

## COUNT GEORGE BROWNE OF CAMAS.

Count George Browne of Camas, soldier of fortune, was born at Castle Mahon, on the 15th of June, 1698. His father was George Browne, Baron of Camas, and his mother, the Lady Honora de Lacy, of Limerick and Russia. He was educated at the Limerick Diocesan School, but like most Catholic nobles of the period, soon left the country to enlist in the armies of Europe.

Having been deprived of their estates, the Brownes were poor, and the only army in which George could afford to buy a commission was that of the German Palatinate. He soon left this, however, for the Army of Russia, in which he served with distinction as Major-in-Chief, under his brilliant uncle, Count Peter de Lacy.

While assisting the Austrians against the Turks, Count Browne was captured and led a terrible existence for four years as a galley slave, being flogged mercilessly and sold four times over. He was eventually recognised near Kishinov by another Irish soldier, who secured his release, and, in spite of all the ill-treatment he had received, Browne was hardy enough to make the long journey of over 1,000 miles on foot and in rags, without any money and starving, to the Court of St. Petersburg. Here he was able to relate many of the Turkish military secrets, and as a reward, as well as in recognition of his great feat of endurance, was raised to the rank of Major-General.

He immediately re-assumed the military life, and for his part in the war against Sweden was awarded the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky. During the Seven Years War, at the battle of Zorndorff, Browne was surrounded by the enemy, had a pistol discharged in his face and his head split by a sword. Even this did not kill the hardy Irishman, and a silver plate to cover the gaping wound was the only reminder he carried of so terrible an encounter.

In 1762 he was appointed Governor-General of Livonia and Esthonia, a post formerly held by Count Peter de Lacy. He was a just but severe Governor, and his experiences of the hardships of the Irish Catholics led him often to take sides with the poor Russian peasants against the despotic nobles. He once had the Mayor and Corporation of Riga whipped for disobeying an order, a disobedience which caused the town bridge to be destroyed.

Browne was a great favourite with the Empress Catherine the Great, who is alleged to have said to him as she refused his proffered resignation: "Nothing, my friend, shall separate us, save death."

He died in September, 1792, still Governor of Esthonia, although ninety-six years of age. He was a staunch Catholic all his life, always observed the Church fasts, even when in military harness, and rebuilt many churches in the provinces he governed. Beginning life as a poor man, he ended his days with vast wealth, but had neither forgotten the faith he had been bought up in or the country he had abandoned in order to retain that faith.

## JAMES BURKE.

James Burke, cleric and revolutionery, was born near Ennis in the year 1739. He was the son of John Burke and Mary Callery.

Burke was sent to the Continent to be educated, was prepared for the priesthood at the Irish College in Bordeaux, and, after ordination, was made Canon of St. Astier in the Diocese of Perigueux. Later he was appointed parish priest of Saint Jacques d'Ambes, near Bordeaux, and was ministering in this office when the revolution broke out in 1789.

One of his teachers at the Irish College had been Guillotine, the inventor of the execution knife which did so much work during the bloody days of the Revolution and counter-revolution, and it has been surmised that Burke was greatly influenced by Guillotine's views. Be that as it may, he was certainly enthusiastic about the new regime and was one of the first priests to take the oath to the Civil Constitution.

His enthusiasm for the revolution and his holy office had nothing in common, and Burke soon left the priesthood to become a speculator in the confiscated lands and houses of the aristocracy in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux. He became one of the leading revolutionaries in the Bordeaux area and gave the Governor of that town great assistance in keeping order. To his credit it may be said that it was his influence alone which saved the Irish College from confiscation. During the height of the terror, an American ship was chartered to bring the students safely to Ireland, and, when things had quietened, the College was returned to the Carmelites.

Although he sacrificed everything in the revolutionary cause, Burke's former calling as well as the zeal with which he executed his duties to the new Government, made him many enemies, and he was imprisoned under suspicion of being an enemy of the Republic. However, his record prevailed and he was released, and, after the Concordat of 1802, was even reconciled to the Church, resuming his pastoral duties in Bordeaux.

In 1815, the French Minister, of Irish parentage, Lally Tollendal, pleaded for a State pension for Burke, claiming that he had risked his life and spent his last penny in preserving the Irish College and in restoring it as a seminary. We do not know