

The Last Irish Wolf.

From The Spectator.

Ireland was much infested with wolves, down to a period comparatively recent. That noble dog, the Irish wolfhound, has been bred from remote times for their destruction. Lord William Russell records in his diary that in 1596 he and Lady Russell went wolf hunting at Kilmainham—quite close to the capital! In 1710 a presentment was made in County Cork for destroying the beasts, and Macaulay quotes a poem published in 1719 to prove that they were quite common in Munster at that time. A writer in The Dublin Penny Magazine was acquainted with an old man whose mother remembered that many wolves were slain in Wexford about 1730-40; and he cites a popular tradition that the last wolf was killed in the Wicklow Mountains in 1770. The same writer narrates some interesting circumstances relating to the slaughter of the last wolves of Tyrone. It appears that the people of those parts were much troubled by two wolves, who committed great ravages upon their flocks. A reward was offered, and a noted hunter, Rory Carragh, sent for. He agreed to attempt the destruction of the beasts. There was a large stone-built sheepfold which the marauders were accustomed to visit, and thither Carragh repaired at midnight, accompanied only by a boy twelve years of age and two wolfhounds. "Now," said Carragh to the boy, "as the two wolves usually enter the opposite extremities of the sheepfold at the same time, I must leave you and one of the dogs to guard this one while I go to the other. He steals with all the caution of a cat; nor will you hear him, but the dog will, and positively will give him the first fall; if therefore you are not active when he is down, to rivet his neck to the ground with this spear, he will rise up and kill both you and the dog. So good-night." "I'll do what I can," said the little boy, as he took the spear from the wolf-hunter's hand. Carragh departed for his own station, and the boy, entering the inclosure, crouched down within the gate with the dog beside him. The cold and darkness affected the child so much that soon, in spite of his danger, he dozed off into stupor. He was roused by the roar of the great dog as he bounded upon the wolf that was stealing by. The hound flung his enemy upon the ground, and so held him for an instant. Then the boy drove his spear with a good will through the wolf's throat, just as Carragh returned, bearing the head of the other.

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