearly into the royal store, in the Tower of London, two hundred and forty lasts, every last to contain twenty-four barrels, and every barrel one hundred pounds, at eight pence half-penny per pound; in consideration that he would be at great expense in erecting new mills for carrying on this manufacture, the sum of £2000 was delivered to him by way of imprest, to be kept by him for three years.

From this period many of the saltpetre commissions are to be found in Rymer's Fædera, together with proclamations on the same subject; it will therefore be sufficient to notice those which have not been printed by him.

By an indenture dated 26th April, 2 Charles I. (1626) made between the King on the one part, and Sir John Brooke, Knight, and Thomas Russell, Esq., of the other part, after reciting that there was never yet made since the first making of saltpetre in this kingdom, being about the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a third part of the saltpetre required for the service of the kingdom; but the King as well as his subjects were forced to procure the same from Barbary, France, Poland, Hamburgh, and other places, in Germany; and that Brooke and Russell had discovered a new invention of making saltpetre, whereby the King should have whatever quantity was required; the King granted to them license to exercise this invention for the term of twenty-one years. They were to make three hundred tons of saltpetre yearly, during the term, and so long after as the King should require; and not to sell saltpetre to any person until the three hundred tons were delivered into the store in the Tower. They were to be paid £3 3s. 4d. for every hundred weight; and if at any time during the term they should erect any more works than should be sufficient for making the yearly quantity of three hundred tons, they might sell the overplus to any of the King's subjects, on paying to the King for every ton so sold, double the usual custom for importing saltpetre. (Patent Roll, 2 Charles I., Part 17, No. 17.)

The East India Company had imported great quantities of saltpetre, and had erected gunpowder mills in the county of Surrey; but being in an inconvenient situation, they were pulled down by the King's direction. The Company then petitioned for leave to erect mills in the counties of Surrey, Kent, and Sussex, or any or either of them, and accordingly by letters patent dated the 17th August, 2 Charles I. (1626) they were empowered to do so, and also to convert into powder all such saltpetre as should be imported by them from foreign parts, and to employ the same powder to their own use, or to the use of any of the King's subjects. (Patent Roll, 2 Charles I., Part 21, No. 31.)

28th April, 5 Charles I. (1629) the King granted to Richard Lord Weston, High Treasurer of England, and others, commission to work for saltpetre. (Patent Roll, 5 Charles I., Part 8, No. 7 dorso), and on the 18th April, 10 Charles I. (1634) a similar commission was granted to Richard Earl of Portland, and others. (Patent Roll, 10 Charles I., Part 9, No. 2. dorso.)

By a commission dated 8th March, 12 Charles I., (1637) directed to the Bishop of London and others, after reciting that the king was minded to sell all such gunpowder as should not be required for the royal service; and that a contract was lately made on the king's behalf, with Samuel Cordwell and John Collins, for the sole working and making into gunpowder of all saltpetre, either made in England or imported, by which they were bound for the term of thirteen years to deliver all the gunpowder they should make, into the king's store at 7½d. per pound; power was granted to the Commissioners to issue such quantities of gunpowder from the king's store, for sale to any person as they should think fit at the price of one shilling and six-pence the pound. (Patent Roll, 12 Charles I., part 2, No. 19 dorso.)

A commission dated 25th April, 13 Charles I., (1637), after reciting that grievances had arisen from the promiscuous sale of gunpowder, Mountjoy, Earl of Newport, and others, were authorised to make choice of and license persons, who were desirous of buying and receiving gunpowder from any of the royal magazines, and retailing the same to other persons. No others, but licensed persons were to buy or sell gunpowder by retail; and no gunpowder was to be sold but that bought out of the royal stores. The prices to be the same as provided by the proclamation of 20th February last. One hundred and fifty lasts were always to be retained in the royal magazines for the service of the country. (Patent Roll, 13 Charles I., part 30, No. 7 dorso.)

7th June following, was granted another commission to the Bishop of London and others, giving them license to dig for saltpetre, and to make the same into gunpowder for the king's service, with powers similar to those contained in the commission of 18th April, 10 Charles I. (Patent Roll, 13 Charles I., part 30, No. 3 dorso.)

By letters patent, dated 6th November, 13 Charles I., (1637), after reciting the Indenture of 1st July, 22 James I.,* and also, that John Evelyn, as well by one former Indenture dated the 21st April, 19 James I., as also since the said three years expired in the first recited Indenture, had entered into several other contracts with others, on the king's behalf, for the making and delivering of gunpowder into the royal stores, "in all which we have received good satisfaction of the faithful and honest dealing of the said John Evelyn;" he was discharged of the £2000 in consider-

* Vide ante.

ation of his having released the king of £989 owing for gunpowder. (Patent Roll, 13 Charles I., part 17, No. 5.)

17th March, 16 Charles II., (1663,) was issued a proclamation prohibiting the exportation of saltpetre for three months

15th June, 18 Charles II., (1666,) a commission was granted to John Lord Berkeley, Baron of Stratton; and Sir John Duncombe, Knight; Thomas Chicheley, Esquire, commissioners for the execution of the office of ordnance; William Legg, Lieutenant of the ordnance; John Evelyn, of Deptford Strond, Esquire; Edward Sherborne, Esquire, clerk of the ordnance; and Jonas Moore, Esquire, to dig and work for saltpetre, and make the same into gunpowder for the king's service; and this commission was published by a proclamation, dated 16th July following, which commanded all mayors, bailiffs, constables, and others, to aid in its execution. (Patent Roll, 18 Charles II., part 4, No. 6; and part 5, No. 3 dorso.)

22nd July, 1689, was issued another proclamation prohibiting the exportation of saltpetre.

By letters patent dated 29th October, 1692, after reciting that William Tindall and Thomas Cox, Esqs., on behalf of themselves and others, had represented that they had discovered new ways of making saltpetre in great quantities, and had besought the king to incorporate them to carry on their invention, granted that "our trusty and well beloved subjects, Richard Earl of Belmont in our kingdom of Ireland, Peregrine Bertie, Phillip Bertie Esqs., sons of our right trusty and right well beloved cousin and councillor Robert Earl of Lindsey, Sir John Huband, Baronet, Sir Nicholas Pelham, Sir John Bucknall, Knights, William Gulston, William Tindall, Thomas Cox, Rupert Brown, Richard Dayrell, William Barnesby, John Hoskyns, Esqs., John Seger Widenfelt, Charles Cox, Thomas Malyn, John Sherman, Patrick Gordon, Samuel Antrim, Jonathan Smith, Gentlemen, Thomas Dawson, and James West Merchants and all such others as shall hereafter be admitted and made free of the company herein-after mentioned, shall for ever hereafter be and be called one body corporate and politic, in deed, and in name, by the name of the Governor and company for making and refining of saltpetre within the kingdoms of England and Ireland and the dominions thereunto belonging we do by these presents, for us, our heirs and successors make, erect, ordain, establish, constitute and declare, one body corporate, and politic, in deed, and in name, to have continuance for ever."

They were to sell and deliver into the office of the ordnance, two hundred tons of the best white saltpetre, duly refined, within one year after the date of the patent, and in every year afterwards, such quantities, not exceeding one thousand tons in any one year, as should be required by the ordnance at the price of £70 a ton, in case it bore that price in the market, and if not, then at the market price.

They were also to pay yearly, during the continuance of their grant to the Treasurer of the Navy, £1000 towards the relief and maintenance of maimed, aged, and decayed seamen, until a hospital should be built for them; after the erection of which, the money would go towards the support of the hospital.

It is rather remarkable, that notwithstanding the importance of this charter of incorporation, I have not met with any mention of it in any of the works on the subject of gunpowder; nor do I know when this company was dissolved, or the charter surrendered; it is not in existence now.

It is not my intention, at the present, to trace this subject further; the documents which I have cited will, I think, decidedly prove that the manufacture of gunpowder in this country, on any large scale, commenced as we have seen, in the reign of Elizabeth; a point which has often been made the subject of discussion, but which I trust my investigation will set at rest.