
THE WERE-WOLF OF ANGERS

In 1598, a year memorable in the annals of lycanthropy, a trial took place in Angers, the details of which are very terrible.

In a wild and unfrequented spot near Caude, some countrymen came one day upon the corpse of a boy of fifteen, horribly mutilated and bespattered with blood. As the men approached, two wolves, which had been rending the body, bounded away into the thicket. The men gave chase immediately, following their bloody tracks till they lost them; when suddenly crouching among the bushes, his teeth chattering with fear, they found a man half naked, with long hair and beard, and with his hands dyed in blood. His nails were long as claws, and were clotted with fresh gore, and shreds of human flesh.

This is one of the most puzzling and peculiar cases which come under our notice.

The wretched man, whose name was Roulet, of his own accord stated that he had fallen upon the lad and had killed him by smothering him, and that he had been prevented from devouring the body completely by the arrival of men on the spot.

Roulet proved on investigation to be a beggar from house to house, in the most abject state of poverty. His companions in mendicity were his brother John and his cousin Julien. He had been given lodging out of charity in a neighbouring village, but before his apprehension he had been absent for eight days.

Before the judges, Roulet acknowledged that he was able to transform himself into a wolf by means of a salve which his parents had given him. When questioned about the two wolves which had been seen leaving the corpse, he said that he knew perfectly well who they were, for they were his companions, Jean and Julian, who possessed the same secret as himself. He was shown the clothes he had worn on the day of his seizure, and he recognized them immediately; he described the boy whom he had murdered, gave the date correctly, indicated the precise spot where the deed had been done, and recognized the father of the boy



as the man who had first run up when the screams of the lad had been heard. In prison, Roulet behaved like an idiot. When seized, his belly was distended and hard; in prison he drank one evening a whole pailful of water, and from that moment refused to eat or drink.

His parents, on inquiry, proved to be respectable and pious people, and they proved that his brother John and his cousin Julien had been engaged at a distance on the day of Roulet's apprehension.

"What is your name, and what your estate?" asked the judge, Pierre Hérault.

"My name is Jacques Roulet, my age thirty-five; I am poor, and a mendicant."

"What are you accused of having done?"

"Of being a thief — of having offended God. My parents gave me an ointment; I do not know its composition."

"When rubbed with this ointment do you become a wolf?"

"No; but for all that, I killed and ate the child Cornier: I was a wolf."

"Were you dressed as a wolf?"

"I was dressed as I am now. I had my hands and my face bloody, because I had been eating the flesh of the said child."

"Do your hands and feet become paws of a wolf?"

"Yes, they do."

"Does your head become like that of a wolf — your mouth become larger?"

"I do not know how my head was at the time; I used my teeth; my head was as it is to-day. I have wounded and eaten many other little children; I have also been to the sabbath."

The lieutenant criminel sentenced Roulet to death. He, however, appealed to the Parliament at Paris; and this decided that as there was more folly in the poor idiot than malice and witchcraft, his sentence of death should be commuted to two years' imprisonment in a madhouse, that he might be instructed in the knowledge of God, whom he had forgotten in his utter poverty.