

**LIFE OF THE CARDINAL DE
CHEVERUS, ARCHBISHOP
OF BORDEAUX**

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Life of the Cardinal de Cheverus, Archbishop of Bordeaux by J. Huen Doubourg & Robert M. Walsh

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J. HUEN DOUBOURG & ROBERT M. WALSH

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L I F E

OF THE

CARDINAL DE CHEVERUS,

ARCHBISHOP OF BORDEAUX.

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

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TO THE REV. J. J. CHANCHE,

PRESIDENT OF ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,

BALTIMORE,

THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE PUPIL AND FRIEND.

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P R E F A C E.

IN presenting this volume to the public, the translator would flatter himself with the belief that he is conferring upon them no inconsiderable benefit. "What is the most useful study?" was the question once asked of a sage—"The life of a good man," he replied:—"What is the next?"—"The life of a bad man." This is the life of a *good* man in the purest and loftiest sense of the word—in whom the sterner and nobler qualities which dignify our nature, were blended in the most exquisite harmony with the gentler virtues, as you may have seen the glow of setting day commingling with the delicate light of the newly risen moon, giving and taking beauty—the one deepened and strengthened, the other softened and refined in its hue. To "see how a Christian can die," is indeed a beautiful spectacle, and an admirable lesson; but the spectacle presented by this book, the lesson inculcated on its every page, are of still greater beauty and moment. "See how a Christian should live," is its sublime sermon. The Christian death may be exhibited by one whose life has been a scandal and a reproach. The thief on the cross breathed his spirit into paradise; but it was the immaculate life of the Man-God expiring near him, that taught the path which leads to eternal bliss. It is in presenting religion with such an aspect as she wears in the character and career of a Cheverus, that her attractiveness and real influence are perceived.

In a man whose views were bounded by the horizon of this world, whose deeds were all performed to win honours and applause from his fellow worms, the high qualities displayed by M. de Cheverus in his unobtrusive career, would have commanded the epithet of great; for where shall we find the warrior who exerted more vigour, and courage, and fortitude, than he possessed; the statesman who evinced more power of self-control, more skill in gaining the affections of others, and directing their actions, and even their thoughts? But it is the poor slave, who, for the gratification of the passions by which he is swayed, obtains a certain mastery over his fellows, and not the being who has the grandeur of soul to employ equal or superior faculties for the loftiest and most durable ends, despising all

"the feculence and froth of things terrestrial," whom the world salutes with the title of great. Thus, while a Richelieu or a Cromwell will go down the stream of time in a gilded, flaunting bark, the little vessel which carries the reputation of a Cheverus, will be scarce an object of notice save to the few who can "see into the life of things." No one, however, can read this volume without being convinced that although the memory of those the world calls great may be the most emblazoned, there is something in the actual presence of virtue, which exerts a more powerful influence upon those within its sphere than any supremacy which is of the earth, earthy. Peruse the account of the departure of M. de Cheverus from Boston—of his reception in France, and say whether the history of any "hero," can furnish a parallel to either. Louder huzzas, more thunders of artillery may have welcomed the successful warrior, but what mere victor was ever detained for hours on the steps of his triumphal car, while multitudes were thronging around him to snatch a kiss of heart-felt love and veneration from his hands? There is a pathos and sublimity combined in some of the scenes recorded in the following pages, which must cause every sensitive breast to swell with emotions, such as few other biographies are fitted to excite.

It is delightful to contemplate an exception like that afforded by the career of M. de Cheverus, to the truth wrung from the lips of bitter experience, and confirmed by universal assent, that "slow rises worth by poverty depress'd;" that virtue, to command the homage of the world, must be plated with gold, or emblazoned by the lustre of rank. It inspires the cheering conviction that there is still a redeeming power in human nature, which must sooner or later obtain the predominance, and render honesty not only the best policy in its ultimate results, but the sole means of securing the admiration of men. Compare the manner in which the Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux was elevated from the humblest station in the priesthood, by the mere force of worth, to the loftiest dignities and influence, with the career, for instance, of a Cardinal de Retz. What a life, in the one case, of tumultuous effort, of mind and body wasting toil, to earn but disappointment, ignominy, and an unhonoured grave! In the other, how easy, constant the ascent, impeded only by the unwillingness of the individual to rise! How serene and beautiful its termination at the highest point! How glori-

ous the mausoleum erected on the pinnacle, from which the stainless spirit was exhaled to heaven! Never, indeed, could it have been said of any one more truly, that "goodness and he fill up one moment;" that "orphans' tears have wept a tomb upon him!" It is after contemplating such an exemplar, that we can appreciate the full force of Milton's exquisite homily—

Love Virtue, she alone is free;
 She can teach ye how to climb
 Higher than the spherie chime:
 Or, if Virtue feeble were,
 Heav'n itself would stoop to her.

There is only one portion of this most beautiful "drama of life," at which a feeling of regret may perhaps be awakened—the catastrophe. It might be wished that this had not been so sudden—that a death-bed scene, in harmony with the existence which it terminated, had been granted to the eye of pious veneration and love—that the setting of the sun had not been so instantaneous, but accompanied by all the mellow effulgence which loves to linger about his couch at the close of an unsullied day. The last words and thoughts of such a man when he beheld himself on the confines of eternity, would have been a treasure of great price;—and what felicity, triumphing over all bodily pain, would then have been his as he cast his eyes back upon a life filled with endeavours to give glory to God on high and peace on earth to men! How inspiringly would the retrospect have enkindled that celestial light which illumines "the dread unknown, the chaos of the tomb,"—how truly then would his mind have been a "mansion for all lovely forms, his memory a dwelling-place for all sweet sounds and harmonies." But whatever might have been the manner of his death, well may we all, whether Catholic or Protestant, make it our daily prayer, that we may be prepared as he was, to meet our fate—that our last moments may be like unto his.

The writer of the biography states that he had the most ample and authentic materials for its preparation. "From every mouth," he says, "at Mayenne, I learnt all that appertained to the early youth of M. de Cheverus; and concerning the rest of his life, I was furnished with the most precious and abundant details from Bordeaux, besides being supplied with various letters and public prints both of that city and of Montauban and Boston, and having all the papers of his Eminence placed in my