

clemency met him almost every hour of that terrible period. But as well expect to see the rock-girt coast of Arranmore yield to the shock of the Atlantic.

The last dread scenes, were they not verified not only by a consistent tradition but also by plain history, might be set down to an imagination finding its proper place in the realms of sensational romance.

The night before the day of the execution, the Mayor descended to the dungeon in which his condemned son lay. The visit had a two-fold purpose: to announce that on the morrow the death sentence would be carried out and to strengthen the watch lest the prisoner, availing himself of the general sympathy in his favor, might escape. The inflexible magistrate was accompanied by a priest (from the latter, according to Hardiman* the account was received). Both entered the cold, dark cell, the former holding a lighted lamp in one hand and locking the grated door with the other. The key he secreted about his person. The son drawing near the father, asked with eyes to which suffering had lent a peculiar winsomeness, the question that the faltering tongue could not utter: "Father, is there any hope?" "None, my son, from me—you must look to Another for that. Were I not the unfortunate man whom the law binds to the execution of its just sentence, I would strive to save you with every fibre of my being. Dismiss, therefore, my poor child, all thought of earthly life; concern yourself only with that which shall never end. I have brought you this holy man, your old confessor (pointing to the priest shaken with emotion at the spec-

tacle), he will help you to prepare to meet your Eternal Judge. At sunrise you must die."

Then as if he feared the father's feelings would overcome him, he turned to the priest and signed to him to proceed with his ministrations. He himself withdrew to a recess in the wall of the dungeon, whilst the last rites of the Church were being administered to the condemned man. This spiritual service rendered, he knelt in prayer with confessor and penitent, and all through that appalling vigil he waited, with them, for the dawn. Sustained by sacrament, prayer and holy counsel, Walter Lynch became resigned to his fate. He joined fervently in litany, psalm and prayer; and although sighing heavily from time to time, spoke of life and its concerns no more. Thus, with intervals of silence, his last night on earth passed away.

Meanwhile, outside the prison walls his relatives and friends were not idle. His disconsolate mother, whose maiden name (as already mentioned) was Blake, had effectually appealed to the heads of that house to rescue her son, if for no tie of kindred then for the honor of their family. They armed to deliver him and, in the immense throng that before day-break had gathered about the prison, found willing hands to help them.

At the first hint of day in the dungeon, in the grey light of early morning, the Mayor gave the expected summons to the guard to prepare. He assisted the reluctant executioner* to remove the irons that still bound his son. Then unlocking the grated door, he ordered

*History of Galway, p. 74.

* Local tradition has it that either because of the popularity of young Lynch or the general execration certain to follow, no person could be found in Galway who would act as hangman. History, however, refers to the presence of an executioner in the condemned cell.