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REPLY

TO THE

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE OF WAREHOUSES

OF THE

EAST INDIA COMPANY,

ON THE SUBJECTS OF

SALTPETRE AND GUNPOWDER.

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MOST RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED TO THE

RIGHT HON. THE LORDS OF THE COMMITTEE OF PRIVY COUNCIL FOR TRADE,

BY THE GUNPOWDER MAKERS OF LONDON.

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L O R D S :

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[PRICE ONE-SHILLING.]

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**T**HE London MANUFACTURERS of GUNPOWDER having been grossly and unjustifiably attacked, in a printed Report from a COMMITTEE of WAREHOUSES of the EAST INDIA COMPANY, in terms which tend to injure their characters, both as manufacturers and merchants; they humbly presume to request the indulgence of your Lordships to a plain, but direct, refutation of every charge which the COMPANY have thought proper to bring against them.

The Report is stated to arise "in consequence of a Memorial presented to your Lordships by the MANUFACTURERS of GUNPOWDER, and *other commodities made from Saltpetre.*" Whereas the fact is, and it is worthy of remark, that notwithstanding *other Dealers* in Saltpetre, by Memorial, July 16, 1792, petitioned your Lordships, the Manufacturers of Gunpowder alone, are the seeming objects of the indignation of the EAST INDIA COMPANY.

The apparent reason of this unwarrantable attack upon the *private concerns*, and the *public character* of the MANUFACTURERS of GUNPOWDER, appears to be, because they have with great submission, presumed, from time to time, to state to your Lord-

ships the peculiar grievances they have been forced to submit to, in consequence of the improper exertion of the COMPANY'S monopolizing power in the article of Saltpetre; and your Lordships having, in your wisdom and discernment, grounded on the best sources of information, thought proper to recommend the business in question to the consideration of Parliament,

Therefore the resentment of the COMPANY is now directed against the MANUFACTURERS of GUNPOWDER, while the WHOLE LEGISLATURE is indirectly charged with becoming accessaries to their misconduct, from having passed an Act, as the Report states, "Laying restrictions injurious both to the Company and the Public, and tending only to the private advantage of —from ten to twenty individuals."—These are their own ingenuous words.

How far the individuals, thus wrongfully charged, ever had the effrontery to dictate a line of conduct to your Lordships—how much they were concerned in framing, or even knowing the Act in question, till it was brought into the House of COMMONS, and what weight they could possibly have in influencing the deliberations of that House—they submit to the knowledge and reflection of your Lordships.

It is farther asserted, in the *printed* REPORT, that the MANUFACTURERS are dissatisfied with that ACT of PARLIAMENT; which, the REPORT says, was passed "for their private advantage," and where the ingratitude, thus stated, must be most ungrateful indeed. But the truth is, that so far from being dissatisfied with the Act, they entertain a proper, and a just sense of your Lordships' attention, and of the relief which the Legislature has endeavoured to afford them.

Their

Their dissatisfaction arises from the intentions of the LEGISLATURE being ~~wholly frustrated~~ ever since that ACT was passed, as will appear by the following Statement; but whether it may proceed, as the Company declare, "from the unsettled state of affairs in Europe," or, what is more probable, from the neglect of the Company in not providing themselves with a sufficient quantity of Saltpetre—the MANUFACTURERS do not pretend to decide.

The observations which first follow, and which they respectfully submit to your Lordships, chiefly confine themselves to

#### THE ARTICLE OF SALTPETRE.

The Company would gladly impress the Public with an idea, that selling the article on the terms intended by the ACT would be a loss to them. The various calculations in your Lordships' possession, the Manufacturers trust, are a positive proof to the contrary. Yet notwithstanding this with, and as if to put an immediate negative on their own statement, several of the DIRECTORS have, at different times, declared it would be a *wise measure* "to make London the grand depot for Saltpetre," and to effect which proper purpose, they assured the COMMISSIONERS, that instructions had actually been sent to the Factors in CALCUTTA to put *five thousand* bags on board *each ship* in lieu of three thousand, the usual quantity: and then, the result of this assurance, and this order, is somewhat curious—the only ships, viz. the GANGES, the EUROPA, and GENERAL GODDARD, arrived from Bengal this season, substitute Sugar, and come home without any Saltpetre at all!

The Report then states boldly and short—"that whether the price of Saltpetre be 80*l.* or 31*l.* per ton—the real consump-

tion by the Makers of Gunpowder will be nearly the same." To avoid trouble, the pleasantest contradiction is that of the DIRECTORS *themselves*; who, in the Appendix, No. 2 and 3, very kindly take pains to prove by figures, how much they are mistaken. For it is to be noted, that the first reduction in the price of Powder took place in the year 1783, and the quantity exported in that year is in the proportion of three to one. From that period the increased export is progressive, and in the years 1789 and 1790, when the prices were at the lowest, that same *unfortunate Appendix* proves, that the exportation was far greater than in any recited in that account. What the exportation may be increased to, when the petre can be bought at thirty-one shillings per hundred (*the manifest intention of the Legislature*) the consumers have not yet had the opportunity of trying. Why they have had no such opportunity is—that the quantity put up has been so small, that the number of bidders have upheld the price to the great injury of the Manufacturers and the Public, who have by these means, as the Report states, "never been able to participate in the advantages they had reason to expect from the hoped-for reduction in the price of "Saltpetre," for although the duty paid by the COMPANY, amounting to 7s. 9d. per cwt. was reduced to 3d. only, in September, 1791, in consequence of the Consumers' application, yet from the unhappy Appendix, No. 3, it appears, that notwithstanding Petre was put up on the first of September, 1791, and at each succeeding sale, at thirty-one shillings, as compelled by PARLIAMENT; the COMPANY, from a larger quantity not being put up, alone received the benefit.

| THE PROOF <i>Vide ibidem</i> <i>Appendix, No. 3.</i> |      |   |
|--|------|---|
| 1791. September Sale                                 |      | Average of the Sale<br>received by the Company, |
| put up at  | - 31 | £. 2 5 0  |
| 1792. March,   |      |   |
| put up   | - 31 | 2 11 6  |
| September,   |      |   |
| put up   | - 31 | 3 7 10  |

The MANUFACTURERS see with pleasure from the COMMITTEE'S Report, "that Saltpetre is very abundant, and very cheap at Bengal, indeed in no other part of the world so cheap." This, it might be imagined, would lessen the Company's fears of losing the commodity. And again they add, "but whatever establishment the military governments of Europe have hitherto made, to procure a supply, the demand in time of war exceeding general calculation, the military governments have constantly been under the necessity of having recourse to the powers in amity with them—particularly the Dutch."

The answer on the part of the Manufacturers is this: Although HIS MAJESTY'S Ministers in time of war, very properly prohibit the exportation of Gunpowder, Saltpetre, &c. &c. yet when justified to what purpose they are to be applied, they grant permission for so doing. Besides, till very lately, GREAT BRITAIN has been in profound peace, while many other powers on the Continent were engaged in war, and were supplied largely from Great Britain, notwithstanding the Report states, "it was merely accidental and not worth notice."

The

The MANUFACTURERS are indeed ready to allow, that the supply of foreign markets has been proportionably small to what it would have been, had the ACT of PARLIAMENT operated with its full effect. But a reference to the CUSTOM-HOUSE books will prove, that the "policy of the Nation does not decidedly check " all Exportation whatever, when the article is in demand," and they presume, does away the insidious reflection thrown out by the COMMITTEE, "that the Manufacturers have a different object in " view, than that of a fair competition with foreigners."

The aspersion, "that the African ships proceed to parts on the Continent for the purpose of avoiding the enormous prices exacted from them at home," will, they flatter themselves, appear an unjustifiable calumny, when it is known, there are several large and extensive Powder-Mills, at or near LIVERPOOL, BRISTOL, KENDAL in Westmoreland, and other places totally unconnected with, and indeed in complete rivalry with the LONDON MANUFACTURERS; and which are employed from their situation in supplying the African markets, and having little or no other business, would certainly vend their commodities on the most moderate terms, rather than stand idle, and see their trade transported to HOLLAND.

Thus, the prices of Saltpetre at the Company's sales have been so enormous (an epithet which perfectly becomes the use) and have so little corresponded with the information obtained from other quarters, that while the DUTCH Manufacturers were purchasing the raw materials in their own Country at 25s. to 35s. per cwt. under the Company's prices, it has been utterly impossible for the British Powder-Maker to vend his article upon equal terms.

The Report of the COMMITTEE of WAREHOUSES, which with curious sophistry sometimes inclines to argue on both sides of the question,

tion, betrays a proportionate share of ignorance on both sides, in attributing the increased sale of Powder (which increased sale, in another part, it is unwilling to acknowledge) to the great number of ships employed in the "Baltic and the Fisheries." Now, to intelligent persons, it is well known, though perhaps not to the COMMITTEE OF WAREHOUSES, that the quantity each vessel takes in peaceable times is so small, as not to exceed one or two barrels each, and many go without any at all.

The COMMITTEE declare—"That they do not mean to resist as " a general principle, that the importation of raw materials ought " to be free." With their accustomed liberality, however, to the consumers of Saltpetre, they seem anxious to seclude that commodity from the general rule: For while they contend, " that this species of Commerce is so interwoven with the existence of " the Empire in INDIA, as to render its separation impracticable," with wonderful facility they dissolve this close union in BENGAL, to accommodate every nation but their own; and although the importation of Saltpetre is prohibited to the British consumer, foreigners of every description have the privilege of purchasing from the Company unlimited quantities at CALCUTTA, which they convey to their respective markets in their own bottoms, to the great emolument of their shipping, and manifest injury of the Navigation and Industry of Great Britain.

Thus, while the Committee are labouring to prove, that the *Public* are interested in their cause; that the benefit of the *Public* is their sole wish; that the *Public* must suffer if they cannot monopolize; this show of anxiety for the *Public* is in truth for their own advantage, and they are thinking only of themselves; discouraging the Manufacturer, and injuring the Kingdom at large.

The Committee assert, that the article of Saltpetre cannot be considered as an exclusive product, because it is found in every "Country," yet with their usual consistency proceed to state it is *virtually* so, from the very *low price* it is purchased at in BENGAL, and the very *high price* it will cost if produced elsewhere. Then, as wishing to prove their justice, by an amiable spirit of analogy—they intimate, that as SPAIN appropriates a considerable revenue from the exclusive product of COCHINEAL, Saltpetre might be equally profitable under the inquisitorial measures of LEADENHALL-STREET.

Notwithstanding the statement in the Report, that when Saltpetre was at 80*l.* per ton, there was no complaint of illicit trade, the Manufacturers presume it is not to be controverted, that when Petre was so high in price, larger quantities were smuggled into the Kingdom, and much that was entered at the CUSTOM-HOUSE under the denomination of *European Petre*, at the low duties of 2*s.* 3*d.* per cwt. those who were acquainted with the article, were of opinion that it was brought from India. Much was also imported in the disguised state of *Sal Prunella*, at a duty only of 2*s.* Such practices afforded large gains to the illicit trader; but the moment the Company materially reduced their prices, this mode of smuggling was at an end, and the East India sales were proportionably increased.

The COMMITTEE are pleased to call an "exaggerated quantity," what the Manufacturers conceive might be the demand for Saltpetre in this Country; but the Manufacturers firmly believe the annual importation from India in foreign ships, by fair or unfair means, fully amounts to 4,500 tons.

The above observations chiefly confine themselves to the *article of Saltpetre*. It may, however, give a clearer view of the subject,

to offer a few farther remarks on *Saltpetre and Powder* in the precise order which the Report takes up, the pages of which shall be quoted, as the refutation of them proceeds.

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## ANSWERS TO THE PRINTED REPORT.

WITH REFERENCE TO THE PARTICULAR PAGES

Page 9.—In page 9, the prices of Powder are named as given in by the Manufacturers; but it is a little remarkable, that the first price and discount quoted should both be erroneous—Instead of P. Powder being at 4*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* per Barrel in March 1784, the real price then was only 3*l.* 15*s.* and the discount allowed was, not 3, but 6 per cent. These are trifling errors when compared with “the enormous profits” which the Manufacturers are afterwards reproached with, however, the nearer the approach to truth in matters of calculation, the better, and, as the COMMITTEE remark that “these prices by no means correspond with the information obtained from other quarters,” it would have been well to have procured the most authentic intelligence, which might have been found to be as now stated.

Page 10.—The COMMITTEE appear to have confused themselves (and probably the reader still more) by stating, in page 10, the prices given in by the Manufacturers to be considerably under those actually charged to the COMPANY, and to OWNERS of SHIPS. This seems to have arisen from not adverting to the known and

established difference in price at all times, between various sorts of Powder, proportionate to the respective quantities.

In Page 9, the price of F. Powder in 1784, is stated to be 4*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* per Barrel. In Page 10, the rate for the same year is stated to be only 3*l.* 15*s.* and the rate charged to the Company, 4*l.* 14*s.*

The COMMITTEE therefore doubtless conceive, that all charge above 3*l.* 15*s.* per Barrel, was so much imposition, because they have not borne in mind, that *Tower Proof Powder* never was, or could be, sold at the same rate as the sort denominated single F.

Page 11—Presents to an attentive observer, a jumble of errors, seldom to be met with in so small a compass. In attempting to estimate the difference in value of the raw materials, and of Powder, a very fallacious guess is formed of the respective quantities of the 3 ingredients used in the composition.

The COMMITTEE manifest, in a pretty glaring point of view, their opinion of the quantum of honesty which the Manufacturer possesses (at the time of mixing his materials) by their supposing his avarice will not permit him to put more than 60 pounds of GRUFF SALTPETRE into the composition of 100 pounds of powder—They must imagine, that these 60 pounds are thrown, “with all their imperfections,” into the mass; for if dross were to be previously extracted, 20 pounds of Charcoal, and the like quantity of Brimstone, would not make the Barrel of Powder weigh quite enough to please a Purchaser; but (whatever the COMMITTEE may think) the Manufacturer certainly has made one discovery, viz. that *Dirt cannot be admitted as a fourth ingredient in the composition.*

The scale having been laid down (though far from a true one) on which calculations are formed, it is needful in this place to conform

conform to it, in order to examine the conclusions that are drawn.

Taking the first estimate at *2l. 4s. 11d.* and the second at *1l. 6s. 4d.* as stated, the difference in value of *raw materials* is declared to be no less than 65 per cent. Differences of opinion among the wisest must often prevail in this life; but questions which a few figures can determine, need not long be objects of dispute. The *accused MANUFACTURERS* did not think it possible that 65 per cent. should be set down in so plain a manner, without expecting to find (to their great mortification) that statement to be a fact; but after exercising their humble faculties in search of the truth, they cannot discover the difference between *2l. 4s. 11d.* and *1l. 6s. 4d.* to amount to more than 41½ per cent.

If the COMMITTEE, on revision of the calculation, should find that 41½ approaches nearly to the truth, they, no doubt, will have the goodness to credit the Powder-Maker in account for an over-charge of 23½ per cent. of extortion brought against him. *4l. 17s. 6d.* and *4l. 2s. 6d.* are stated as the prices of Powder at the two periods of estimating the value of the *raw materials*, and the difference is said to be 18 per cent. but that difference will be found to be not quite 16 per cent.

This is mentioned just to shew that *accuracy* is not the distinguishing feature of the Report.

After having pointed out the false conclusions drawn from the COMMITTEE'S *own statements*, it may be proper to suggest a remark or two on the manner of quoting the prices of powder. The price first named (in page 9) is that of F. powder, therefore

all subsequent calculations should be on that *particular sort*, in order to draw a fair and just inference. The prices of *that sort* for sundry years are accordingly quoted in the following page, as said to be given in by the *Manufacturers*; and against the years specified, are put, in two columns, *advanced rates*, as said to be charged to the *COMPANY* and to *OWNERS* of *SHIPS*. Persons unacquainted with the powder trade would be led to infer from hence, that the *Manufacturers* were guilty of juggle and imposition, but those who are at all conversant with the article, well know (as has been already hinted) that various sorts, superior in quality to single F. are always in course sold at higher rates, which rates are advanced or reduced in exact proportion to the rising or falling price of F. powder; and the *Company* and *Owners* of (*India*) *Ships*, being always supplied with powder superior in quality to the sort thus denominated, it follows that the prices inserted in the first column of page 10, must not be quoted as the *standard value* of the sorts which they have purchased.

In order to form a comparative estimate of the value of Powder, and of the Raw Materials, the price of the former must not be fixed at 4*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* (as in page 11) for the year 1783, but at 4*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* (the first price mentioned in page 10) at which a barrel of F. powder was then sold, † deducting a discount of 6 per cent. And in 1789, after Saltpetre had been sold at 14*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.* the price of F. was not 3*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* (as stated in page 10) but was reduced to 3*l.* 10*s.* per barrel, with a discount of 10 per cent. taken off. The true statement therefore will be as follows:

In

† In the early part of that year.

In 1783, F. powder at — £4. 7 6 — less  
 Discount 6 per cent. is — 4 2 3 — per barrel.

In 1789, F. powder at — £3 10 0  
 Less 10 per cent. discount, is 3 3 0 — per barrel.

Difference in value of Raw Materials — 41½ per cent.  
 of Powder — — 23½ per cent.

The COMMITTEE'S estimate of difference against the Manufacturer is stated to be (as 65 to 18) 47 per cent.; but the Manufacturer thinks himself warranted in asserting that difference to be no more than (as 41½ to 23½) 17½ per cent. admitting <sup>to</sup> this place their own valuation of materials.

If the patient Reader can discover no mis-statement, or false-casting, in what has now been offered—and if in a charge of taking an unjust gain of 47 per cent. that charge can be clearly reduced one-half, he will be candid enough to grant, that the MANUFACTURERS are but in half the degree those *vogues in grain* which the Report would insinuate.

After having shown the difference of 47 per cent. alledged to be against the Manufacturer (in page 11) to be really no more than 17½, the calculations in the two following pages, it may be presumed, are not set forth with great precision.

The REPORT (without any pretence to real knowledge in the business) having first stated the respective quantities of the *raw materials* used, it then, as confidently sets forth an estimate of “ the loss of weight in refining the Petre, waste which the other  
 \* articles may be subject to, labour, incidental charges of every  
 “ kind

" kind, including risk"—all of which is set down at 13s. 6d. per barrel; an estimate grossly false, and short of the actual expenditure and costs. The MANUFACTURERS, however, will not at this juncture avail themselves of the advantage they should acquire by stating the exact quantities used of each material in the composition, and of the costs of workmanship; because they mean not to be drawn unwarily to give information to GENTLEMEN, who recommend to the serious attention of the COURT, the establishing Mills for making Gunpowder. Such powerful rivals in trade must submit to acquire the knowledge of their new occupation, as others have done before them, by long and dear-bought experience.

If the prices of powder had been quoted truly in pages 12 and 13 for the years 1783 and 1789, viz. in 1783 at 4l. 2s. 3d. per barrel, and in 1789 at 3l. 3s. per barrel (as has been noted above) the COMMITTEE'S estimates, after their own mode of calculation, must have stated what they call the profit for home consumption barely at 41l. instead of 62l. per cent. on prime cost in 1783, and on prime cost in 1789 about 61l. instead of 90l. per cent. Each statement must also allow a farther deduction of 2½ per cent. for foreign orders. The bounty of 4s. 6d. per barrel must be wholly thrown out of each estimate, the MANUFACTURERS never in any instance having received a penny of it to their own emolument; it being notorious that the MERCHANT who buys and exports the powder, always takes to himself the full benefit of that allowance; the proof of which, some of the GENTLEMEN who have signed the Report, might readily have found in their own counting-houses.

In page 12, it is declared that the Company's Petre has not for many years refracted, on an average, 5 per cent. Their sale-papers for the last year (which contain all the refractions hitherto published) will evince how far that assertion is founded. Subjoined is a list of ships (copied from the sale-papers) the number of bags put up to sale by each ship, and the refraction of the Petre by those ships, viz.

## MARCH SALE, 1792.

|               |   | <i>Bags.</i> | <i>Refraction.</i> |
|---------------|---|--------------|--------------------|
| Per Ponsborne | — | 627          | 4 per cent.        |
| Winterton     | — | 697          | 4½                 |
| Houghton      | — | 1106         | 4½                 |
|               |   | <hr/>        |                    |
|               |   | 2412         |                    |
|               |   | <hr/>        |                    |

## MARCH SALE, 1792.

|                      |   |   |      |     |
|----------------------|---|---|------|-----|
| Per Francis          | — | — | 2713 | 15½ |
| Princess Royal       | — | — | 797  | 7   |
| Earl Chesterfield    | — | — | 1007 | 5½  |
| Princess Royal       | — | — | 1046 | 5½  |
| Princess Amelia      | — | — | 3495 | 10½ |
| Rodney               | — | — | 3494 | 8   |
| Prince William Henry | — | — | 2986 | 5½  |
| William Pitt         | — | — | 2921 | 5½  |

## SEPTEMBER SALE, 1792.

|                  |     |     |       |     |
|------------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Per Hawke        | —   | --- | 3498  | 7½  |
| Earl Fitzwilliam | —   | --- | 3374  | 7   |
| Warren Hastings  | --- | --- | 4000  | 6½  |
| Worcester        | --- | --- | 1036  | 7   |
| Deptford         | —   | —   | 4643  | 7½  |
| Queen            | —   | —   | 5449  | 11½ |
|                  |     |     | <hr/> |     |
|                  |     |     | 40459 |     |
|                  |     |     | <hr/> |     |

It appears from this extract, that of 17 ships, 3 of them (containing 2412 Bags) are at refractions under 5 per cent. and 14 of them (containing 40,459 bags) are at refractions above 5 per cent.; the excess of difference on the Petre (superior to the standard) being 1 per cent; and the excess of difference on the Petre (inferior to the standard) being  $10\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

It must be submitted to the reader, whether the remarks now offered have not shewn incontrovertibly, that the estimates and statements in the Report are drawn up in a very erroneous manner, and therefore unwarrantably to the disadvantage of the Powder-Maker; however, if the attack be weak, the labour of more serious defence is saved.

Though the partial and incorrect estimates in the Report would infer, that a much greater profit has accrued to the Manufacturer in and since the year 1789, than in the year 1783, yet they must insist, that they do not now derive more advantage from the sale of a Barrel of Powder, than they did when the price of Petre was for a series of years at *4l. 0s. 6d.*

It is well known that every sort of Powder, without exception, is much superior in quality to what was made 10 or 15 years ago. The Consumers of the article have gradually grown more nice in their discernment, and have required degrees of strength, and other requisites, beyond what they were formerly satisfied with. The consequence has been, that more expensive modes of purifying the several materials have been adopted, and much more time and labour bestowed on the workmanship in every stage of it. The greater degree of strength enhances in proportion the *degree of risk* in the course of manufacture, which must be obvious to the slightest reflection; and when accidents happen, which the greatest prudence cannot wholly prevent, the destruction of the works, and the

loss of human life, are evils for which the *few shillings and pence* set down in the *Committee's estimate* will provide but a poor and inadequate compensation.

That such is a fact, the Manufacturers can prove, they have at different times sustained, by a momentary explosion, damages, from *one thousand to eight thousand pounds*.

If the REPORT be found not always correct on the subject of Saltpetre, it is much less so, when it undertakes to give information respecting other articles.

In Page 11, the assertion that 18 *l.* per ton had been the highest rate of *Brimstone* for some years, is a mistake, and as for *Charcoal* (since the improvements in the manufacture of Powder) that ingredient, when properly prepared for the superior sorts, is at an advance of more than a *thousand* per cent. instead of *fifty* per cent. as quoted in the Page just mentioned. It may be added, that wages, together with every article and utensil needful for the repairs, use, and maintenance of the works, have progressively increased from year to year, which may be readily believed by most persons from their general knowledge, without being intimately acquainted with this particular Manufacture.

These matters are merely hinted, to point out the scanty knowledge manifested by the Report on the subject under discussion.

Another enhancement of cost in the purchase of the raw material, it may not be improper to mention, though it had nearly escaped the notice of the manufacturer, from not having been reminded of it by the Report.

When the ACT of PARLIAMENT had restricted the Company from putting up Saltpetre to sale at higher rates than 31 *s.* in time of peace, and 40*s.* in time of war, men of plain understandings would imagine, that the purchasers could not be made to pay more  
than

than the prices limited by that act; however, a very neat contrivance (which must do honour to the projectors in the eyes of the Public) was made use of at September's sale 1792, *not* to raise the price, but only to take from the pockets of the Saltpetre purchasers, a little more money than they were aware could be demanded of them. A tare of 18 pounds per treble, and 14 pounds per double *Gunnybag*, had been allowed for time immemorial, and had also been allowed at March sale 1792, which was subsequent to the passing of the ACT that limited the prices; but at the September sale following, this customary allowance of tare, was reduced 6 pounds on each sort of Bags (amounting to a difference of 600 pounds weight on every lot of *Petre*) and at the average price of that sale, the loss sustained by such reduction, amounted to 3*s.* per hundred weight. If this measure be *legal*, and within the *meaning* of the ACT of PARLIAMENT, it must be inferred, that the LEGISLATURE did not intend 3*s.* to be the actual limit, but some higher price, at the discretion of the COMPANY, and which may be made still higher in effect at another sale, if the COMPANY should think fit farther to curtail this reduced allowance.

When the amount of difference is reckoned on the purchase of Saltpetre for a twelvemonth's consumption, it will be found an object of importance to the Manufacturer; but a loss of greater magnitude is likely to fall on him, in the course of the present year, arising from the COMPANY having failed to put up a *single Bag* of *Petre* for sale, in the month of March, according to known custom. The consequence is, that large and expensive establishments must be kept up and maintained, though the works will in a very short time be totally destitute of employ for want of this essential article.

To the public, the loss is still more material ; for without the Manufacturer can obtain relief from the LORDS of the COUNCIL, as the Company have declined putting up a sufficient quantity, in a few weeks, there will not be the least supply for

Private Ships of War,  
Merchant Ships,

Or for any of the opulent and vast mines in Wales, Cornwall, Derbyshire or Scotland, which, without the aid of Gunpowder, must necessarily stand still.

That part of the Public, who may be pleased to favour these remarks with a perusal, will determine, whether a dispassionate reader of the REPORT can charge it, or not, with bringing forward assertions not proved, with erroneous calculations, and with misstatements. In the way of recapitulation it may not be improper to urge that,

The REPORT has quoted prices of powder, not according with the actual terms of sale at some of the periods named, and then insinuated, without explanation, that higher prices than those given in, were charged to the COMPANY and to OWNERS OF SHIPS, tending thereby to mislead the unwary reader with the notion that *only one sort* of Powder is fabricated, and that the Venders had committed a fraud on the purchasers.

The REPORT then forms an *arbitrary scale* of materials (wide of the truth) from which the Manufacturers are judged, and it is roundly asserted, that they "have never done justice to the liberal concessions in their favour"—From that false scale, *false conclusions* are drawn, and the difference in value of raw materials is *magnified*, greatly against the Manufacturers.

ANOTHER ESTIMATE is then brought forward, which betrays an unbecoming eagerness to depreciate the *characters* of the  
MANUFACTURERS

**MANUFACTURERS**, by attempting to rate the costs and risks of workmanship; and the misfortune is, that they are liable to suffer in the opinion of the public, in exact proportion to the lack of *knowledge* and *truth*, displayed in a calculation which the Report has the boldness to assert " is considered as a most ample allowance."

The Powder-Maker is charged with pocketing a bounty of 4s. 6d. which the Merchant himself always received, and the Report has not the candour to add, that the ACT of PARLIAMENT which directed the ultimate reduction in the price of Petre, at the same time took off 7s. 6d. out of 7s. 9d. duty, on that article, which had been formerly paid, and the ACT farther directed that the bounty on powder should no longer be allowed.

When it is asserted that the Company's Petre has not for many years refracted on an average 5 per cent. proof is produced (from their own publications) that of 42,871 bags put up for sale, more than sixteen seventeenths of that quantity was at greater refractions than 5 per cent.

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#### N O T E.

The Manufacturers, in the course of their experience, recollect one or two instances of Petre being delivered to them refracting not more than 3 per cent.; but on the other hand, they have cause to remember how many parcels they have received at large refractions, varying upwards to 18½ per cent. Proofs of which could easily be furnished, if not to the satisfaction of the *Committee*, at least, that could not be contradicted.

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The MANUFACTURERS trust they have now completely answered the printed Report of the COMMITTEE of WAREHOUSES, signed by *nine* DIRECTORS of the HONOURABLE THE EAST INDIA COMPANY. They trust that they have proved, that so far from wishing or intending to injure the Public, they themselves are a part of that Public whom the Company kindly used for a *stalking-horse*, the better to effect their benefit alone.

The Manufacturers hold it their duty, very solemnly to declare, that they were satisfied with the ACT of PARLIAMENT which ordered *Saltpetre* to be put up at 3*1*5. They were dissatisfied only when the COMPANY entirely frustrated the intentions of the LEGISLATURE by the mode adopted at their sales, which, from not putting up a sufficient quantity to answer the demand, rendered the ACT of PARLIAMENT ineffectual. The Manufacturer, and in consequence, the PUBLIC, receiving no advantage from an ACT evidently designed for their benefit. It has been requested, on the part of the MANUFACTURERS; they might be allowed *the liberty* of importing it themselves;—which, as the COMPANY think it “ a very losing trade,” they can have no objection to give up. Such is the wish the Manufacturers presume to entertain before your LORDSHIPS.

In regard to the printed Report, they can only say—that when the HONOURABLE THE EAST INDIA COMPANY chose to descend from their high station to attack the humble works of the Manufacturers, to enter into their private concerns, to asperse their characters, and kindly to attempt to ruin their trade—perhaps it might have been expected, that something like *accurate calculation*—something resembling knowledge of the *business*, and something approaching to regard for the Public, might have been shewn by them.

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But the DIRECTORS are more disinterested far;—and gallantly slighting all these advantages, they trust the attack to some zealous CLERK, who, with more activity than discretion, requests the DIRECTORS to set their hands to his mistakes. As there are many Directors, perhaps he thinks the errors should be many likewise; and he compliments each Director with, at least, a dozen pieces of misinformation.

Against such vague and unsupported calumnies, the MANUFACTURERS presume to think too laboured a reply not necessary; but some reply, perhaps, it was their duty to make; for as the name and cause of the Public were artfully implicated in the printed Report, and the Manufacturers were represented as imposing on that Public—a sense of their own honour, and a just respect for the public opinion, called upon them for a justification.

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#### POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the above was written, the Court of Directors have declared, that they will put up to sale, on the 30th of April, 3000 bags of Saltpetre. Such a petty quantity cannot be acknowledged by the various Consumers as a supply, when the stock in private hands is known to be exhausted. And if each individual Consumer should indulge the hope, that by contention and an advanced price, he may get his small proportion of what is offered to public sale, that proportion (if secured) could not find more than a few days employment for each manufactory.

The Court of Directors do also declare, “ that they reserve to themselves the liberty of selling a farther quantity of Saltpetre at their present March sale, if they should judge it expedient

pedient; so to do." The most common observer could here remark, that if only small quantities are to be put up, and those to be parcelled out at different times in the course of each half year, the late ACT of PARLIAMENT is thereby rendered nugatory: it matters not whether the Petre be put at one shilling, or at one and thirty shillings, for this mode of supplying the Public must effectually secure (what the Report appears to hold in such detestation) an exorbitant profit to the Company.

Signed, on behalf of himself

And the rest of the Gunpowder-Makers,

*April 25, 1793.*

EDMUND HILL.