



Clive: The Life and Death of a British Emperor

Robert Harvey

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The real-life story of Robert Clive would be judged as wildly implausible if it came from the pen of a novelist.

Clive of India was one of the most extraordinary and colorful figures Britain ever produced. The founder of Britain's Indian empire, he was also Britain's first great guerrilla fighter by the age of twenty-seven, conqueror of Bengal at thirty-one, and avenging angel of righteousness against the greed of his own fellow-countrymen at forty-one. In his later life Parliament brought him under painful scrutiny and he ended up one of the most hated men in Britain. He died violently under still-mysterious circumstances just before his fiftieth birthday.

The story of Clive can be viewed on several levels: as a spirited military adventure by a man who defied death many times, who withstood the greatest siege in British military history, and conspired to force one of the most absolute and cruellest monarchs on earth off his throne; as the morality tale of a penniless young man who became the sole ruler of a huge empire, ended up as one of the richest men in Britain and was then brought to account and driven to despair; or as the story of a plundering early poacher-turned-gamekeeper who sought to establish a moral and legal order amidst slaughter and greed.

Clive today lies buried in an unknown grave in an obscure corner of rural Shropshire, a reflection of the controversy he aroused in his lifetime and that still surrounds his legacy and the manner of his death. In this lively and revealing study Robert Harvey illuminates Clive's life's journey from the green fields surrounding Market Drayton through his adventures in India, his drive to success and self-destruction, to his vicious and premature death, by suicide or murder.

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