

Shortly afterwards he fell out with his protector, the Duke of Buckingham and made scandalous imputations against his character. The latter took an action against Blood for £10,000 damages, but, before the action could be heard, Blood died on the 24th August, 1680, after an illness of fourteen days, involving a speechless lethargy. Suspecting another trick of this inventive scoundrel to escape the Court sentence, the authorities had his body exhumed and examined, and proved beyond doubt that, contrary to all expectations, Blood had died a natural death.

An elegy published in the year of his death ends with these lines:

Here lies the man who boldly hath run through
More villainies than ever England knew;
And ne'er to any friend he had was true.
Here let him then by all unpitied lie,
And let's rejoice his time was come to die.

SIR JOHN BOURKE OF BRITTAS

Sir John Bourke of Brittas, commonly called "Captain of Clanwilliam," was born about the middle of the 16th century. His father, Sir Richard Bourke, was brother to Sir William, First Baron Castleconnell, and his mother was Honor, daughter of Conor O'Mulryan, Chief of Owney. Before marrying Bourke, Honor had been previously married to De Lacy of Bruff, and was mother of that famous soldier of the Desmond Wars, Sir Piers De Lacy.

Sir John was married to Grace, the daughter of Sir George Thornton, who received some of the confiscated Desmond property in Co. Limerick. He, therefore, kept aloof during the Desmond Wars, but, during Sir George Carew's victorious march through Limerick after he had taken the Castle of Lough Gur, he was called upon to submit to Queen Elizabeth. He replied, stating he considered "it was sinful and damnable personally to submit to Her Majestie," and Sir George Carew thereupon laid waste his lands. On submission he was reprovved for his "rebellious obstinacies," but through the good offices of Sir George Thornton, was pardoned and restored to his estate. He did not feel happy under the "protection" of the Queen and applied for leave to travel to Spain on a "pilgrimage to St. Iago," but this was refused him and he was compelled to remain with his family at Brittas.

When the religious persecutions which followed the suppression of the Fitzgeralds began, Bourke incurred the enmity of the Government by his open avowal of the Catholic Faith and by his protection of the persecuted and hunted clergy. During the short lull in the persecutions he openly attended Divine Service at St. Mary's Cathedral, temporarily restored to the Catholics, and was received together with his family and retainers, into the Dominican Confraternity of the Holy Rosary.

On the renewal of the persecutions, Sir John was summoned to answer a charge of recusancy and was put into prison. Again the good offices of Sir George Thornton obtained his release, but, although restored to his estates and fortune, he continued to harbour the hunted priests and was the acknowledged protector of the Catholics.

In October, 1607, while Mass was being celebrated in Brittas Castle, he was betrayed by his kinsman, Theobald Butler of Castleconnell and Sir Edmond Walsh of Abington. A detachment of horse soldiers arrived to arrest the priests and on Sir John's refusing to give them up or open the castle to the soldiers he was outlawed and Brittas Castle was besieged. Sir John "with his casque on his head, his shield on his left arm and his sword in his right hand, burst out and made good his escape." He arrived at Waterford on his way to Spain but was here betrayed, arrested and sent back to Limerick for trial.

He refused to renounce the Catholic Faith or to conform to the new state religion, stating "he could acknowledge no king or queen against the King of Heaven and the Queen of Heaven . . . whoever would act otherwise was not a servant of God but a slave of the devil," and was sentenced to be hanged, beheaded and quartered.

He was hanged on Gallows Green on 20th December, 1607, but owing to his influence and popularity the latter part of the sentence was remitted. His body was returned to his relatives and buried in St. John's Churchyard, where no trace of it now remains.

Sir John left nine children behind him, but his estates were confiscated and granted to Theobald Bourke, his betrayer, who was created Baron of Brittas in 1618. The statue "Our Lady of Limerick," now in the Dominican Church, is said to have been given in reparation by a descendant of the Sarsfield who condemned Bourke to death.

DAVID O BRUADAIR

While doubt exists both as to the date and place of O Bruadair's birth, Limerick's claim to him can be more than substantiated by the fact that he spent most of his life within the county, and that it was here he found most of his patrons, the Barrys, the Bourkes of Limerick City and the Fitzgeralds of Claonglais.

He was probably born near Newcastle West about the year 1625, of a family of Danish origin, and his name is commonly englished "Broderick." Nothing is known of his parents, little of his youth and education, beyond the fact that he knew some Latin, some English and must have received a very thorough grinding in Irish poetry, history and genealogy.