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Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR  
OF THE  
HON. CAPTAIN COURTENAY BOYLE, R.N.

COMMISSIONER OF THE TRANSPORT BOARD.

" AND GENTLE COURTESY AND FAITH  
UNCHANGED BY SUFFERINGS, TIME, OR DEATH;  
AND VALOUR, LION-METTLED LORD,  
LEANING UPON HIS OWN GOOD SWORD."

*Walter Scott's Marmion, (Introduction).*

**T**HIS worthy descendant of the noble family of Boyle,\* was the early pupil and associate of the lamented Nelson; and is the second son of the late Edmund, seventh Earl of Cork and Orrery, by the amiable Anne Courtenay, whose mother

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\* It dates its origin from Lodowick Boyle, who lived in the reign of Henry III. Sir Richard Boyle, first Earl of Cork, who was Lord High Treasurer of Ireland, and one of his Majesty's honourable Privy Council, was descended from Mr. Roger Boyle, who was born in Herefordshire; and was created Baron of Youghall, Viscount Dungarvon and Earl of Cork in 1620. The following is the account which this Sir Richard Boyle gave of his early fortunes; as inserted in the Life of his learned and illustrious relation, the Hon. Robert Boyle, prefixed to the quarto edition of his works. "When first I arrived," says Sir Richard, "at Dublin, in Ireland, the 23d of June, 1688, all my wealth then was 27*l.* 3*s.* in money, and two tokens, which my mother had given me, *viz.* a diamond ring, which I have ever since, and still do wear; and a bracelet of gold worth about ten pounds; a taffety doublet, cut with, and upon taffety, a pair of black velvet breeches laced, a new Milan fustian suit, laced, and cut upon taffety, two cloaks, competent linen and necessaries, with my rapier and dagger: and since, the blessing of God, whose heavenly Providence guided me hither, hath enriched my weak estate in beginning, with such a fortune, as I need not envy any of my neighbours, and added no care or burthen of my conscience thereunto. And the 23d of June, 1682, I have served my God, Queen Elizabeth, and King Charles, full forty years; so long after, as it shall please God to enable me."—This Sir Richard also mentions, his buying a ship of Sir Walter Raleigh:—"Being commanded by her Majesty to attend at Court, it was not many days before her Highness was pleased to bestow upon me the office of clerk of the Council of Munster, and to recommend me over to Sir George Carew, after Earl of Totness, then Lord President of Munster. Whereupon I bought of Sir W. Raleigh, his ship called the Pilgrim, into which I took a freight of am-

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was a daughter of Viscount Hinchinbrooke. None of the family, we believe, had ever before been in the royal navy, excepting Captain Boyle Walsingham who was lost in the *Thunderer*, and to whom the subject of this Memoir was nearly related.

The Honourable Courtenay Boyle was born on the 3d of September, 1770 ; and, as appears from the documents before us, which have been furnished by one of those who had long the happiness of serving under him, he derived his first inclination for the naval service, from having passed the vacation (September, 1780) with his father, the Earl of Cork, at Plymouth ; who was then Lieutenant-colonel of the Somerset militia, and commanded a division of light infantry at Maker Heights. The scene which every day there presented, certainly gave a naval bias to the enterprising mind of our young seaman : As the celebrated writer whence we have taken our motto justly observes in *Marmion*—

“ That secret Power by all obey'd !  
 Whether an impulse, that has birth  
 Soon as the infant wakes on earth,  
 One with our feelings and our powers,  
 And rather part of us, than ours ;  
 Or whether fitlier termed, the sway  
 Of habit, formed in early day ?  
 Howe'er deriv'd, its force confess'd,  
 Rules with despotic sway the breast ;  
 And drags us on by viewless chain,  
 While taste and reason plead in vain . . . . .  
*He'll say, from youth he lov'd to see  
 The White Sail gliding by the tree.*”

The decided turn for the navy which his son had thus taken, was immediately encouraged by the Earl of Cork ; and he consented that the young man should try the strength of his mind and constitution, by taking a cruise (Sept. 12—18th Oct. 1780), with Captain John Carter Allen, in the *Gibraltar*, of 80 guns, then attached to the Channel fleet. The Hon. C. Boyle was thus introduced into the service, under one of its first officers ; whose character at that time and ever afterwards, stood deservedly high

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munition and victuals, and came in her myself by long seas, and arrived at Carrig-Foyl-Kerry, where the Lord President and the Army were at the siege of the Castle.” The present Earl, who is a Lieutenant-general in the Army, is brother to Captain C. Boyle,

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in the profession. Captain J. C. Allen fought several actions with the enemy, and greatly distinguished himself—he died an admiral: but as his public services have never been chronicled as they deserved, a knowledge of his skill and merit remains chiefly with such officers as had the honour of his acquaintance.

When Lord Cork had sufficiently proved the inclination of his enterprising son, by this his first cruise, he was removed on his return for some time to a naval academy at Greenwich; and then again sent to sea, February 19, 1781, in the *Latona* frigate, of 30 guns, commanded by Sir Hyde Parker. In this ship, Mr. Boyle commenced his career as a midshipman; and as a due discharge of the duties of that station, are of such essential consequence to the reputation and professional character of every officer, we shall here subjoin the admirable letter which our lamented Nelson, the subsequent friend and commander of Mr. Boyle, sent to a young man on his attaining that first step in the rank of the British navy:—“*Dear Charles: As Captain Hillyer has been so good as to say he would rate you MID, I sincerely hope that your conduct will ever continue to deserve his kind notice and protection, by a strict and very active attention to your duty. If you deserve well, you are sure of my assistance. Mr. Scott will furnish you with money to begin your Mess, and I shall allow you thirty pounds a year, if it be necessary, which Captain Hillyer will supply you with.—And as you from this day start in the world as a man, I trust that your future conduct in life will prove you both an officer and a gentleman: recollect, that you must be a seaman to be an officer; and also, that you cannot be a good officer without being a gentleman. I am always, with most sincere good wishes, your true friend, NELSON & BRONTE.*”

February 19—October 31, 1781. The *Latona* was employed in the North Sea, attached to the fleet under the command of Admiral Parker, father of Sir Hyde; and was one of the repeating frigates in the action on the Dogger Bank, August 5th, 1781. In this ship Mr. Boyle fell from the booms into the orlop; which accident obliged him to go on shore for his recovery. during this interval, he was placed under the tuition of the Rev. Mr. Pitt, in London; he then was appointed to the *Goliath*, until April 8th, 1783, when he was sent to the Royal Academy at Portsmouth, where he remained until March, 1784.

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(1804.) The Hon. C. Boyle then re-commenced his naval career with renewed spirit, under the auspices of the great Nelson, in the *Boreas* frigate, of 28 guns, and sailed in her to the West Indies, on the 19th of May. The following extract from a letter written by Lady Hughes, who was on board, which has appeared in the splendid *Life of that Admiral*,\* will shew the manner in which the young men in that ship were trained and gradually enured to hardihood and enterprise by their parental commander. “As a woman, I can only speak of those parts of his professional conduct which I could comprehend; such as his attention to the young gentlemen who had the happiness of being on his quarter-deck. It may reasonably be supposed, that among the number of 30, there must have been timid spirits, as well as bold: the timid he never rebuked: but always wished to shew them, he desired nothing that he would not instantly do himself: And I have known him say—*Well, Sir, I am going a race to the mast head, and beg I may meet you there.* No denial could be given to such a request, and the poor little fellow instantly began to climb the shrouds. Captain Nelson never took the least notice in what manner it was done; but, when they met in the top, spoke in the most cheerful terms to the midshipman, and observed—*How much any person was to be pitied, who could fancy there was any danger, or even any thing disagreeable, in the attempt.*

“After this excellent example, I have seen (continues Lady Hughes) the same youth, who before was so timid, lead another in like manner and repeat his commander’s words. How wise and attentive was such conduct in Captain Nelson! On the same principle, he every day went into the school-room, and saw the mode in which they pursued their nautical acquirements; and at twelve o’clock, he was always the first on deck, with his quadrant;—no one could then neglect his duty. There is also another anecdote, which deserves to be mentioned:—The day we landed at *Barbadoes*, and were to dine at the Governor’s, our dear commander said—‘you must permit me, Lady Hughes, to carry one of my *aid-de-camps* with me—and he presented him to the governor, adding—*Your Excellency must excuse me for bringing one of my*

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\* Vol. I. page 65. For preceding Letter, see Vol. II. p. 342.

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*midshipmen. I make it a rule to introduce them to all the good company I can, as they have few to look up to, besides myself, during the time they are at sea. This kindness and attention made the young men adore him, and they vied with each other, in an endeavour to anticipate his wishes—Who is there but must allow, that this excellent manner of making his midshipmen feel, that the attainment of nautical knowledge and experience was a pleasure instead of a task, proceeded from the genius and astonishing goodness of heart, which were so conspicuous in Captain Nelson.”*

The transactions of the *Boreas*, in the West Indies, have been detailed with so much accuracy and interest by Mr. Clarke, in the Life of this great Admiral, together with his uniform attention to his midshipmen, that we shall condense a small part, in order the better to illustrate the public services of Mr. Boyle.—The *Boreas*, according to this Biographer,\* “arrived at Madeira on the first of June (1784); and on the 2d, after breakfast, the governor sent the major of his guards, with his state barge, to convey Lady Hughes and her suite on shore, which was politely declined.—At half-past ten, the ship being completely manned, Lady Hughes and her daughter, attended by Captain Nelson, two lieutenants, the lieutenant of marines, and the Rev. William Nelson, went into the barge; and as soon as she was got to a convenient distance, she was saluted with eleven guns, and three cheers, which were returned from the barge. Captain Nelson was also accompanied by ten midshipmen, of whom Mr. Boyle was one. This was his constant mode of paying visits of ceremony; because, in his opinion, it was highly beneficial to his young gentlemen in their professional career; and it is to be lamented, that the mode, from its great utility, is not more generally adopted in the service. On Tuesday, June 8th, the *Boreas* got under sail, and arrived at Barbadoes on the 26th. It was no small degree of satisfaction to Captain Nelson, to find himself senior captain, and second in command on that station.

“During the passage of the *Boreas* down to Antigua, to be laid up for the hurricane months, Captain Nelson paid a visit to Fort Royal, and St. Pierre, Martinico; and on landing, he was

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\* Vol. I. pages 66—89.

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attended, as before mentioned, by all the young gentlemen \* of the ship who could be spared. . . . . When the hurricane months were over, and while the Boreas remained at anchor in Nevis Road, a French frigate passed to leeward, close along shore. According to Captain Nelson's information, which proved to be correct, this frigate had been sent to make a survey of our West India Islands, and had on board two general officers and some engineers. He therefore gave orders to accompany † the French ship, that he might prevent them from executing their intentions. The Boreas accordingly got under weigh; and, pursuing the frigate, found her the next day at anchor in the road of St. Eustatia: Captain Nelson anchored at about two cables' length on the frigate's quarter. After interchange of salutes, and other mutual civilities, both himself and his officers were the next day invited by the Dutch governor to dinner, to meet the French officers; and an opportunity was thus afforded Captain Nelson, of making known his intentions, which he gladly embraced: he informed the captain of the frigate, with a courtesy worthy of an experienced statesman, *That understanding it was the wish of the French, to honour the British West India Islands with a visit, he had taken the earliest opportunity in his power to accompany them in H. M. S. the Boreas, that such attention might be paid to the officers of his most Christian Majesty, as every Englishman in the Islands would be proud of an opportunity of shewing.*—This civility, as might be expected, was not very cordially received by the French; who, in their turn, protested against giving so much trouble; and more particularly, as they had merely intended to take a cruise round the Islands, without landing on any.—Cap-

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\* The Hon. Mr. Boyle, and Mr. Talbot, accompanied Nelson to the governor's: the latter now commands the Victorious, in which ship he so eminently distinguished himself, by the recent capture of the Rivoli, of 80 guns, in the Adriatic. Some of Nelson's officers, who are still living, may remember his address to them on the superiority of the British laws, which the captain of the Boreas made, on seeing a man broken on the cross, at St. Pierre, who had committed murder.

† So closely did Nelson accompany this frigate, that on hearing a drum beat on board her, he asked his first lieutenant, Mr. Wallis, what it meant: "It is their dinner drum, Sir, I suppose." Upon which Nelson replied, —*Then do you take care, when you go to dinner, that the Frenchmen hear THE ROAST BEEF OF OLD ENGLAND beat.*

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tain Nelson was determined to watch them, and strictly adhered to his purpose. The French officers, having made repeated attempts to elude his vigilance, but without effect,\* abandoned their project, and beat up to Martinico. The *Boreas* immediately beat up for Barbadoes, and never lost sight of the frigate until she was safe in Martinico, whence she had originally sailed."

For a more ample account of the proceedings of the *Boreas*, whilst on this station, our readers are referred to the valuable *Life*, whence this information has been taken. We cannot, however, refrain from adding two other anecdotes, as there recorded by Mr. Clarke, of this most extraordinary naval officer.—“It † was on account of this illicit trade (1785), and the cabal formed by men whose duty it particularly was to aid and support the patriotic spirit of Nelson, that a correspondence commenced between him and General Sir Thomas Shirley, ‡ Governor of the Leeward Islands; in which the former clearly pointed out the steps to be taken at so important a crisis. But this zeal and unusual mode of giving advice to a superior, awakening the military jealousy and irritating the pride of the governor, he replied, ‘That old generals were not in the habit of taking advice from young gentlemen.’—The indignation of Nelson was roused, and his answer was remarkable—*I have the honour, Sir, of being as old as the Prime Minister of England, and think myself as capable of commanding one of his Majesty’s ships, as that Minister is of governing the State.*

The other anecdote § is as follows:—“When Captain Nelson was so long confined to his ship, by the shameful prosecution which had been allowed to be instituted against him; some one of his indignant officers, when in conversation, happened to use the

\* Thus did Nelson, at an early period of his career, secure those islands from the designs of the French, whose subsequent preservation from the same enemy formed one of the latest and most brilliant achievements in his life.—ED.

† Vol. I. page 71.

‡ So utterly devoid was the mind of Nelson, of any wrong feeling, in consequence of what passed between him and this governor, that on hearing Sir Thomas Shirley had a son, whom he intended for the navy, Captain Nelson immediately offered to receive him on board the *Boreas*; and he accordingly became the messmate of the subject of this memoir.

§ Vol. I. p. 83.

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word pity.—*Pity!* exclaimed Nelson, *pity, did you say? I shall live, Sir, to be envied, and to that point I shall always direct my course.*

The *Boreas* at length sailed from the West Indies, for England, during June, 1787, and arrived at the close of that month at Spithead; she was afterwards sent round to Sheerness, until the 30th of November, when she was paid off. Among the Nelson papers have been found two, respecting the subject of this biographical memoir, hitherto unpublished, which the kindness of a friend has obtained.—They were addressed to Mr. Boyle's father, the Earl of Cork. The following extract is from one dated Portsmouth, July 15th, 1787, on giving him leave of absence from the ship.—“My Lord: I am this moment honoured with your letter. I have great pleasure in doing what I know will give our dear Courtenay so much happiness. He is amiable in the truest sense of the word; and I feel real regret in parting from him. In his professional line he is inferior to none.—His virtues are superior to most.”

The other letter was addressed by Captain Nelson to the Earl of Cork, from Portsmouth, on the 22d of the same month (1787), and contains the advice which Nelson sent, at his Lordship's request, respecting the best mode that could be adopted by the young midshipman on coming ashore.—“In the first place, my Lord, it is necessary that he should be made complete in his navigation; and, if the peace continues, French is absolutely necessary. Dancing is an accomplishment that probably a sea officer may require: You will see almost the necessity of it, when employed in foreign countries;—indeed, the honour of the nation is so often entrusted to sea officers, that there is no accomplishment which will not shine with peculiar lustre in them.—He must nearly have served his time; therefore, he cannot be so well employed as in gaining knowledge. If I can at any time be of service to him, he may always call upon me. His charming disposition will ever make him friends. He may as well join the ship, when his brother goes to the Continent. I have the honour to be, &c. &c. HORATIO NELSON.”

(1788.) Mr. Boyle was accordingly sent by his father to the care of the Rev. Mr. Smith, at Tewksbury; under whose instruction he remained, until the beginning of the year 1788. He then



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entered, at the recommendation of Captain Nelson to Lord Hood, (January 9) on board the *Barfleur*, bearing his Lordship's flag, and commanded by Captain John Knight, in Portsmouth harbour; and in that ship he continued until the 25th of November ensuing, when he went on board the *Leander*, the flag-ship of Admiral Peyton, commanded by Captain John Peyton, then under orders for the Mediterranean. In this ship he served until June 5th, 1789; when Admiral Peyton gave him an order to repair on board the *Aquilon* frigate, Captain R. Montagu, as an additional lieutenant:—his messmates, if we mistake not, were Lieutenant W. Brown, now an Admiral, commanding on the Jamaica station, and Lord Garlies. At Smyrna, Mr. Boyle was obliged, on account of ill health, to leave the *Aquilon*, April 24th, 1790; when he returned to England in the *Lightning*, a Smyrna merchant ship, belonging to London; and in this vessel he had the pleasure of being accompanied by Lord Garlies, who was going home on promotion.

(1790-93). At the close of 1790, and in the month of November, Mr. Boyle was received on board the *Vanguard*, commanded by Capt. Sir A. Hamond, in which ship he did the duty of lieutenant, until promoted and appointed to the *Roebuck*. At the beginning of January, 1793, on the commencement of the first French war, his name appears in the books of the *Egmont*, of 74 guns, to which ship he was appointed as fourth lieutenant: it was then commanded by Captain Archibald Dixon, afterwards created a baronet. This ship, after fitting at Plymouth, proceeded with the squadron under Admiral Gell, from Portsmouth, to convoy the East India ships to a certain latitude, and then cruised between the Western Isles and the Coast of Spain. The squadron succeeded in capturing the *Damourier*, French privateer, of 22 guns, and the *St. Jago*, register ship, from Lima, her prize which was worth a million sterling. This ship, after a tedious litigation, was condemned, when the captors shared largely; the lieutenants received 1,400*l.* each.—After this valuable capture, and the having given their prizes in charge to the *Phaeton*, Sir A. Douglas, to convoy them to England, the squadron proceeded to Gibraltar, where the fleet under Lord Hood shortly arrived. His Lordship, previous to sailing, sent Lieutenant Boyle to England, for the purpose of joining H. R. H. the Duke of Cla-

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rence, who was then soon expected to hoist his flag. Lord Hood appointed Lieutenant Boyle (May 27, 1793), to the *Fox* cutter, of 11 guns, and charged him with despatches for the Admiralty. The fleet sailed to the eastward with a fine westerly wind, whilst the *Fox*, from the great nautical skill and experience of her commander, was enabled to beat, with a foul wind, through the Gut of Gibraltar, and arrived safely at Lime in Dorsetshire. During the passage, a large French schooner privateer, of 20 guns, and full of men, chased the *Fox* for two days, and fired several shot at her, the *Fox* returning only her stern chasers: by manœuvring, and good management in using her sweeps, she escaped being captured. Mr. Boyle afterwards served as lieutenant for a short time, in the *Excellent*, fitting by the Hon. Captain Clement Finch.

During 1794, he served on board the *Saturn*, Captain Lechmere, fitted for Admiral Vandeput's flag and ordered to proceed with Lord Moira and an expedition under his command, to the coast of Brittany; some political circumstances, however, occurred which prevented it from taking place, and the *Saturn* was employed on various other services. On the 8th of December, in that year, Lieut. Boyle was appointed to the *Mary* yacht. When the *Jupiter*, Commodore J. W. Payne, Capt. W. Lechmere, sailed, in February, 1795, from the Nore, to bring over her Royal Highness the Princess Caroline of Brunswick, from Cuxhaven, the Hon. Mr. Boyle left the *Mary* yacht, and was lent to the *Jupiter* as commodore's lieutenant, as the yachts did not proceed on that service. Soon after the arrival of the Princess in England, he was promoted (April, 1795) to the rank of commander; and during the month of October, was appointed to the *Kangaroo*, a new brig of 18 guns, lying at Deptford.

(1795.) This sloop was very shortly manned by Captain Boyle's exertions, and was immediately sent to cruise off the Texel: On her return to Sheerness, he received orders to proceed to Plymouth and put himself under Admiral Vandeput, who had been appointed commander-in-chief on the Lisbon station. The *Kangaroo* joined that Admiral's fleet on their appearance off Plymouth Sound; and, after proceeding with them to a certain latitude, was ordered to Bilboa with a convoy and brig in charge.