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# THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

by

HUGH ROSS WILLIAMSON

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## APPENDIX II

### *Gunpowder*

One of the mysteries connected with the plot is the mystery of the gunpowder itself. 'From the moment of the "discovery", the discovered gunpowder disappears from history.'<sup>1</sup> As has already been noted, the Ordnance accounts of the stores for this period are missing.

On November 27th, Lake wrote to Cecil that the King had commanded him 'to put you in mind of one thing in the examination whereof he does not remember that you are yet cleared. That is, that where at Lambeth at the house whither the powder was brought by the porters, there was a young man that received it, which His Majesty and you at first conceived to be Winter, but since, as His Highness judges, could not be so, because the examinations make mention that that young man had no hair on his face, which is otherwise in Winter. He would therefore know whether you have yet found who was the receiver of the powder, or if it have not been enquired of, by reason of the multitude of other things, that you would bestow labour to discover it.'<sup>2</sup>

There is no other mention of the gunpowder, apart from a passing reference in the *Politician's Catechism* (1658) which states that 'the barrels wherein the powder was are kept as relics, and were often shown to the King and his posterity that they might not entertain the least thought of clemency toward the Catholic religion'.

About every other matter, there was considerable inquiry—about the conspirators' lodgings and associates, about the boatmen, carpenters, tradesmen and porters who worked for them. Inquiries were even made as to where the iron bars laid on top of the barrels were purchased. 'But concerning the gunpowder, no question appears ever to have been asked, whence it came or who furnished it. Yet this would appear to

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be a point at least as important as the rest, and if it was left in absolute obscurity, the inference is undoubtedly suggested that it was not wished to have questions raised. It may be added that no mention is discoverable of the augmentation of the royal stores by so notable a contribution as this would have furnished.<sup>3</sup>

Though there is some discrepancy as to the amount of gunpowder which the plotters were alleged to have procured, the lowest estimate (which is accepted by Gardiner) is a last and a half.\* This amounts to a quarter of the entire amount of gunpowder stored in Dublin Castle at the height of the Irish wars. Thus, on any showing, the conspirators' acquisition was considerable.

Gunpowder, which had been proclaimed a Government monopoly in 1601, was stored in the White Tower<sup>4</sup> and was under the control of the Earl of Devonshire as Master-General of Ordnance, with Cecil's intimate friend, Carew of Clopton (he who had let his house to Rookwood) as Lieutenant-General. Devonshire and Carew had campaigned together in Ireland where Devonshire (then Lord Mountjoy) had subjugated the country of which he was appointed Lord Deputy in succession to Essex, while Carew was made President of Munster. Also associated with them in friendship and in their Irish career was Sir Henry Brouncker, who had married one of Monteagle's sisters, Ann. He was appointed President of Munster in succession to Carew in the summer of 1604.

Brouncker, a creature of Cecil's, had for many years farmed the customs of wine imported into Ireland and had learned, in that way, much of the underground communications with Spain. He was an energetic persecutor of Catholics and when he succeeded Carew to office proceeded with such severity that, however agreeable to Cecil, it caused the King to remark that 'his zeal was more than was required in a governor, however allowable in a private man'.<sup>5</sup>

Brouncker died in 1607, leaving a son, William, aged 22, who had been at Oxford during the time of the Plot; and the subsequent activities of this young man in the matter of gunpowder are, considering his connections, of peculiar interest. One of Sir Henry's last letters to Cecil, four months

\* A last contained twenty-four barrels. Each barrel held 100 lb.

## *Gunpowder*

before his death, had vowed William to Cecil's service,<sup>6</sup> and four years later, both William and his widowed mother, Monteagle's sister, were petitioning Cecil, she for money still due for her late husband's services, he for a warrant to investigate the disappearance of gunpowder from the Royal stores.

The demand has all the appearance of blackmail, since it was described as 'extravagant' by Lake, and when William thereupon threatened to take his suggestion to the courts, he was given the warrant—with the proviso that the years to be covered by the investigation were from 1578 to 1604.<sup>7</sup>

There is no need to emphasize the strangeness of this transaction—the nephew of Monteagle, son of the associate of the man in charge of the gunpowder in the Tower in 1604 and 1605, being allowed to investigate the leakage of gunpowder up to the exact point where that leakage became notorious. Taken in conjunction with the fact that the records have disappeared and with the character of William Brouncker—he eventually bought an Irish peerage for £1,200 and swore the same day that he had not a shilling left to pay for his dinner<sup>8</sup>—it suggests, at least, that the Government were well enough aware how and where the conspirators procured their gunpowder.

Further than this, it is impossible to go, though the Brouncker episode proves that the gunpowder account could be checked with accuracy and thus makes the fact that they are 'missing' the more suspicious.

## Notes

29. Gerard: *Narrative*, p. 290. He had the description from an eye-witness who 'was glad to give twelvecence only to stand upon a wall'.
30. Gerard: *Narrative*, p. 295.
31. Casaubon: *Epistolae*, p. 420.
32. Morris: *Life of Gerard*, clxxxiv.

## Epilogue

1. Gardiner: *History*, i, 287.
2. *Statutes of the Realm*, iv., 1071 ff. The Acts are printed in J. R. Tanner: *Constitutional Documents of the Reign of James I*, pp. 83-104.

## Appendix I—The Authenticity of Thomas Winter's Confession

1. 12th November 1605. P.R.O., S.P.Dom.
2. 21st November 1605. Hatfield MSS., xvii., p. 502.
3. Gerard: *Thomas Winter's Confession and the Gunpowder Plot*, p. 11.
4. Gardiner: *History of England*, i, 248 n.
5. 26th November 1605. Hatfield MSS., xvii, p. 511.

## Appendix II—Gunpowder

1. Gerard: *What was the Gunpowder Plot?* p. 137
2. Sir Thomas Lake to Salisbury: 27th November 1605 (Hatfield MSS., xvii, 516).
3. Gerard: *What was the Gunpowder Plot?* p. 135.
4. Lord Carew to Salisbury: 31st August 1606 (Hatfield MSS., xviii, 268).
5. R. Bagwell: *Ireland under the Stuarts* (1909), i, 23.
6. Brouncker to Salisbury: 14th February 1607. (C.S.P. relating to Ireland, James I.)
7. C.S.P.Dom., James I: 1611-18, pp. 10, 13, 17, 99.
8. Pepys' *Diary*: 29th January 1667.

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