

**ELEANOR VERE BOYLE (1825—1916) (E.V.B.):
Writer and Illustrator: Her Life, Work and Circle**

By Michael McGarvie

On high ground above the Vale of Witham in the sequestered Somerset countryside which lies to the south-west of Frome stands Marston House. The great mansion on which generations of the Boyle family lavished care and wealth is now neglected and decaying, its tranquil existence threatened by demolition. Yet it is still majestic as it rears a long facade along the East Hill of Marston. Even in ruin the south terrace, with its superb view across the valley to the Wiltshire ridge, a prospect which the historian Collinson¹ thought one of the most beautiful in the Kingdom, is a romantic, even enchanting, spot. Marston House had its heyday yet to come when on 28 February, 1812, in one of those modest bedrooms which (typical of the Boyle family) conveyed 'the ideas of comfort and utility, with which the glitter of gold, and the rustling of damask, are ever at variance'² Isabella Henrietta, wife of Edmund, eighth Earl of Cork and Orrery, gave birth to her sixth son and youngest child. He was christened Richard Cavendish Townshend, his first name invoking the memory of the Great Earl, founder of the House of Cork. The name Cavendish indicated a relationship with the family of the Dukes of Devonshire, Isabella Henrietta, Countess of Cork being the first cousin of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, her mother, Georgiana Poyntz, Countess Spencer, being the sister of William Poyntz, Isabella's father. The Townshend name was given in honour of Lord John Townshend, who had married Richard's maternal aunt, Georgiana Anne Poyntz in 1787.



Marston House in 1845 from a painting by W.W. Wheatley. Lord Cork was then living in London and the artist has caught the lifeless look of an empty house.

Richard's parents were devoted to their children and their influence on the youngest child, who seems to have been especially beloved, was profound. Lord Cork had been born at Marston in 1767 and had followed his father into the army, serving in the Coldstream Guards. The seventh earl had inherited the title and estates at the age of 22 and thrown himself into a life of extravagance and dissipation which resulted in him having to sell his maternal estate of Caledon in Co. Tyrone and in a divorce from his wife, Anne Courtenay, which became a *cause célèbre*. His son either reacted against these extremes, or was fortunate enough to inherit the virtues of his grandfather, John, the fifth Earl of Cork and Orrery, a sincere christian and a model husband and parent. From his father, 'the real polite gentleman, qualified to shine in courts and camps . . . and pronounced by the ladies a man of uncommon address'³ came his slightly sensual good looks, but his vices were planed down to a discerning open-handedness.

At the age of 28, in 1795, the young heir of Marston, who bore by the courtesy of England his father's second title of Viscount Dungarvan, married Isabella Henrietta Poyntz, one of the Maids of Honour to Queen Charlotte. She was also his first cousin, both their mothers being the daughters of Kelland Courtenay, of Painsford in Devon. The Courtenay pedigree put even that of Boyle into the shade and the young couple were proud to give the name to their second son. The Poyntz's, although of Norman descent, had only recently begun to shine in the highest circles. They had come to prominence with Isabella's grandfather, Stephen Poyntz. His father, William, was an upholsterer of Cornhill, but the son rose to become Minister to Sweden and Steward of the Household and Governor to William, Duke of Cumberland. Poyntz's fortunes were much advanced in 1733 when he married Anna Maria Mordaunt, Maid of Honour to Queen Caroline and a niece of the Earl of Peterborough. He became a Privy Councillor and tutor to Frederick, Prince of Wales, acquiring estates at Midgham in Berkshire. The Poyntz's entered the ranks of the Court families.

The Poyntz's, both male and female, were very good looking. This was a factor in their advancement. Stephen Poyntz's daughter married the most eligible bachelor of the day, the future Earl Spencer, literally in a blaze of diamonds as Mrs. Delaney recorded.⁴ His grandson, William Poyntz, was described as 'a remarkably handsome man, very tall and with a bright, fresh complexion'.⁵ William shared the Whig sympathies of the Corks but was 'of a tendency too aristocratical to permit him to identify with the radicalism of the present day'.⁶ Not surprisingly he secured the hand of a great heiress, marrying in 1794 Elizabeth Mary Browne, the sister and heir of Lord Montagu, of Cowdray Park in Sussex, 'a lady of great beauty and many personal accom-

plishments'. Her father had left the Catholic Church and been excommunicated. The story went that the ban included fire and water. Cowdray Park was burnt down in 1792 and never rebuilt. Lord Montagu, Elizabeth's brother, was drowned shooting the falls of Schaffhausen in 1793 while William and Elizabeth Poyntz's own two sons were drowned off Bognor in 1815, the family becoming extinct in the male line.⁷ The curse was remarkably thorough and presumably invented after the events of which it was supposed to be the cause. William Poyntz's sister, Carolina Amelia, described by her daughter as 'one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, in form, feature and complexion',⁸ married Admiral Sir Courtenay Boyle. Another sister, Georgiana Anne, married Lord John Townshend while a third was the Hon. Mrs. Bridgman whose husband's first wife had been Lady Lucy Boyle, daughter of the seventh Earl of Cork. She 'was a lady possessing the kindest affections, and exercising a most unostentatious but genuine piety.'⁹ The fourth sister, the Countess of Cork, shared the Poyntz beauty as is evident from her portraits, and retained it far into old age. Her marriage to the eighth earl lasted for 48 years. Its mutual devotion was strengthened by the heavy trials put upon it as the years rolled by.

The seventh Earl of Cork died at Bath, where he had a house in Trim Street, in 1798. There is a miniature of him by Cosway at this time, still 'a conspicuous figure for his taste in dress'¹⁰ in a red velvet coat and white cravat, a brilliant, but melancholy portrait of a disillusioned roué. Edmund and Isabella now became Master and Mistress of Marston and at once began to improve the property in the interests of comfort, elegance, and privacy. For young Richard Boyle the house was an ideal place to grow up. The mansion itself was modest and homely, and facing due south, a veritable sun-trap. The park, which had been laid out by Stephen Switzer for the fifth Earl of Cork and Orrery,¹¹ was small, but intriguing. There were winding walks and patches of copse, a kitchen garden containing a cold bath, a Hermitage, an ice house, and scattered throughout the demesne, statues and trophies, among them those raised by the fifth earl to his dog, Hector, and his horse, King Nobby. Among the plants was a Glastonbury thorn which flowered at Christmas, when all the cousins and relations gathered for the festivities at the big house. Perhaps best of all was the little wooden house called Asberry Cottage, again raised by the fifth earl, to commemorate an Anglican clergyman who had sought refuge there in 1649. It now served as a summer house where the children could have tea and cultivate a little garden.¹²

There was one grave and uninvited visitor who threw a permanent shadow over this paradise—Death. The Boyle family suffered from two hereditary malaises: gout, handed down at

least from the first Earl of Orrery, and epilepsy, which may have come into the family through Margaret Hamilton, wife of the fifth earl. It killed their son, Lord Dungarvan, in 1759 and three of Richard Boyle's brothers, two of whom bore the Dungarvan title. It is not surprising that the family came to think the Viscounty unlucky.¹³ In addition, Edmund and Isabella lost their three daughters in the prime of life, so that out of nine children only three survived. Lord Cork even had the misfortune to outlive one of these, Major the Hon. Robert Boyle, who died in the Crimea in 1854. Being first cousins, their children inherited a double dose of any congenital weaknesses. Edmund and Isabella were sustained by their unquestioning faith which they passed on to their youngest son. This spirit is reflected in the inscription which they caused to be engraved on the monument to their daughters, Lady Lucy Georgiana and Lady Louisa Boyle in the Cork Chapel in St. John's Church, Frome, which declares the parents to be 'even more than reconciled to a momentary separation' by their certainty of a future reunion. Lady Cork was equally 'patience in tribulation', as her youngest son recorded on a plaque he erected to her memory in St. Leonard's Church at Marston Bigot.

What the family lacked in health, they made up for in love. Thomas Bunn, a Frome solicitor and worthy, who was born in the same year as Lord Cork, describes him in his diaries as 'an excellent husband and parent.'¹⁴ He also refers to his good temper and kindness, qualities which shine out of his portrait by Hoppner, now in the possession of the present Earl of Cork and Orrery. Richard Boyle refers in another memorial at Marston Bigot to 'his gratitude for his Father's unceasing affection'. To his mother he was also greatly devoted and she in turn had an especial love for her youngest child. In later years he thought of her as 'the guide and support of my childhood. The friend and companion of my youth'.¹⁵

In addition to this excellent parental relationship, the Boyle children were fortunate in their nurse, Mrs. Mary Briggs, whom they loved dearly. When she died at Marston House in 1847 at the age of 89, having outlived her mistress and most of her charges, John, Robert, and Richard Boyle erected a tablet to her memory among the family memorials in the chancel of Marston Church. On it they recorded their gratitude 'for her tender care during their childhood and for her steadfast affection during the later years of her life'. Richard's sister, Lady Louisa Boyle, 'a beautiful blooming girl'¹⁶ who had died of smallpox in 1826, left Mrs. Briggs an exquisite gold and enamel watch and chain which had been a christening present from her Godmother, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. Mrs. Briggs in turn bequeathed it to Richard Boyle and it is still in possession of his descendants, a token of a long forgotten love.



The Hon. and Revd. Richard Cavendish Boyle, Rector of Marston Bigot, as a youth. From a miniature, perhaps by Sir William Ross, in the possession of Captain Richard Boyle, R.N. (retd.).

As a youth, Richard Boyle was sent to Winchester. There still exists a charming miniature of him at this period. It shows a fine-boned, sensitive face with that high forehead, finely arched brows, and long nose, handed down from the founder of the family, the Great Earl of Cork. He also has the auburn colouring characteristic of the family. There is also much Poyntz in the face which shows in the delicacy and refinement of the features. The

whole effect is studious, gentle, and pure, his face being a clear window into his soul. Already in early manhood he was completely devoid of pomposity or pride of rank and showing that simplicity of character which was to endear him to his parishioners. This characteristic is underlined by the fact that he had a winning way with children and they were never afraid or shy of him. Thomas Bunn found him 'aimiable' and he was not an easy man to please. Jane Bunn, his sister, thought Richard Boyle 'truly estimable . . . very unassuming and pleasing'.¹⁷ On the other hand, there was a quiet strength and resolution in Richard Boyle on which other more domineering personalities came to rely. An old parishioner summed it up in the words: 'He's young and ruddy like David; aye and he's a sling and a stone, too!' In addition to this strength and beauty of character, he possessed what one of his curate's described as 'a high moral and intellectual refinement, in itself very beautiful'.¹⁸ Truth and rectitude were to be the hallmarks of his 40 year incumbency of the Rectory of Marston Bigot.

At Winchester, Richard Boyle was struck in the left eye by a ball when playing cricket and blinded. This, combined with the deaths of so many of their other children, may account for the somewhat protective affection of his parents. For the rest of his life, Richard Boyle was extremely sensitive about this deformity, and would only be painted or photographed side face and even then would shade his blind eye with his hand. He entered Christ Church, Oxford, the Boyle College, in 1830 becoming a Bachelor of Arts three years later and M.A. in 1835.

The tradition of a younger son of a great family going into the Church of England was still a strong one in the early 19th century. In the 17th century Michael Boyle had been Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland. Of late years the Boyles had not been especially enamoured of the Church. The eighth earl, with six sons to provide for, seems early to have considered that one of them would go into the Church and with this end in mind had bought the advowson of Marston Bigot from the Marquess of Bath in 1805 for £2,632. Richard had a genuine vocation and was ordained in 1835 at the age of 23. He at once became curate to the Rev. R.M. Meade, who was Rector of Marston and chaplain to the Earl of Cork. His first duty was the baptism of Emma Brimson on 25th July 1835. By the following May, Meade had tactfully moved on and Richard Boyle was duly appointed Rector in his place.

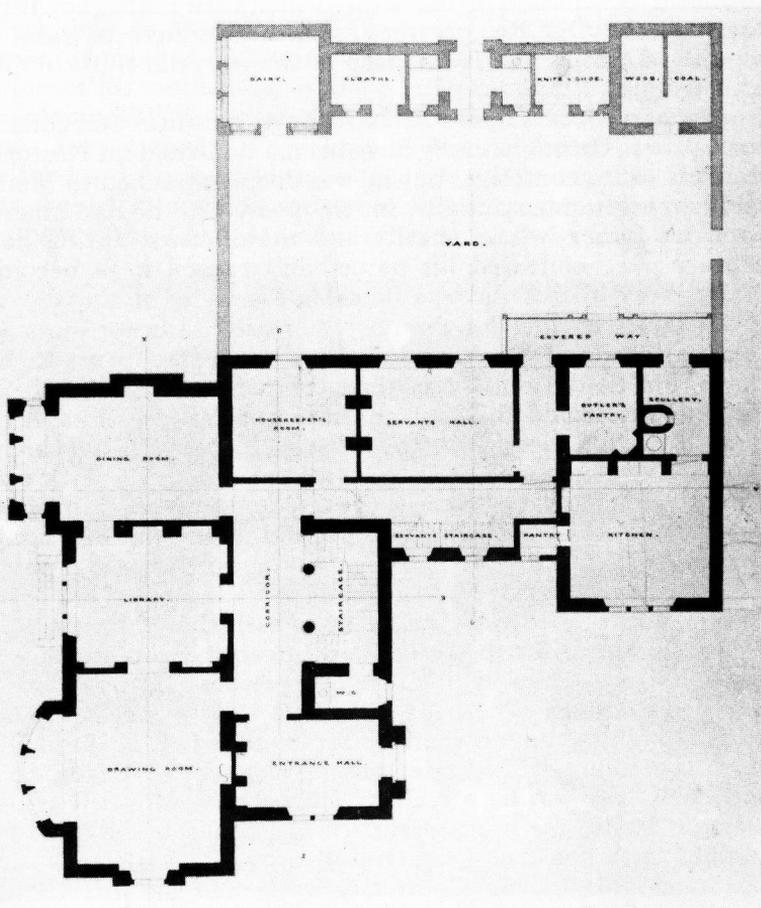
It was evidently intended from the beginning that Richard Boyle should devote his life to the people of this isolated and penurious parish, a long and narrow tract of land, marshy and well-wooded, which stretched from the Wiltshire ridge over the Vale of Witham to the East and West Hills of Marston and



An elevation of the proposed Marston Rectory by Edward Davis, City Architect of Bath, 1836. The design was little altered in execution except that the servants' wing at the back was given an extra storey.

beyond to the borders of Nunney. There was no village as such, but a scattering of farms and hovels linked by execrable lanes. The Turnpike road from Bruton and Shepton passed through the parish to Frome and connected it with an outlying portion at Spring Gardens.

Lord Cork was determined that his son should serve his cure in the wilderness in comfort and dignity. Edward Davis, the City Architect of Bath, was commissioned to draw up plans for a new house for the noble Rector. In 1836, he presented his ideas for a palatial villa, which was to rise in the midst of the Somerset countryside, in the form of an album of elegant water-colours showing ground plans and elevations of almost irresistible attraction. This still survives in the possession of Captain Edmund



Marston Rectory: Edward Davis' ground plan.

Boyle. The design is chaste, dignified, and somewhat austere, Italianate in atmosphere with its deep-eaved roof, yet fundamentally reflecting the taste of the Greek revival which Lord Cork admired and which ideally suited the character of the young Rector. Davis produced not only a distinctive building, but a practical and spacious home. The drawing-room, library, and dining room faced south to the wooded hills that had been the heart of Selwood Forest. Behind these was ample accommodation for the servants facing a walled yard in which were extensive out-buildings including a dairy. A lantern tower lights the pillared entrance hall which featured a noble cantilever staircase, again of the most austere Grecian design. Outside were terraced gardens. The plans were adopted with only minor alterations and the new rectory completed by 1839.¹⁹ Today, after many vicissitudes, including occupation by the army, which used mahogany fittings for fuel, the Old Rectory retains an atmosphere of calm and serenity, a tribute to Davis' grasp of the essential spirit of Greek architecture.

His parishioners found Richard Boyle a dutiful and conscientious priest. He might easily have been a non-resident Rector like so many of his confrères, but he was deeply attached to Marston and had a genuine sympathy for the poor. This he had inherited from his father 'whose charity and munificence during half a century . . . endeared his name, and caused it to become a household word'²⁰ in the neighbourhood, and his mother of whom it was said: Her love for the poor increased with her years. The spiritual needs of his parishioners were paramount to Richard Boyle, but he did not forget their temporal needs and when he died his wife could think of no more appropriate epitaph than that he was 'the friend of the poor in this place'.²¹ He did care and this care was expressed by such actions as rising on a dark winter night to go to a death bed. His youthful enthusiasm coupled with a preaching which was plain, simple and direct, put new life into Marston Church. People flocked there and it became a popular venue for marriages which, around 1840, averaged 40 a year. Although Boyle had two curates, he himself shared the work load as his signature in the register testifies, but their presence did allow him to be away for lengthy periods during which he travelled extensively.

Although in the ten years before he married, Richard Boyle must have found Marston Rectory too large for his needs, he was not lonely, nor was he a recluse. His parents were still living at Marston House for most of the period, while at Millards Hill, another Cork house in Trudoxhill nearby, lived Richard's uncle and aunt, Admiral Sir Courtenay Boyle and his wife Carolina Amelia, née Poyntz, the sister of the Countess of Cork. Sir Courtenay was a Fellow of the Royal Society and he had five

handsome and talented children of whom the most famous was Mary Boyle, tiny and blue-eyed, a prominent Victorian literary figure, who, if her portraits are to be trusted, inherited the Poyntz beauty, but never married. (She later had a well-known affair with Charles Dickens who wrote her 'incoherent notes of love and devotion'²² and to whom she sent a flower for his button hole wherever he was). Richard was the favourite cousin of these Boyles, and there was much tooting and froing between Millards Hill and the Rectory which Mary Boyle calls, oddly enough, 'pretty'. She recalls that his 'unbounded hospitality became a proverb with all who knew him'.²³ There was also the stimulus of literary visitors like Walter Savage Landor who would come down to Marston from Bath and read to Mary Boyle under a sycamore at Millards Hill in a voice powerful enough to shake the house.

Death again shattered this pleasant existence. The Countess of Cork died in 1843 and Sir Courtenay in the following year. Both were buried in the family vault in St. John's Church, Frome. The loss of his mother 'for whom a constant and loving devotion had coloured all his youth and earlier years'²⁴ affected Richard deeply. In a manner of speaking he lost his father at the same time for Lord Cork could no longer bear the memories Marston House held for him and retired to London where he spent the remainder of his life in Hamilton Place.



Marston Bigot Church as restored by the Revd. Richard Boyle. In the foreground the Boyle graves. From a photograph by George H. Hall, 1981.

Richard Boyle seems to have assuaged his grief by a flurry of activity. He put in hand an elaborate restoration and enlargement of Marston Church. The original church, a small plain structure, had stood in front of Marston House where it intruded on the privacy of the owners. By 1786 it was in a ruinous condition²⁵ and Richard's grandfather sought and obtained a private Act of Parliament for its demolition and for the erection of a new church on the present site. The seventh Earl of Cork, always desperately short of money, was not exactly generous in his provision. The new church of St. Leonard, which corresponds to the nave of the present church, had neither tower nor chancel. No picture of it appears to survive, but the plans do.²⁶ These show it to have been a mere chapel, generally 'Gothick', with three nine foot high pointed windows on each side. The entrance was at the west end. It was rubble built, but ennobled with a freestone plinth and cornice on which was set a battlemented parapet. Richard's father added a tower and a peal of bells in 1809 and here matters had rested.

In his second foray into the field of architecture Richard Boyle did not again opt for the Greek revival. It was already passing out of fashion and in any case he probably thought its heathen connotations unsuitable for a Christian church. Equally the debased and unauthentic 'Gothick' of his grandfathers day offended a mind that was essentially purist. The most pressing need was for a chancel so that the ritual of the church could be performed with fitting dignity. This, he decided, should be in the Romanesque, or Norman style, and that the whole church should be 'normanised' in keeping. Edward Davis was called in once again and he produced a unified building of some charm and excellent quality.

The architect was as authentic as practicality allowed. The new chancel, spacious and light, was connected to the nave by an impressive Romanesque arch. All the windows of the nave and tower were given round heads and enormous pains taken with the moulding and beak heads of the main entrance through the tower. In order that the south wall of the nave should match the dressed stone of the chancel, it was faced with ashlar. The north wall, which was not in the public eye, was left unadorned and the original rubble wall of the 1786 church can still be glimpsed. Some liberties were taken for reasons of necessity or taste. The rose window in the chancel would be anachronistic in a Norman church. The triple lancet which comprises the east window is generally an Early English device and looks distinctly odd with rounded, instead of pointed, heads. However, it probably had an impeccable source in the west window of St. Joseph's Chapel in Glastonbury Abbey. The work was completed on 23rd September, 1845, which date, together with Richard Boyle's

initials, were cut on the impost on the right of the doorway as one leaves the nave and enters the tower. In later years, he built a small chapel on the north side of the church with its own entrance (now blocked) for the use of the Earl of Cork and his family, and gave the organ and its special chamber where this ugly instrument was hidden away and did not detract from the beauty of the church.

A glimpse of Richard Boyle at this time has been left by Thomas Bunn, a Frome solicitor and noted townsman, and his sister, Jane, who visited Marston Rectory in July, 1844. They confided their impressions to diaries. Wrote Jane: 'I have spent part of a morning at the Marston Rectory, a beautiful residence finely situated & built by Lord Cork for his youngest son the Hon. & Revd. Richd. Boyle. He recd. very cordially, shewed us his gardens & the whole of his house. He spoke with great tenderness of his late mother, Lady Cork & in one of the chambers which she had occasionally inhabited, shewed me her last unfinished work & various little things that had been hers . . .'²⁷ Her brother also recorded his impressions: 'Jane went with me, by invitation, to Marston Rectory where the Hon. & Rev. Richard Boyle received us kindly . . . his father has lately built him a beautiful rectory house in a fine situation. The son has placed an inscription on stone with his father's picture above it. It is in elegant Latin and meets your eye at the door. He spoke to my sister of affecting incidents in his departed mother's illness and showed her memorials of his parents' last days. To her he showed the architectural improvements of his house and his church, both of which are beautiful. The house Italian, and the Church Gothic'.²⁸

In December, 1844, Richard officiated at the marriage of his cousin, Cavendish Boyle to Miss Rose Alexander at Marston Church. His own thoughts were turning towards matrimony, an estate for which perhaps he had not felt the need whilst his mother lived. Exactly when, or how, he met Eleanor Vere Gordon has not been recorded, but it is probable that their paths crossed at Hampton Court. Richard's aunt, Lady Boyle, wife of the Admiral, had lived there until retiring to Somerset in 1840 and her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Courtenay Boyle, continued to do so. Until his death in 1840, Richard Boyle's uncle, William Poyntz had a house on Richmond Green. Also occupying Grace and Favour apartments in the palace was Lady Albinia Cumberland, who had been a Maid of Honour to Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, and a close friend of the Royal Family. Here she was often visited by her gifted grand-daughter, Eleanor Vere Gordon. It is significant that she had fond memories of Hampton Court and it figures prominently in one of her last books, *Seven Gardens and a Palace*. These memories went back to her teens for Eleanor remembered seeing William IV and Queen Adelaide there in a

pony phaeton and glimpsed a rare side of Louis Philippe, King of the French, 'beaming with the happiest good nature, and his brown hair curling up high on the top of his head.'²⁹ She may have been recalling the extensive grounds of Hampton Court when she later wrote that 'all through the days of childhood the garden is our fairy-ground of sweet enchantment and innocent wonder'.

E.V.B. (as we will call her, anticipating her *nom de plume*) had plenty of time to absorb the atmosphere of Hampton Court. Her grandmother, Lady Albinia, lived on in her apartments at the top of the palace until her death at the age of 91 on 2nd August 1850. Her grand-daughter was by this time 25 and for the rest of her life remembered Lady Albinia as 'a little old woman, rather bent, yet with slow and stately gait' who at church made 'a point of beguiling the hour of service with the peculiar chronic long-drawn cough, in which she indulged to the exasperation of the whole congregation.'³⁰ She had a passion for beautiful books, silver plate and open windows and lived amid a multifarious collection of treasures which composed a harmonious whole. Fifty years after Lady Albinia's death, E.V.B. remembered as if it were yesterday sitting in her grandmother's apartments and listening to the 'continuous, ceaseless fall of the fountain below in the gardens: most dreamily delicious sound. Sometimes the fountain would go mad and dance wildly up and down. Even in these intervals, the very splash of it was musical'.³¹ Further on in her book, *Seven Gardens and a Palace*, she recalls how 'the water in the Fountain Court and also in the gardens uprose in one high *jet d'eau*. The strong, firm stream simply sprang into the air and fell with a certain indescribable rippling plash, which comes back for ever at will to the ear of those who knew it.'³² Even the drinking water at Hampton Court was of 'crystal purity' and she knew that it was brought in pipes three miles from Coombe Wood. There was also a beloved fountain at Ellon 'picturesque with reeds and water-lilies' which scattered 'its glitter of diamond drops in the gloom of the yew-trees shade!'³³ Such memories contributed to her passion for fountains and running water, be it ever so tame.

The pedigree of E.V.B. was rather more adventurous than that of her future husband. Her maternal grandmother, Lady Albinia, daughter of the third Earl of Buckinghamshire, and now a dignified old lady ensconced at Hampton Court, had in 1784 disgraced herself by running off with and marrying Richard Cumberland, a penniless actor. He was the son of Richard Cumberland the dramatist and a direct descendant of Richard Cumberland, Bishop of Peterborough, the friend of Pepys. Lady Albinia's husband died young at Tobago where he had gone looking for a job and she found refuge at court, first as a Lady of the Bedchamber to the princesses and later as Lady-in-Waiting to



Marston Bigot Rectory, about 1860, from a photograph in E.V.B.'s album.

Queen Charlotte. Fanny Burney found Lady Albinia 'a peculiarly pleasing woman, in voice, manner, look, and behaviour.' Court life, however, was not without its drawbacks and in 1831, during the long battle for the Reform Bill, she was confused with Lady Almeria Carpenter, the Duke of Gloucester's mistress, and in a letter to *The Times* described as having a pension 'for her former services to certain of the princes'. Wrote Lady Louisa Stuart: 'It is all one to poor Lady Albinia, whom two-thirds of the Kingdom will believe to have been some Prince's mistress in her youth, instead of a careworn wife, widow, and mother we have known her from first to last'.³⁴ Understandably Lady Albinia was 'full of affronts and grievances'. She tried to accommodate herself to changing times telling Lady Louisa in 1832 that 'she had formerly thought it a great disgrace to sit down to dinner with a doctor at Windsor, but now nobody minded rank and family'.³⁵ When she finally departed this troublesome life, Lady Albinia left to her daughter Albinia Elizabeth Gordon, E.V.B.'s mother, 'all my silver plate with Queen Charlotte's cypher & crown, a present to me from Her Majesty'. This included 54 silver handled knives and forks which Lady Albinia desired and hoped 'may remain in my daughter's family' as, indeed, they do. E.V.B. was bequeathed a miniature of her mother and 'a miniature painting after Domenichino', an early indication of her interest in the arts.³⁶

Lady Albinia's daughter, Albinia Elizabeth, married in 1811

Alexander Gordon, of Auchlunies in Aberdeenshire. Alexander, born in 1783, was the son of George, third Earl of Aberdeen (1722–1801) by what was politely called a Scottish marriage with Penelope Deering, known as Mrs. Dubois, who came from Pett in Sussex. In fact, she was one of several mistresses whom the earl set up in palatial style in various houses in Scotland and the West of England. In 1752 Lord Aberdeen bought Ellon Castle, near Aberdeen, where he himself died in 1801. Here (until her death at the age of 95) lived Mrs. Dubois and it eventually became the inheritance of her son, Alexander Gordon. Eleanor Vere was the youngest of nine children of Alexander and Albinia Gordon, born on 1st May 1825, at Auchlunies, near Aberdeen. The name Vere invoked her great-great grandfather, Lord Vere Bertie, son of the Duke of Ancaster, and his de Vere ancestors. One of E.V.B.'s brothers was lost in the wreck of *H.M.S. Challenger* off Chile in 1835, another became an admiral, a third a general. There was a grit in the Gordons of which she was proud. This combination of descent certainly made for personality and strength of character. In addition, E.V.B. was exquisitely beautiful. In 1846, she and her husband had their portraits painted by Sir William Boxall³⁷ and that of E.V.B. gives us an impression of just how charming she was. Her great-grand-daughter, Mrs. de Wend Fenton refers to her 'beautiful Madonna-like countenance, glowing with a still but vibrant inner happiness' and the picture fully bears out Jane Bunn's description of her 'picturesque countenance and form'.³⁸ Her cousin, Mary Boyle, remembered her at this time as 'young, lovely, and loveable'.³⁹ She had striking sea-blue eyes, rarely without a sparkle. Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford, said of her: 'You always seem to be made for smiles and sunshine and beautiful things'.⁴⁰ The total effect of her portrait is one of vitality, sweetness and merriment. In person E.V.B. was small and slim, although she became matronly all too soon. She was no wilting lily, but vigorous and industrious. An excellent conversationalist, she had a gift of repartee and was noted for her special and delicate sense of humour. It is revealing that her grandson, Captain Edmund Boyle, probably the last surviving person to have known her, remembers this quality above all others. Brought up in the depths of the Scottish countryside, which was always close to her heart, she had a deep love of nature. She was much attached to animals and delighted in flowers. In later life she became a keen gardener, a trait possibly inherited from her mother who had created an English garden at Ellon. All those animals whose lives I have saved will make a ladder for me to mount to Heaven, she would say.

E.V.B. had a curious love for running water which had a strong influence on her life and, apart from the indelible impression left on her by the fountains of Hampton Court, was



Eleanor Vere Boyle at the age of 21. From a portrait by Sir William Boxall painted at Marston Rectory and now in the possession of G.H. Boyle, Esq.

probably ultimately based on the experiences of a Highland childhood. She was brought up at Auchlunies, a comfortable and unpretentious family house standing high and exposed on fir clad hills above the Dee. The low, grey mansion stands in a small park dotted with beech and sycamore and well protected by wind-breaks. There is an infinity of that sapphire blue sky festooned with white fleecy clouds which meant so much to her. Auchlunies is within sight of the spires of Aberdeen and there are glimpses of

the sea and of the broad waters of the Dee. To the north west the house looks across a vast panorama of wooded hills to the distant mountains of Braemar. Brought up in this solitude, it is little wonder that E.V.B. developed an affinity with nature, a *rapport* with animals and birds and an instinctive feeling for the remote past. Even when the family settled at Hampton Wick in 1833 there were frequent visits North. E.V.B. spent much time at Maryculter, the seat of her uncle, General Gordon, in the valley below Auchlunies, a spot whose wild beauty and primeval antiquity did much to mould her character. Here she was fascinated by the varying moods of the Dee now 'smooth like liquid glass' and 'clean and crystal clear', at others a 'huge dark, foaming torrent terrible in its power', now 'shining like a silver track', always 'changeful and full of whims, like a woman'.

Culter House, surrounded by great tracks of woodland, was formerly a preceptory of the Knights Templar, and itself wrapped in mystery and legend. A ghostly priest was seen in its corridors while in the garden was the Bride's Well where a young girl about to be married had drowned herself for some long forgotten reason. She imbibed with a mixture of dread and delight these ghostly tales of the Highlands related by the oldest inhabitants. She took long, lonely walks, her imagination filled with strange visions and half-glimpsed apparitions. She was drawn to scenes of ancient violence 'rooted in silence, wrapt round with solitude'⁴² hearing the voices of the past in 'the low sough of the wind shuddering through the pines'.⁴³ She spent long hours in the walled churchyard of Maryculter, deeply shaded by beech and horse chestnut and infested with rooks, where two of her infant sisters were buried, communing with her friends the Invisible Host in the City of Silence. She mused on the tombstones, deciphered the inscriptions and traced the impedimenta of death with which they were carved, enjoying the churchyard as a garden in whose 'deep calm gloom enters not'. Memories of Maryculter and its waters haunted her until the end of her life.

Perhaps even dearer to E.V.B. than Deeside was Ellon, north-west of Aberdeen which Alexander Gordon inherited about 1840. Ellon, although now expanding rapidly, is still almost lost in a fold of the many undulating hills of Buchan. This is a country of wide skies and extensive landscapes spiced by frequent glimpses of the North Sea and the distant but constant presence of Bennachie. Ellon now lies on both sides of the River Ythan but was originally grouped round the market square on the north bank under the shadow of the castle. The houses are of granite, low and solid, making up dignified streets. The bridge, dated 1793, has been completely by-passed and cut off by a new one which carries the heavy traffic between Aberdeen and Fraserburgh. The castle to which the third Earl of Aberdeen comm-



Left: The Revd. R.C. Boyle in the library at Marston Rectory c.1865 and (below) the same view in 1981. (G.H. Hall).



issioned John Baxter to add wings, had a notable garden whose great terrace 190 yards long was of some renown. So sheltered was the garden that peaches ripened on the walls. Its yew hedges inspired E.V.B. with a lifelong love of that solemn tree. By the time Alexander Gordon came to Ellon the castle was beyond repair and he built a new house in the traditional Scottish baronial style. This, too, has been demolished and the present Ellon Castle consists of the converted stables and servants' wing. Ellon had its fountain and river, the Ythan famed for trout and salmon. Mrs. de Wend Fenton has summed up E.V.B.'s preoccupation with flowing water in this way: 'Some of E.V.B.'s happiest memories were inextricably mixed up in the sound, sight, and promise of sparkling water'.⁴⁴ She suggests that E.V.B. may have met her husband near the fountain at Hampton Court. In later years she was to provide piped water for her neighbours in Somerset. Her compassion spread to the animal kingdom as well as witness the granite drinking trough she provided at Ellon. Underneath the outward brightness of E.V.B.'s character was a darker streak, a tinge of Gaelic mysticism which gives a slightly sinister character to some of her pictures. This deep interest in the supernatural and the inexplicable surfaced occasionally in a preoccupation with dreams, omens, and death. Her mother had a fear of being buried alive and had made her husband promise that when she died her coffin should have breathing holes in the lid and be laid in a vault.

On 23rd September 1845, the Hon. and Revd. Richard Boyle and Eleanor Vere Gordon were married at St. George's, Hanover Square, London. He was 33 while E.V.B. was twenty. The bride suddenly found herself transported to a milieu rather different from Ellon or Hampton Court. Marston Bigot was remote, and conservative, although soon to be made more accessible by the passage of the Wilts., Somerset and Weymouth Railway in 1853. Robert Porteous, the conscientious and zealous steward of the ninth Earl of Cork and Orrery, who was also a Scot, but a Lowlander from Lesmahagow, was shocked by the neglect and lack of enterprise that characterised the Marston estate when he arrived a few years later. He found it 30 years behind the times and was mildly surprised to find the farmhouses and cottages 'not too bad', but as a man who respected horseflesh, was horrified to find the stables 'mere hovels, not fit for pigs'. There was a general lack of farm buildings so that the cattle had to be kept out in the fields and fed under the shelter of a fence. The system cut up the land to such an extent, especially in a wet Spring, that it took months to recover. Despite the wetness of the land, no drainage had been done and the ploughing was too shallow.

Mr. Porteous's sense of efficiency was deeply offended in that some of the Marston land was let for as little as 8s.10d. an acre

when it was only 100 miles from London 'the Commercial Capital of the World' where cheese sold at 75s. a cwt. and mutton and beef at 9d. a pound. The fields were small, the hedges overgrown and full of timber, some measuring up to 18 ft. wide. These not only took up much ground, but sheltered a legion of rabbits and rats from whose attentions the farmers suffered severely. Porteous, whose writings, one feels, were always intended for the eye of his Lord and Master, was careful to conclude his strictures by saying that no blame for this lamentable state of affairs could be attached to the present earl 'who will find it no easy matter to bring the estates up to the mark. It will take a great deal of money to do it and no little labour'.⁴⁵

E.V.B. no doubt took the romantic view expressed by Mary Boyle who thought that the countryside round Marston afforded a 'charming type of home English scenery, being almost entirely pasture land embellished with very pretty woodlands'.⁴⁶ Her husband took up his thoughtful round of parochial duties and E.V.B. did her best to alleviate the poverty and squalor which she saw around her. Besides these charitable activities and running a considerable household, her chief recreation was sketching and painting. Her talents in this direction had attracted admiration even in childhood. Skill with brush and pencil was an attribute of most Victorian young ladies, but E.V.B.'s talent was exceptional. She was an excellent draughtsman (an ability inherited from her mother) and had an innate sense of style. She was much influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites and by Albrecht Durer, but was at her best in portraying children and animals. Her babes were described as 'full of power and joy' and F.T. Palgrave likened them to those of Michelangelo. Here her heart lay and with them she had an intuitive *rapprochment*. She painted many pleasing landscapes in which, when she came to use them as illustrations for childrens' stories, she could infuse atmosphere, especially a sinister one, with consummate skill.

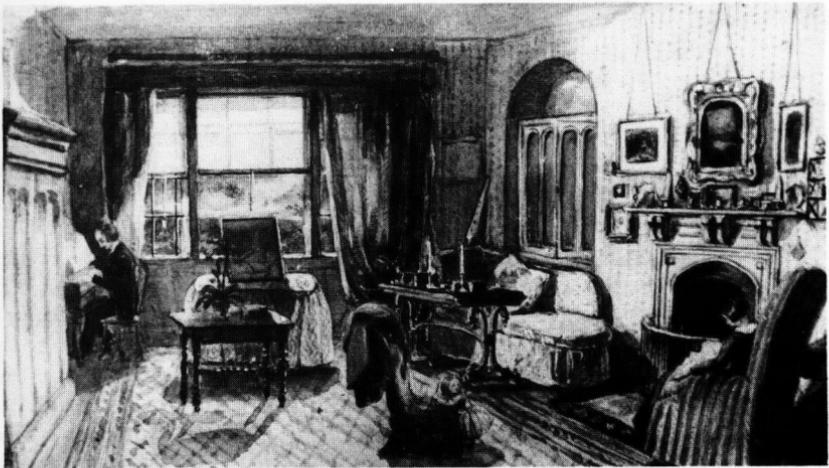
In these first years, E.V.B. drew to amuse herself and to record the progress of her children and the minutiae of domestic life. Thus she sketched the proud and jealous peacock of Millards Hill, Narcissus, which had been given to Mary Boyle by the Duchess of Somerset, and would come in on a Summers morning to eat out of her hand.⁴⁷ She found that she had interests in common with the curate, the Rev. Wathen Mark Wilks Call, who was something of a poet. On her 21st birthday he presented her with a white parchment album full of poems, thoughts, and essays in his own hand. This was friendship, but a much deeper attachment grew up between Mary Boyle and Call as appears from reading between the lines of her memoirs. A union with a penniless curate was, of course, out of the question and this may have been the reason that she never married. Born in 1817, he



E.V.B.'s drawing of her husband, Richard Boyle, and two of their children at Marston Rectory, 1849.

shared her bent for literature and was later to produce several books as well as articles for the *Fortnightly Review* and other publications. He had been curate at Marston since 1847 and it was a shock to the Boyles when he withdrew from the Church of England on conscientious grounds in 1856. (He died in 1890 three months after Mary Boyle). E.V.B. also passed the time by taking up sculpture and appears to have grown proficient enough to work in marble for a letter exists to her from the sculptor, Sir William Theed in which he denies that he was intending to send her own model to her father but 'the cast from the marble which was prepared for you'.⁴⁸ The exploration of the local countryside was not neglected and she was delighted to find the already mentioned Glastonbury thorn 'a large tree' growing within the park gates at Marston House. 'It used to bloom with great regularity in mild winters about this time (January). Tufts of flowers came all over the branches, smelling as sweet as hawthorn in May'. She discovered that the great celandine was known as the Witches flower in Somerset and the cuckoo pint 'Silly Loons'. Such were the gleanings of her local walks and talks.

Motherhood stimulated rather than dampened E.V.B.'s artistry. Her eldest child, Eleanor Isabella, was born at Marston on 12th August, 1846, quickly followed by Hamilton Richard on 3rd February, 1848. Charles John was born on 17th March, 1849, and Isabella Albinia on E.V.B.'s birthday, 1st May, 1851. The family was completed, almost as an afterthought, by the birth of Algernon Edward Richard in 1854. Many charming drawings of her husband and children survive in the collections of Mrs. de Wend Fenton at Eberston Hall and of G.H. Boyle at Bisbrooke Hall, Rutland. These include one of the family at home in their drawing room with Richard at the piano, E.V.B. sewing, and



Family scene at Marston Rectory about 1849, sketched by E.V.B.

Nellie playing. There is also another of Richard sitting on a throne-like chair looking extremely young and vulnerable. Nellie and Hamilton clamber round his knees. The picture is suffused with the affection which binds the three. In 1847, Richard Boyle was appointed a Chaplain-in-Ordinary to Queen Victoria.

The redoubtable Miss Bunn paid a second visit to Marston Rectory in April, 1851 and recorded that she had been 'most kindly received by Mr. Richard Boyle & his charming lady—whose drawings are admirable—groups of figures from her own fancy. For the first time I saw their trio of lovely children, the eldest Eleanor, a little beauty, Hamilton and his brother, very fine boys . . . the whole party walked with us to see the conservatory, gay with early flowers . . . I was much gratified by the scene of domestic happiness, especially as I have long esteemed Mr. Boyle, though nobly descended, there was no vain display, but a quiet elegance marked all the arrangements, & they are blessings to the poor around'.⁴⁹

In 1852 E. V. B.'s work appeared in print for the first time. She had started illustrating nursery rhymes to amuse her children. Now Addy & Co. published 17 of her drawings to illustrate a selection of these rhymes. The book was called *Child's Play* and was something of a revolution as it was the first time that nursery rhymes had been illustrated. Its success was encouraging and *Child's Play* was quickly followed by *Children's Summer*, almost a combined effort by Marston parish. E. V. B. drew and etched 11 exquisite illustrations, while Mr. Call, the curate, and Mary Boyle wrote the poems and prose respectively. The theme was the pastimes of a group of children in the Somerset countryside. E. V. B. was at her best when drawing children and the book was a huge success. Even John Ruskin whose view of art was law to the Victorians, was moved to praise. 'I never saw anything in modern art to approach them—except the finest work of Millais and Hunt . . . these etchings have also a grace and freshness which their works have not. Everything that they have is great . . . inestimable treasures'.⁵⁰

E. V. B. put the money she made to good use. She decided to spend it on bringing a supply of spring water to Lower Marston, the spot in the scattered parish where the largest collection of houses stood. Up till then the inhabitants had been dependent on wells and E. V. B. with her special love for running water could think of no better gift. The water had to be brought a considerable distance and the total cost was £120, at least £2000 by today's values. She designed the well-head herself and it was gratefully christened and inscribed 'Eleanor's Well'. It still stands outside the Village Hall, somewhat battered and now dry. The indefatigable Miss Bunn was on hand for the formal opening. She thought the fountain of 'simple & elegant form' and waited with

the women from the cottages and the village school girls in neat uniforms for Richard Boyle's arrival. It was a warm July day in 1852 and tea tables were set under the trees. 'When Mr. Boyle arrived we proceeded to the fountain watching in silent expectation for the first flow of water, at length it came plentifully in a clear stream. Mr. Boyle addressed the rustic party speaking of water as one of the greatest earthly benefits of heaven to man . . .' The formal proceedings concluded with a hymn of praise from the school girls after which the whole party sat down to tea, E. V. B. waiting 'on everyone with the sweetest kindness'. Later the Boyles arranged for a supply of water from the same source to be piped to Tytherington, a hamlet in Frome parish, but on the Marston estate, where the remains of the fountain can still be seen near Manor Farm.



Eleanor's Well about 1865 with some of the local people posed around it. In the background is the school, built by Richard Boyle in 1857.

The opening of Eleanor's Well caused Mr. Call to burst into song in honour of the occasion:

Fair fields were ours, touched with a mellow glow
 From gorgeous clouds at rise, at set of sun,
 And shadowing trees, but no glad spring had run
 Beside our homes, to bless the day and night.
 But see! the water flows with gentle might,
 In metal highway thro' green pastures led;
 And o'er the sculptured basin see it shed
 A silver stream, a fall of sparkling light!
 Thus with wise heart a gentle fancy wed,
 Long summer morns, hath for our solace wrought;
 So noble work succeeds to noble thought,
 So the hand justifies the heart and head,
 So the child's play to earnest close is brought
 So piety to poetry is wed.

Parish life continued, although some of the merriment had gone out of it. Lady Boyle had died in 1851 and Millards Hill was let to strangers. Lord Cork, crippled by gout and failing sight, stayed on in London. Marston House was deserted and falling into disrepair. But in June, 1856, he finally passed away in his 89th year. His body was brought back to Marston House where it lay in state in a superb coffin covered with purple silk velvet emblazoned with his arms and the insignia of the Order of St. Patrick, of which he had been senior knight, all richly gilt. By the earl's request the time of the funeral at St. John's, Frome, was kept secret and the utmost simplicity observed. Nevertheless, the procession from Marston was preceded by many of the tenantry with silk scarves and hatbands, after which came the hearse drawn by six horses, followed by four mourning coaches four by four in the first of which were Richard Boyle, E.V.B., and their two sons. In the second came their 27 year old nephew Richard, the new Earl of Cork and Orrery and proprietor of the Marston estate. 'Every mark of respect was paid to his memory by the townspeople; almost every shop was either wholly or partially closed, and the drapery of the church was covered in black cloth, while the building was filled by people from all classes, who observed the greatest decorum and propriety during the solemn service'.⁵¹ The eighth earl had been Lord of Marston for 58 years. It was the end of an era.

Lord Cork's will underlines his charity and consideration. The poor of Cork received £2,000, those of Charleville in the Barony of Orrery, £1,000, and the Rector of Marston Bigot £200 for the use of the poor inhabitants. His stewards in Ireland and England

received presents of plate, 'each of the men labourers in my garden at Marston' £10, and the women labourers £5. Lord Cork's 'affectionate and kind nieces', Lady Clinton and the Marchioness of Exeter, £100 each. E.V.B. received £200 for her own use and Richard Boyle four silver candlesticks as well as 'my gold watch, chain and seals'. Together with his brother, John, and the children of his brother Robert, Richard received a share of a trust fund of £50,000 and £4,000 in addition. He and his brother and nephews were also to receive the residue of the unsettled estate, properties such as Millards Hill House and Pyle Farm which the eighth earl had bought in his lifetime. If sold, the first refusal was to be offered to Viscount Dungarvan who inherited the settled estate. As Richard was one of Lord Cork's executors, and as a result of the will became a wealthy man, this may have led to a certain coolness between the Rectory and the new Lord of Marston.⁵²



Marston Rectory: The Ionic pillars of the hall and cantilever staircase by Edward Davis, City Architect of Bath. (G.H. Hall).

The new earl 'a genial, high and generous minded man' had been born in Dublin in 1829. He married in 1853 Emily Charlotte, the daughter of the wealthy Marquess of Clanricarde, and on succeeding to the family estates put in hand repairs and additions to Marston House. For the next fifteen years the builders were ceaselessly at work.⁵³ In politics he was a Liberal but 'did not seek to find a justification for his political fidelity from the display of deep knowledge, profound conviction, or great elevation of view'.⁵⁴ Although he held minor political office—he was twice Master of the Horse and three times Master of the Buckhounds—his real passions were the Marston estate, which he spent a lifetime improving, and hunting. He was a bold and good rider to hounds and his turnouts were described as some of the nattiest ever seen. He and his Countess had a young and growing family; in addition Emily had literary pretensions so relations between the big house and the Rectory should have been close, and indeed Emily and Aunt Ella appear to have been friends. Emily was a remarkable beauty, well-known for her keen wit and brilliant table talk. Sir Horace Rumbold described her as 'pretty, clever and high bred'.⁵⁵ She was the author of a rather thin volume of *Memoirs and Thoughts* in 1886 and produced the valuable, but badly edited, *Orrery Papers* in 1903. Lord Cork was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset in 1864 and Marston House became the social centre of the county.

For some years E.V.B. had been designing stained glass windows. Her husband gave five to the nave of Marston Church, all of which survive. They are of excellent quality, individual design, and rich and glowing colour. It is difficult to be sure of their chronology, but the first appears to be the Salvator Mundi window in the middle of the south wall of the nave. It is in memory of Richard's mother, Isabella, Countess of Cork and Orrery, and bears the date of her death, 29th November, 1843. Almost contemporary must be the window on its west side showing St. Peter for both windows have an identical lower panel with her husband's initials R.C.B. and his coat of arms, *per bend, embattled, argent and gules* (Boyle) quartering three *torteaux* for Courtenay to which is added a slight adaption of the family motto, God's providence is *our* inheritance. It is interesting that Richard Boyle uses his father's arms differenced by a martlet rather than quartering with the Boyle coat those of Poyntz, his mother's family. The third window on the south side, showing St. John, is probably the last being a memorial to the eighth Earl of Cork. In the lower panel is a splendid representation of his coat of arms, Boyle and Courtenay again quartered, surrounded by the chain of the order of St. Patrick, and those of Poyntz, *barry of eight or and gules*, shown separately, the whole composition upheld by the Boyle supporters, *two lions, per pale, embattled*;

the dexter, *gules* and *argent*, the sinister, *argent* and *gules*. The two windows on the north side of the nave are to George Warburton, and to Richard's brother, Robert, who died at Varna in 1854. Each window bears the initial T.W. for Thomas Willement, the celebrated Victoria glass-painter, who transformed E.V.B.'s designs into splendid reality.

This was not the end of E.V.B.'s industry. She was also painting in oils as a somewhat pensive portrait group of her five children, much influenced by the work of Millais, now at



A somewhat pensive portrait of her five children, painted by E.V.B. about 1855, much influenced by the work of Sir John Millais.

Bisbrooke Hall, goes to show. She was also busy illustrating books through which the name of E.V.B. became familiar to two generations of Victorian children. In 1861 she illustrated a sumptuous edition of Lord Tennyson's *May Queen*, the drawings reflecting the well-loved landscape around Marston Bigot, and with Frederick Leighton and others provided pictures for a book called *Woodland Gossip* which Mary Boyle translated from the German in 1864. *A Dream Book*, which is an anthology with drawings, appeared in 1870. *The Story without an End* had ten colour illustrations of which the original art work is at Ebberston Hall. In 1873 she illustrated an edition of Andersen's fairy tales and two years later published *Beauty and the Beast*. The distinctive colour pictures which E.V.B. painted for this edition are at Bisbrooke

Hall. Her last book for the young, *New Child's Play*, came out in 1879. Not all her books were equally successful. *Child's Play* took 15 years to sell 5,000 copies, but her drawings attracted high prices. In January, 1867, her agents, Cundall & Fleming, of New Bond Street, wrote to say that they had sold her drawings for £160.⁵⁶ There is an interesting judgement of E.V.B.'s work in Forrest Reid's *Illustrators of the Sixties* (Faber, 1928) in which the author appears to come to mock but stays to praise. He includes her in his final chapter among the rank and file, mentioning E.V.B.'s artistry 'not with the purpose of denying its slightness and amateurishness, but because, at its best, it possesses a naive charm which has a distinct value of its own. Such drawings as the frontispiece to the one volume edition of Richard Jefferie's *Wood Magic* (Macmillan, 1877), are really lovely things in their own unpretentious fashion. The coloured illustrations . . . are far less pleasing, and seem crude in the extreme when compared with the colour prints of Kate Greenaway or Randolph Caldecott.' Reid considered the drawings in *A Children's Summer* 'charming things', the waifs and strays 'a most interesting and varied collection'. He thought *The New Child's Play* 'one of the most delightful of all E.V.B.'s books'.

Richard Boyle was equally active in his own sphere. He inherited the family passion for building and in 1857 erected the school 'For the benefit of the poor' and as a further memorial to his father. The site chosen was at Lower Marston behind Eleanor's Well. The style this time was Gothic, generally of the Decorated period. Now the Village Hall, it is substantially built and not without charm and character. On the right of the entrance is an inscription to the eighth Earl of Cork and the arms of Boyle quartering Gordon, three formidable boar's heads. Although education was not then compulsory, the school was a great success. In 1863 the Diocesan Inspector reported that every child, with one exception, was 'most satisfactory in respect of order, discipline, and attainments; above all the tone seems to be all that could be desired . . . the children are clean, cheerful and nice-mannered. The needlework is especially good. Most zealous and efficient help is given by the Rector . . . A school so managed is a great blessing . . .' Richard with an inevitable touch of paternalism assured his parishioners 'that their sons and daughters are here earnestly taught to do their duty in that station of life in which God has placed them'. In 1866, 52 children were examined of whom 46 passed in reading, 37 in writing and 39 in arithmetic. The inspector commented that fair general progress had been made, although 'little is known of geography and grammar.'⁵⁷

Another project which Richard had been working on for more than 20 years came to fruition in these years. This was the

provision of a proper church at Gare Hill in the south-west corner of his parish. Gare Hill was in the heart of Selwood Forest, a lonely spot. As the neighbouring Woodlands had been the refuge of coiners and thieves, so Gare Hill was the stronghold of squatters and poachers. Lord Weymouth had established a Christian presence in the Woodlands by building St. Katherine's Church in 1711 and in the early 19th century the local clergy led by Mr. Festing, the zealous Vicar of Witham Friary,⁵⁸ determined to plant the Cross more firmly in Selwood. Money being in short supply, they adapted to their purpose the little school at Gare Hill which had been endowed by one Thomas Mears.⁵⁹ As the building had been conveyed to trustees as a school, it could not be consecrated, but it was licenced for services and sacraments by the Bishop of Bath & Wells in 1832. It proved its need for 'the congregation is often as large (and frequently larger than) the Chapel can well contain'.

The Rev. William Phelps, gathering material for the unpublished Frome volume of his *History of Somerset*, has left us an intriguing account of the situation at Gare Hill which he describes as 'A colony of poor persons who have been long settled on some open waste lands within three contiguous parishes vizt. Marston Bigot, Witham Friary, & Maiden Bradley in Wiltshire . . . by the inattention of the agents of the three lords, to whom the property belonged, these people held uninterrupted possession of their cottages and gardens for twenty-five years, and could not be ejected . . . and all efforts to dispossess them were frustrated. They were accustomed to meet together annually and appropriate the common or waste for potatoe (sic) land. In fact they were poachers and wood thieves. In this state they continued until the Earl of Cork aided by the neighbouring clergy, began to christianize them, by establishing a school and building a school-room in which divine service is performed every Sunday, which has happily produced a good effect.' Phelps goes on to describe the 'habits and avocation' of the inhabitants as 'not of a reputable character' and speaks of their 'spiritual destitution.' Richard Boyle he says, 'exerted himself to rescue them from such propensities' and quotes the provision of the chapel as 'a noble instance of the liberality and true Christian feeling of the Earl of Cork and Orrery to provide for the spiritual wants of a colony of very poor people . . .'⁶⁰

Immediately on coming to Marston, Richard Boyle threw himself into the work of establishing Gare Hill Chapel on a more permanent basis. An appeal for its enlargement and endowment was launched in 1835. Donations ranged from £1,000 from the Earl of Cork to one pound from Sir Courtenay Boyle, and five shillings from Mrs. Briggs and Mrs. Southwood, servants at Marston House. We may be sure that Richard Boyle was that



Gare Hill Church from a photograph by George H. Hall, 1981.

'anonymous friend to religion and the poor' who gave £100.⁶¹ By 1840 the endowment had reached £2800 which brought in an income of £84 of which £70 went as a salary for the curate and the rest on repairs and incidental expenses. There is a local tradition that this chapel, which was thatched, burnt down. It was later rebuilt by Richard Boyle as a house for the schoolmaster.⁶² Real progress could not be made until 1856 when Lord Cork left £1200 for the building of a new chapel at Gare Hill. William Butterfield was called in to design it and a more prominent site was chosen on the hilltop overlooking a great panorama. The land was given by the new earl and the simple church built under Richard Boyle's direction and largely at his expense. Appropriately dedicated to St. Michael and standing in a walled churchyard, it is a conspicuous local landmark and one of the most splendidly situated churches in the county. It closed in 1979. Besides the church, Richard Boyle built several houses at Gare Hill, replacing miserable hovels with spacious and comfortable cottages such as those now known as Corner House and Penstone House.

While her husband was thus engaged, E.V.B. was founding a parish magazine. The first issue appeared on 1st January, 1863, the cover bearing an attractive sketch of a group of children round Eleanor's Well. Besides the usual religious tracts and records of births, marriages, and deaths, the magazine had a marked literary flavour and one wonders what the yokels must have made of it all. The Rector contributed the occasional solemn obituary or travelogue, E.V.B. wrote articles on the holidays in Switzerland and the South of France which punctuated the even tenor of life at Marston Bigot, and now and again an outside contributor was called in such as W.J. Harvey, a Frome journalist, who described the Roman villa at Whatley, and Mary Boyle, who penned an amusing piece of *What a Little Bird Saw* at the Frome Industrial Exhibition of 1866.⁶³

The magazine gives us the occasional glimpse of village life. In 1863 Richard Boyle instituted a Harvest Home, influenced no doubt by the bountiful year the parish had enjoyed, 'the hay and harvest so plentiful, the Summer so warm, the winter up to this date (23rd December) so mild; blessed indeed in many ways has Marston been' as the Rector wrote. He invited every man and woman in the parish and many of the older boys. After a service 147 people were entertained in a great tent in the Rector's field, decorated in red and white, the Boyle colours. When the 'old English fare' of cold beef, salad, and plum pudding had been consumed, the farmers' wives provided tea and the proceedings concluded with a firework display.

It was a great year for Marston. It had begun with a ball at the 'big house' on New Years Day to celebrate the first birthday of Lord Cork's heir, Viscount Dungarvan. From the doggerel which appeared in the magazine, it appears to have been a somewhat mixed party:

The tradesmen and the tenants,
 Came flocking in again,
 From Frome's unsightly market place;
 From Marston's muddy plain.

'The floor was in the most perfect condition for dancing upon, its high polish creating in some instances, both amazement and amusement'. In March, Lord Cork gave a dinner to 'all his workmen and their wives' to mark the marriage of the Prince of Wales. He also provided tea for the school children. Most of the farmers followed Lord Cork's example and gave their men either a dinner or a supper.

The Boyles had been Lords of the Manor of Frome Vallis since 1751 and from first to last took a genuine interest in the welfare of the town. E.V.B. was particularly interested in the School of Art, founded by J.W. Singer, the brass founder, and as



The dining room at Marston Rectory, about 1865.

Lady Patroness did everything possible to promote its interests. Her own ideas on art education were expressed in an address she prepared for delivery to the School. It was not considered correct that she should give it in person so her husband read it for her on 20th November, 1870. She declared that she believed 'that all truth, whether of painting or sculpture, demands a certain single-mindedness and childlike character . . . joined with an intense, though perhaps unconscious, love of Nature.' E.V.B. was ahead of her time in her appreciation of vernacular architecture: "You have but to pass along the street of almost any country town or village in England", she told the students' — here in Somersetshire for instance, in this town of Frome — and look up at the many old houses which remain, to feel that good design must once have come naturally to us. These gabled houses were doubtless built by the common masons of the place; yet how quaintly pleasant are they to look upon! In many places they are really beautiful with ornamental timbers, carved stone doorways, mullioned windows, groups of twisted chimneys, and always the characteristic high pitched roof.' As for the painter's palette she advised her hearers to look no further than the hedgerow: 'Many a lesson in colour you may find in the old bare hedges, with their soft shades of grey and brown, their purple bramble sprays, and here and there a dash of gold, where some Autumn leaf, forgotten by the winds, still quivers on its stalk'.⁶⁴

In the late 1860s, Richard Boyle and his wife began to think in terms of retirement and of finding a home of their own. Before leaving Marston Bigot they resolved to give a gift to Frome to mark their long association with the town and it was E. V. B.'s idea that it should be an ornamental fountain. Although Frome had plenty of water it was not well endowed with either fountains or ornaments. E. V. B. set to work on the design which in respect for Richard Boyle's cloth was to combine the elements of a market cross which Frome also lacked. No water runs to the Boyle fountain today and the basin is used as a flower bed. The soft red Pennant stone of the bowl has decayed and the inscriptions have become almost illegible. The shaft of the cross itself is chipped and cracked and much of the detail obscured by grime or worn away, so it is not easy to imagine the beauty of the original conception or the care and artistry which went into the design. The deep moulding of the octagonal basin was intended to produce a strong shadowy effect to be viewed in conjunction with the water in it. From the midst of the water rose a pedestal, carved with ivy and narcissi, from a full-sized drawing by E. V. B. Four jets of water were concealed in this foliage and splashed



One of E. V. B.'s illustrations for *The May Queen*: 'To-night I saw the sun set: he set and left behind The good old year, the dear old time, and all my peace of mind'. Through the window is the view of the Wiltshire ridge from Marston Rectory.

down into the basin. Here was also engraved the motto of the Boyle family, 'God's Providence is mine inheritance'. Above rose the cross itself, nine feet high, octagonal in form and ornamented by four series of crockets which diminish in size as they go up the shaft. The whole was carved out of a single block of the finest red Devon marble, which weighs nearly a ton, and we must imagine it as highly polished and reflected in the sparkling water. On the lower part of the shaft is Richard Boyle's monogram, an entwined R.C.B. and on the bowl is the inscription: 'Richard Cavendish Boyle gave this fountain to the town of Frome A.D. 1871'. The Lord of the Manor also received some credit and on the lower side of the bowl are engraved the words: 'The site for this fountain was given by Richard Edmund St. Laurence, 9th Earl of Cork and Orrery, K.P.' The inscriptions are now very worn and their content, together with some additional information, has been incorporated in a plaque erected (by their courteous consent) on the nearby Lloyd's Bank premises. This was given by E.V.B.'s great-grandson, G.H. Boyle, and the Frome Society for Local Study and was unveiled by Mrs. G.H. Boyle on 1st May, 1977 — E.V.B.'s birthday.

The design of the cross and fountain were E.V.B.'s, probably much influenced by one at Ford Castle in Northumberland, erected in 1864 to the design of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, of which there is a photograph in one of her albums at Bisbrooke Hall. Ford was the home of E.V.B.'s friend Louisa, Lady Waterford, who wrote to her in 1870: 'You are charming, and I am delighted with you . . . how I do delight in you because you have so much of the girl left, and I scarcely ever read a novel without finding you in it.'⁶⁵ The actual carving of the cross was done by Joseph Chapman, one of a dynasty of Frome builders and sculptors. The work took him six months. In unveiling the fountain in May, 1871, Richard Boyle chose words which, more than 100 years later, seem particularly poignant. 'Climate may dim the lustre of the marble', he said, 'time may efface the words carved on the stone, the supply of water may fail — over these things there is no human control. This fountain may lose in the course of its years much of its beauty . . .' So it proved to the letter. This prophecy of impending doom was not allowed to mar the day which ended with three hearty cheers being given for the Earl of Cork and Her Majesty the Queen.⁶⁶

There was some criticism of the fountain in the *Somerset and Wilts Journal* which declared that it was neither ornamental, nor useful for getting water, or for dogs drinking. There were no cups to drink from it. Moreover, it leaked. *The Frome Times* defended the fountain and condemned the *Journal's* 'questionable taste'. At least the fishmongers found it useful on market days to wash their stock and keep it cool. The urchins stood on the bowl and drank

from the leaden jets. After the Second World War, Frome Urban District Council proposed to move it altogether. They had the grace to consult a local historian, Mr. J. O. Lewis, who declared it to be of no historical or artistic importance whatsoever. The Council resolved to go ahead, but fortunately nothing was done. Today we are humbler and realise that we have no monopoly of taste while the historical interest of the cross as a link between Frome and a distinguished family is clear.

Soon after the unveiling of the Frome fountain, the Boyle's went north to Ellon. There in August, 1871, they lost their eldest daughter, Nellie, who had endured a long slow decline. Her body was brought back to Marston and buried in the Cork plot at the east end of the church. The inscription on her tombstone is movingly simple: that she was born to their great joy and died to their great sorrow. Later a memorial window was unveiled at the new church of St. Mary-on-the-Rock at Ellon bearing the legend: Grateful to a Heavenly Father Richard Boyle places this memorial of his love for his child Eleanor Boyle who died at Ellon Castle August 11th, 1871, aged 25. Less than two years later, in March, 1873, E. V. B.'s father died at Ellon in his ninetieth year and was buried at Maryculter.

The Boyles now spent less time in Scotland and less at Marston. They had, in 1870, found a home of their own, 'an old house full of echoes'. This was Huntercombe Manor, near Burnham in Buckinghamshire, which they bought from Grenville Wells. It was quite close to Britwell which had been the favourite seat of Richard Boyle's ancestor, Charles, fourth Earl of Orrery. Huntercombe, which is now a residential adult education college, was a gabled house of mediaeval origins in a poor state of repair and with no garden to speak of. E. V. B. drowned her sorrows in its re-creation. 'We found hardly any flowers', she wrote, 'a large square lawn laid out in beds . . . old wrought-iron gates in the wrong places . . . Here we brought a skilful gardener, possessed of common sense and uncommon good taste'⁶⁷ (his name was Jesse Foulk). She could not endure the featureless type of garden which could be taken in at a glance with which she had had to make do at Marston Bigot. She liked bosky paths, green surprises, hidden grassy ways, and pleasant orchard corners, and above all nothing gloomy, except that is for English yew whose 'thousand years of gloom' were a different story. She had relished the yew hedges at Ellon and planted them at Huntercombe as a sober-hued background to those brilliant 'borders of tangled sweetness' of which she was so fond. The broad walk, 240 yards long, was inspired by the terrace at Ellon.

Formal planning did not suit E. V. B.'s conception of gardening. Rather 'year after year it was shaped into form and dignity, as the eye felt its way, so to speak, and little by little knew



Huntercombe

—or thought so—what was wanting to perfect the place'.⁶⁸ She was one of the first to plant roses, for which she had a particular love, on a large scale and put in 20,000 snowdrops to form a white carpet in the winter. They were followed by violets, daffodils, primroses, wall-flowers and cinemones. Irises succeeded in May and in June came the roses. E.V.B. admired weeds and allowed white violets and wood strawberries to spread everywhere. She felt that there was more individuality and feeling in wild growths. Her 'winged friends' were very much a part of the scheme of things: 'How much they enhance for us the grace and charm of the garden . . . It is their gay light-heartedness that is so delightful . . . who ever saw a grave bird?'⁶⁹ It was said that the diversion of the road from Burnham to Windsor (which originally ran close to the house) in 1877 carried out at Richard Boyle's expense was more for the benefit of the feathered than the human inhabitants of Huntercombe.⁷⁰

While Huntercombe was in the hands of the builders, time was still spent at Marston Rectory and there their daughter Isabella was married to Sir George Gough Arbuthnot in September, 1873. The Sunday School children were entertained to tea and cake in honour of the occasion at the Rectory and beef

was given away to the parishioners. The local farmers were presented with wedding cake and favours, while the bells of Marston and Frome rung out joyous peals.

In July 1875, Richard Boyle retired after spending 40 years as Rector of Marston. His parishioners presented him with a 'handsome massive silver inkstand of exceeding chaste design, weighing about 43 oz'. The large sum of £28 had been raised by subscription for its purchase. It was not given to Richard Boyle to enjoy a long retirement at Huntercombe. In 1878 he suffered a stroke, 'the unseen blow was struck which separated him from the active world of life and thought, secluding him at once from all present hope and enjoyment'.⁷¹ He lived on for eight years, bearing his affliction with 'constant courage and gentleness', still emerging occasionally in a wheelchair to visit friends or take fruit to the sick. E.V.B. describes her husband's illness as painful and miserable and as she had always to be with him, she gave up drawing and took up writing instead. Her first book was *Ros Rosarum*, an anthology of verse devoted to roses and illustrated with woodcuts, which she sub-titled 'Dew of the ever-living rose gathered from the poet's gardens of many lands'. Lord Tennyson and Lord Lytton were among those who contributed new verses to it. *Notes and Queries* reviewed *Ros Rosarum* enthusiastically: 'With its lovely typography, its appropriate cover, and the general excellence of the workmanship, this may claim to be one of the daintiest volumes ever issued'.

Thus encouraged, E.V.B. continued to write. *Days and Hours in a Garden* was published by Elliot Stock in 1884. Originally written during her husband's illness, this story of the changing garden at Huntercombe throughout the year is inscribed: 'To Richard Cavendish Boyle whose love for nature and for art, years have not chilled nor trouble changed, these records of our garden were inscribed by E.V.B. in 1884.' It went into at least seven editions and was her most popular work. In 1900, Macmillan published *Sylvana's Letters to an Unknown Friend* 'not about anything else but gardens and the joy of them' and in the same year there appeared what is probably her best book and certainly the one most revealing about herself, *Seven Gardens and a Palace*. Huntercombe, Hampton Court, and Dropmore feature and there is a moving account of the gardens of her childhood in Aberdeenshire, but, curiously, she never wrote about Marston. A beautifully bound copy of this book, probably the one she presented to her friend, Queen Alexandra, belonged to Queen Mary and is now in the London Library. Her last work came out when she was 83. This was *The Peacock's Pleasaunce*, published by John Lane in 1908. It still reflected her broad interest in nature, not only Weeds of the Garden, but also The Haunted Wood and A White Earwig, finding a place among the chapters. By the time

she died, E.V.B. had written or illustrated 21 books.

Much of this consolation was in the future. At Huntercombe, Richard Boyle came to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. E.V.B., always on the outlook for signs and portents, noted in her diary on 26th March, 1886: 'The rooks have forsaken us after four years. Father very ill'.⁷² Her diary for 1885-86 is inscribed: 'Do not open this book if my heart is not to break' and it contains "the rose that Foulk brought him the last morning & said 'Goodbye Mr. Boyle thank-you for . . .' He could not finish." Richard Cavendish Boyle died on March 31st and was buried in a quiet corner of the churchyard at Marston Bigot.

For more than thirty years E.V.B. lived on at Huntercombe Manor, gardening, writing, sketching, and throwing herself wholeheartedly into the joys and sorrows of two more generations, but enduring the sad experiences that are the inevitable accompaniment of great years. Yet she led a full life, being on terms of friendship with the Royal Family and entertaining the cream of Victorian Society. She interested herself in the affairs of Burnham, giving money for the restoration of the church tower and providing a screen. She founded a Band of Mercy for the schoolchildren of Burnham who undertook 'to be kind to animals and protect them from cruelty', entertaining them at Huntercombe, on one occasion with 'a most interesting account of a dog, and some anecdotes of wasps'. She gave recitals 'with great taste and precision in the shades of pathos'.⁷³

Six years after her husband's death, E.V.B. went to stay with her friend the Duke of Somerset at Maiden Bradley. It was the October of 1892. She drove to Longleat ('all so perfectly beautiful. Several swallows . . .') and rattled over the bumpy roads to Mells to see her closest male friend, Maures Horner. But the highlight of her stay came on October 16th: 'Lovely, perfect day, the Duke drove me at 11 to Gaer Hill and Marston—the whole country most radiantly beautiful—in its mellow Autumnal colour—One woman Brimson knew me, at Gaer Hill—the church path (at Marston) was locked so I could not go to it—I walked up the lane to the lodge while the Duke went to the Rectory to enquire for Mr. Constable—I had time waiting in the lane to remember a thousand things in the long past away—memories connected with the old home came crowding thickly—I gathered 2 leaves of violet for Bella'.⁷⁴ In 1899 E.V.B. visited Frome and this time was allowed to address the School of Art. She seems to have sensed the end of an era finding the times 'charged with a sense of fulness and strange unrest and hurry'. That she was out of touch with modern art is underlined by her remark *vis-a-vis* the impressionists that a muddle of nothing looking like something. Her message did not change: Art and Nature always go hand in hand but Nature could only be represented not

imitated for 'the best of beauty is a finer charm than the best rules of Art can ever teach'.⁷⁵ Three years later she had an exhibition of her 'Sketches, Dreams and Drawings' at Leighton House, Kensington.

Friends and associates of her youth were dying in ever increasing numbers and she diligently noted their decease in a curious diary into which she also entered details of her weird and vivid dreams. Part of her world crumbled away with the death of her nephew by marriage, the ninth Earl of Cork and Orrery, which occurred 'with painful suddenness' on 22nd June 1904. The bell of Wells Cathedral tolled on the news of his death becoming known. Only the previous week, Lord Cork had mingled with the worshippers at Marston Church and ridden for two or three hours over the estate and through Postlebury Wood. Now Somerset lost 'a nobleman universally popular and esteemed, the tenantry on the Marston estate a kind and considerate landlord, and the town of Frome a true and generous friend'.⁷⁶ The tributes were sincere and heartfelt. The Bishop of Bath and Wells said simply: 'Lord Cork was one of the most unaffected, genuine and true hearted friends a man could have' and Rev. W.A. Dickworth, of Orchardleigh, told the Frome Bench that 'no man in his position felt and acted so thoroughly in the spirit of the French motto—Noblesse oblige . . . I am probably the only magistrate present who recollects him as a boy, and I can truly say that his popularity as an Eton boy continued to the day of his death'.⁷⁷ The ninth earl had lived at Marston for 70 years and he defined



The ninth Earl of Cork and Orrery, E.V.B.'s nephew by marriage.

his attitude to it in a speech to his tenantry on 20th July, 1903, when they presented him with an address and a silver cup to mark his Golden Wedding. He had, he said 'been the owner of this property for rather more than 46 years. Not only that, but I came to Marston in 1834 as a child of only five years old, and from that day, with a very little interval, it has been my home, and a home which I love better than anything else'.

Lord Cork, who died in London, was buried at Marston on 27th June, the body being carried from Marston House by twelve men of long service on the estate, through the ranks of the Frome troop of the North Somerset Yeomanry. A wreath from the Queen arrived inscribed: 'In memory of our old and valued friend, Lord Cork, from Alexandra.' E.V.B. attended the memorial service held the same day at the Chapel Royal, St. James's. She noted in her diary: 'A beautiful service—most touching, beautiful music'.⁷⁸ The new Earl of Cork, nick-named Sol, was not, alas, a man in the same mould as his father. Very much a Londoner and member of half a dozen clubs in the capital, he disliked society, hated being waited on, and did not care for Marston. A reckless gambler, he was also hopelessly in debt. The tenth earl, as he now became, persuaded his brother, the Hon. Robert Boyle, to break the entail and during 1905 the whole estate, including the house and the entire contents, was sold.⁷⁹ It had been in the Boyle family for 268 years. The house was sold against the wishes of the rest of the family and E.V.B. thought it shameful. At the sale of pictures she much wanted John Wootton's portrait of the fifth Earl of Orrery's horse, King Nobby, but was unable to afford it.

The truth was that at the age of 80, E.V.B. was for the first time in her life comparatively poor. Her husband had left nearly £98,000, perhaps worth two million pounds today. Unfortunately, it had been entrusted to her son-in-law, Sir George Arbuthnot, a banker. He overreached himself and went bankrupt and much of the money was lost. In her 80's sight and strength begun to fail. She still drew occasionally. Her last work 'Love that hath us in the net' was sketched for Lord Tennyson in 1911 and done with all her old skill and charm. When she could no longer write or paint there remained, as a friend wrote, 'her wonderful brightness, her youthful joy, her spirituality, her sympathy, her calm courage in facing her many trials and sorrows and her constant and intense love of nature . . .'⁸⁰ Her son, Major John Charles Boyle, and her daughter, Lady Arbuthnot, were a great support to her in these years which saw the deaths of her other two sons, Hamilton in 1909, and Algernon in 1914, both without issue. Eleanor Vere Boyle lived on and on until in the midst of the Great War which was to destroy civilisation as she knew it, she died at Brighton on 29th July, 1916 in her 92nd year, perhaps, if

she had her wish, slipping away to one of those gardens 'lovelier than all gardens we have known, graced with the far-off charm of the unattainable . . . the gardens we have wished for but have never seen. Words cannot paint them, for memory sets no copy: yet the longing for them does still possess our hearts with visions of their unknown beauty'.⁸⁰



The grave of E.V.B. and her husband at Marston Bigot. (G.H. Hall).

E.V.B.'s will with its recital of family treasures is an interesting document and is printed in full in an appendix. Her furniture, silver and effects were valued at £1,348.18s. As far as Somerset went by the time of her death she was a figure from the distant past, a feeling summed up by the Rev. W.A. Duckworth, who noted in his diary: 'Hon. E.V. Boyle, years ago at Marston Rectory, authoress.' She was buried beside her husband at Marston where she lies between 'the House' and the Old Rectory amid the countryside she loved and whose beauty is still undimmed.

Appendix I

The Will of the Hon. Mrs. E. V. Boyle

I THE HONOURABLE ELEANOR VERE CROMBIE BOYLE of Huntercombe Manor Maidenhead in the County of Berks Widow hereby revoke all former testamentary dispositions made by me and declare this to be my last Will

1. I ap-point my son Charles John Boyle and my daughter Isabella Albinia Lady Arbuthnot the wife of Sir George Gough Arbuthnot EXECUTORS of this my Will

2. I give to my said daughter my diamond and emerald locket my large sapphire ring (formerly my Mothers) my emerald ring with two diamonds (one on each side of the stone) a wedding present to me from my brother Charles Gordon Lady Eastlake's bracelet set with different stones and scotch pearls The Holbein Locket The lower part of my large diamond locket The diamond and enamel watch which belonged to my Aunt Lady Stuart (Louisa Waterford's Grandmother) The miniature of my late husband by Ross The miniature of my mother as a child with a black bonnet tied on by a white handkerchief The miniature painted by my sister after Guercino which hangs in the drawing room The little étui case gold open work with the motto "Rien n'est trop bon pour ce qu'on aime" round it The square miniature of my mother by Robertson The miniature of my great grandmother Lady Buckinghamshire And all jewellery trinkets watches and personal ornaments not hereby disposed of Princess Amelia's silver coffee pot The two silver cream jugs left to me by my brother Admiral William Gordon and the two small silver tea or hot milk jugs and the silver round bowl given to me by my son in law the said Sir George Gough Arbuthnot

3. I also give to my said daughter such of my books and old tables and chairs as she may desire to have and the remainder (if any) of the said books tables and chairs I give to my sons the said Charles John Boyle and Algernon Edward Richard Boyle or such one of them as shall survive me to be fairly and equally distributed between them if more than one in such manner as they shall agree upon

4. I give to my daughter in law Marcia the wife of my son the late Hamilton Richard Boyle in token of my gratitude for her long years of devotion to him the use of the upper part of my large diamond locket during her life and subject to her use of the same I give it to my said daughter absolutely And I also give to my said daughter in law my old escretoire in the oak room

5. I give to my said son Charles John Boyle the pair of old Sheffield Candlesticks in the Library The old Sheffield Salver with my Grandmother's initials on it given to her by Queen

Charlotte The large silver tea pot The silver sugar basin and the sword stick all of which belonged to my father The oval miniature of my said sons Grandfather the silver sugar basin given to me by the Duchess of Somerset The medals of my brother Admiral William Gordon The small silver gilt bowl given to me by my husband The blue Ribbon of St. Patrick and white flowers that belonged to my son's Uncle Robert The two large brass plates Sir Walter Scott's carriage clock The set of silver knives and forks and the large case contained those given to my mother by Queen Charlotte also the silver gilt inkstand given to my Mother by the Duke of Gloucester and my large arm chair in the oak room

6. I give to my daughter in law Lilian the wife of my said son Charles John Boyle my diamond half hoop ring with five stones and my old paste star brooch

7. I give to my said son Algernon Edward Richard Boyle the high clock in the oak room The picture of the Bay near Slanis Castle The pair of silver candlesticks given to me by my father the plated inkstand and the pair of plated candlesticks left to me by my brother Admiral William Gordon The silver coffee pot given to me by my sister and the pair Sheffield candlesticks I bought at Aberdeen The Japan Cabinet in the oak room which belonged to my Grandmother Cumberland also the picture in oils of a place near Ellon

8. I give to my daughter in law Edith the wife of my said son Algernon Edward Richard Boyle the picture of her husband by Sir John Millais and my diamond and emerald ring (a wedding gift from my father in law)

9. I give to my granddaughter Joan Countess of Macclesfield the daughter of my said son Charles John Boyle my Jardoons and turquoise ring in a case

10. I give to my granddaughter Cecilia Albinia Lygon the daughter of the said Sir George Gough Arbuthnot and Lady Arbuthnot the ebony and silver casket left to me by my Aunt Lady Buckinghamshire

11. I give to Arthur Gordon of Ellon the small oil painting of the Mouth of the Ytham

12. I give to Annie Dalrymple Albas cable chain gold bracelets worn for years by Mrs. Leslie and my brother William Gordon's silver coffee pot

13. I give to Meta Orred the Cabinet (of Charles the Second's time given to me by her) and the shells it contains and if she dies in my lifetime I give the same to my said son Algernon and if he also dies in my lifetime to my said son Charles

14. I give to my grandson Edmund Michael Boyle the small water colour of a Ship in full sail and three coloured sea pieces the

receipt of his father to be a good discharge if he is a minor.

15. I give all my furniture horses carriages live and dead farming stock and chattels personal except money and securities for money and except those hereby otherwise specifically disposed of to my said daughter absolutely with the request that she will dispose of the same or a part thereof in accordance with any memorandum or paper signed by me and deposited with this my Will or left among my papers at my death but such memorandum shall not be deemed to form part of my Will or to have any testamentary character and the above expression of my wishes as to the disposal of the said articles and effects shall not create any trust or legal obligation.

16. I give to my said two sons Charles John Boyle and Algernon Edward Richard Boyle in equal shares the share or interest (if any) to which at the date of my decease I may be or become entitled by reason of the death intestate of my said son Hamilton Richard Boyle of and in the trust funds subject to the trusts of my Marriage Settlement dated the twenty second day of September One thousand eight hundred and forty five or of and in any share of such trust funds which may constitute or form part of the estate of my said son Hamilton Richard Boyle

17. I give all my property not hereby otherwise disposed of (subject to the payment of my funeral and testamentary expenses and debts) to my said two sons and daughter in equal shares IN WITNESS whereof I have hereunto set my hand this _____ day of _____ One thousand nine hundred and ten — *ELEANOR VERE C BOYLE* — Signed by the said Testatrix in the joint presence of us who thereupon signed our names in her and each others presence — *JOSEPH FOULK* Huntercombe Dec 7th 1911 — *EVAN INGRAM* Dec 7th 1911 Huntercombe.

On the 9th day of October 1916 Probate of this Will was granted to Charles John Boyle and Isabella Albinia Dame Arbuthnot the Executors

Appendix 2

Monumental Inscriptions to R.C. and E.V. Boyle, Marston Bigot Churchyard, Somerset.

The Memory of a dear and most tender father
Richard Cavendish Boyle
is recorded here with grateful reverence
by his four children.

Feby 28th 1812 he was born at Marston House:

The last day of March 1886 he died at Huntercombe Manor.

“His soul had passed into that
still country where storms do not reach
and where the heaviest laden wayfarer
lays down at last his burden.”

To the dear Memory of our Mother
Eleanor Vere Boyle
Born May 1 1825; Died July 29 1916.
“So He giveth His beloved sleep” Psalm 127.V.1.

Brass Plaques to R.C. and E.V. Boyle, Marston Bigot Church

To His Dear Memory
— who for forty years
God's faithful Minister was the
Friend of the Poor in this place,—
RICHARD BOYLE
Youngest son of Edmund & Isabella Henrietta
Earl and Countess of Cork and Orrery
Born at Marston February 28 1812,
Died March 31 1886
His home he has changed
for a House not made with hands
Years of pain for untroubled peace
Long parting for sweet re-union
Brief sorrow for Eternity of Joy

This tablet is placed by his wife March 31 1889

To the Dear Memory of
ELEANOR VERE BOYLE
wife of Richard C. Boyle
born at Auchlunies in
Aberdeenshire May 1 1825
died July 29 1916

Appendix 3

Memorials to the Gordon family at Maryculter, Aberdeenshire.

E.V.B. describes the family plot as follows: ‘A Cross, almost the only one in the place, is set on the summit of the ivied reredos of a

little iron-railed close, where throughout the year the turf is kept green and smooth' (*Seven Gardens and a Palace*, p.163). The 'reredos' is a granite wall with ramped shoulders on which are set four plaques to members of the Gordon family. The railings are much decayed and when the writer visited Maryculter in the Autumn of 1977 the grass was far from smooth and plentifully sprinkled with docks. I have numbered the plaques from 1 to 4 going from left to right.

1. In loving remembrance of
 Harriet Albinia Louisa Dalrymple
 second daughter of
 Alexander Gordon, of Ellon
 Born September 14th 1816,
 Died at Ellon, February 13th 1854
 And was buried at Logie Elphinstone

Also to the beloved memory of
 Bertie Edward Murray Gordon
 Late Colonel of the 91st Argyllshire Highlanders
 second son of
 Alexander Gordon of Ellon,
 Born December 17th 1813,
 Died at Ellon July 27th 1870,
 And of his wife
 Katherine Alicia Gordon
 second daughter of
 Francis Beynon Hacket,
 of Moor Hall, Warwickshire
 who died at Banchory, March 19th 1878
 And were buried at Ellon

"Say wilt thou think of me when I am gone
 Farther each year from thy vision withdrawn.
 Thou in the sunset, I in the dawn"

2. In Memory of
 Richard Lewis Hobart Gordon
 Midshipman R.N.
 third son of
 Alexander and Albinia Gordon of Ellon
 (formerly of Auchlunies)

Born 7th May 1815, and was drowned, 20th May 1835
 at the wreck of H.M.S. *Challenger*
 near Molquilla, on the coast of Chili,
 in the performance of a dangerous service
 essential to the safety of his shipmates,
 for which he had volunteered.

In life he was beloved
 and his death was bewailed by the officers
 and ship's company
 and deeply lamented by his relatives and friends.

In Memory also of Sophia Albinia Georgiana
 and

Catherine Louisa Caroline
 daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon
 who died in infancy at Auchlunies
 and are here interred

3.

Here rest
 in the sure hope of the resurrection
 to eternal life
 Through the atoning blood of her Redeemer
 the mortal remains
 of
 Albinia Elizabeth Cumberland
 the beloved wife
 of
 Alexander Gordon of Ellon
 Born 16th of April 1787
 Died 7th of July 1848

Her children arise up and call her blessed
 Her husband also and he praiseth her
 Proverbs XXXI, 28.

4.

The sun shall no more go down
 Neither shall thy moon withdraw
 itself for the Lord shall be thine
 Everlasting light, and the days of
 thy mourning shall be ended

Here rests in peace awaiting
 the resurrection of the just
 The mortal body of
 Alexander Gordon
 of Ellon

He was born in London Dec^r 18th 1783

He died at Ellon March 21st 1873

Notes and References

1. Rev. John Collinson, *History and Antiquities of Somerset*, vol. 111, p.139. He is referring to the view from the opposite side of the valley.
2. Rev. Richard Warner, *Excursions from Bath*, 1801, p.88.
3. *Town and Country Magazine*, vol. XV, pp.121-23, 1783. One of the portraits tête-à-tête: The Suspicious Husband and Mis G-h-ll (Greenhill).
4. *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, First Series, vol. 3, 1861, pp. 399-400.
5. *Mary Boyle: Her Book*, edited by Sir Courtenay Boyle, 1902, p.10. By a curious coincidence, G.H. Boyle, of Bisbrooke Hall, Rutland, descends from the Poyntz family on both sides. He is the great-great-grandson of Isabella Henrietta Poyntz, Countess of Cork through his father, and of Isabella Poyntz, Marchioness of Exeter, through his mother, née Maida Evans-Freke. The Marchioness of Exeter was the niece of the Countess of Cork.
6. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1840, part 1, p.653.
7. Sir John Maclean, *Historical and Genealogical Memoir of the Family of Poyntz*, 1886, pp.223-25; pedigree.
8. *Mary Boyle*, p.10.
9. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1840, part 1, p.331.
10. *Town and Country Magazine*, XV, pp.121-23.
11. Stephen Switzer and Garden Design in Britain in the Early 18th Century, by William Alvis Brogden. PH.D. thesis, Edinburgh University, 1973. Vol. 1, pp.191-93.
12. The story of the Rev. Richard Asberry has been told by Collinson (11, p.215) and others. The cottage was rebuilt by John, fifth Earl of Cork and Orrery, an episode commemorated by Dr. Samuel Bowden in his poem *On the Earl of Corke's Cottage*, in *Poems on Various Subjects*, 1754. A scrap book which Lady Louisa Boyle kept at Asberry Cottage is in the possession of Mrs. M. de Wend Fenton at Eberston Hall, Yorkshire. For what Marston meant to the Boyle children see *Mary Boyle*, pp.52-54.
13. From the time of the Great Earl of Cork several of the first born sons of the family died young. This happened in the cases of the sons of the 5th, 7th and 8th Earls of Cork and Orrery. There has been no Dungarvan since 1904, the double earldom having been without a direct heir since that date.
14. These diaries are in the possession of the Frome Literary and Scientific Institute. My quotation is from extracts made by the late J.O. Lewis, now in the Somerset County Record Office (DD/LW 57). The feeling of the children for their parents is borne out by the dedication of a sketch book and account of a tour in the Lake District by Lady Louisa Boyle to her mother 'her for whose approbation and pleasure these sketches were attempted and this account of a delightful tour, made in the Autumn of 1825, written . . . with every feeling of gratitude and love'. The book, bound in purple with gold tooling, and stamped H.I.C.O. is now at Bisbrooke Hall.
15. On the memorial which he erected to her in Marston Bigot Church.
16. *Mary Boyle*, p.52.
17. These extracts from Jane Bunn's diary are in the Fenton archives at Eberston Hall, Yorkshire. They are on the notepaper of Nunney Court, near Frome, the home of the Daniel family who owned the diaries, and were presumably copied out for E.V.B.

18. *In Memoriam*: an anonymous printed tribute to R.C.B. published shortly after his death. Fenton Archives.
19. The original plans are at Bisbrooke Hall. The Rectory is shown as completed on the Marston Bigot Tithe Map of 1839.
20. On a memorial plaque in Marston Bigot Church.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens*, 1977, p.372.
23. *Mary Boyle*, p.176.
24. *In Memoriam*.
25. *Votes of the House of Commons*, 24 February, 1786 with Marston Parish Registers, County Record Office, Taunton.
26. *Penes* the Author.
27. See ante, note 17.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Seven Gardens and a Palace*, 1900, p.287.
30. *Ibid.*, p.271.
31. *Ibid.*, p.273.
32. *Ibid.*, p.294.
33. *Ibid.*, p.220.
34. *Letters of Lady Louisa Stuart to Miss Louisa Clinton*, second series, 1903, p.281.
35. *Ibid.*, p.375.
36. Will of Lady Albinia Cumberland, Proved 1850, P.R.O. Prob. 11/2119.
37. Both now at Bisbrooke Hall. They have suffered from over-cleaning in the past. Boxall, a fashionable portrait painter and later Director of the National Gallery, was a friend of Mary Boyle's. She may have made the introductions. See *Her Book*, p.171. E.V.B. recorded that Boxall was 'a very old friend of ours, and in the summer often used to journey down to Somerset to stay with us—to paint, and be refreshed by the deep quiet of our green country'. (*The Peacock's Pleasaunce*, 1908, p.76).
38. See ante, note 17.
39. *Mary Boyle*, p.177.
40. Letter to E.V.B., 11 November 1870, quoted in Augustus Hare, *Two Noble Lives*, 1893, vol. 3, p.300. On page 478 is reproduced a sketch of Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford, on her deathbed by E.V.B.
41. *Seven Gardens and a Palace*, pp.121-24, 126.
42. *Ibid.*, p.210.
43. *Ibid.*, pp.128-29.
44. In an unpublished biography at Eberston Hall.
45. Marston Estate Reference Book, *penes* Mr. R. Bonham-Christie, Tuckmarsh Farm, Marston Bigot.
46. *Mary Boyle*, pp.163-4.
47. *Ibid.*, p.164.
48. Fenton Archives.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Quoted in G.F. Thomas, *A History of Huntercombe Manor*, Bucks. Education Committee, n.d., pp.31/32.
51. Press cutting (probably from the *Frome Times* or *The Somerset and Wilts. Journal*) among papers connected with the Frome Electon of 1856 at Longleat House, Wiltshire. (Rack E, Cage 15).
52. Will of the Eighth Earl of Cork and Orrery, PRO, PROB 11/2235 c.7279.
53. See Michael McGarvie, *Marston House: A Study of its History and Architecture*, Proc. Som. Arch. Soc., 118, 1974, pp.15-24.
54. *Vanity Fair*, 13 January, 1872.
55. *Recollections of a Diplomatist*, 1903, vol. 1, p.104. She had the reputation of ruling her family with a rod of iron and bringing them up in 'the school of obedience'.
56. Thomas, *Huntercombe Manor*, p.32.

57. Marston Parish Magazine, No. 9, September, 1866, *penes* the author.
58. C.G.R. Festing, vicar from 1827 until his death in 1857. He is commemorated in a stained glass window at Gare Hill and in a more elaborate one at Witham. See Michael McGarvie, *Witham Friary: Church and Parish*, Frome Historical Research Group, 1981, pp.15-16.
59. Will of Lord Cork: P.R.O. PROB 11/2235 C7279.
60. British Library, Add. MS. 33826, vol. Vii f. 79.
61. Note by R.C.B. in a manuscript account book of the 1835 appeal. G.H. Boyle Archives.
62. In 1863. Marston Estate Reference Book (see note 45).
63. *Marston Parish Magazine*, No. 10, October, 1866. *penes* the author.
64. Printed in *The Peacock's Pleasaunce* (1908), especially pp.230, 233, 238, 246.
65. *Two Noble Lives*, vol. 3, p.300.
66. From a report in *The Somerset and Wilts Journal*, 11 May, 1871.
67. *Days and Hours in a Garden*, seventh edition, 1890, p.7.
68. *Seven Gardens and a Palace*, p.109.
69. *Days and Hours in a Garden*, pp.55-56.
70. G.F. Thomas, *Huntercombe Manor*, p.33.
71. *In Memoriam*.
72. Diary for 1886. Fenton Archives.
73. G.F. Thomas, *Huntercombe Manor*, pp.34-35.
74. E.V.B.'s diary for 1892.
75. *Peacock's Pleasaunce*, p.249.
76. *Somerset and Wilts. Journal*, 24 June 1904.
77. *Somerset Standard*, 2 July 1904.
78. Fenton Archives. *The Times* (June 28 1904) records the music as Beethoven's Funeral March, an elegy by E. Silas, and Tchaikovsky's *Marche Funebre*. The choir of the Chapel Royal sung the opening words of the burial service in procession.
79. A copy of the sale catalogue is in Frome Public Library and catalogues of the furniture, pictures and library, are in possession of the author.
80. *The Times*, 18 August, 1916.

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