

THE LOUP GAROU*

BY ST. CLAIR MOORE

IT was on the occasion of my last visit to St. Bernard that this fantastic tale was related to me by Clovis Melancon, the old sexton. It was about the noon hour of an August day, the sun poured fierce rays upon the parched fields, and the stream lay low between its banks. Clovis, digging a grave near the wall of the little churchyard, seemed impervious to the heat. His dull blue cotton shirt unfastened left his hairy chest bare, and he worked away with a will, throwing up great clods of sun-baked clay. Raising his shaggy head he saw me watching him.

"Ah," he observed, "you have come back after all, but it is a long time since you have been seen in the parish." I answered that I had been away, and he went on:

"Travelling, I suppose. I also have travelled in my day, all over the parishes, and once even to Lewiston, but that was when I was young. But," he continued, reflectively, "if I could have had my wish in my time, I would have gone to France. Not now, of course, it would be too far for an old man like me, but in my time!" Then with an abrupt change of subject, "Would you believe it, this grave I am digging is for a boy who was confirmed with me? He was three years younger, yet I am making his bed, and to-morrow I will toll the

bell for him. There, that reminds me; I must ask his reverence for another rope. This is the first death in three years. The very first I put away lies there," and he nodded towards the wall. "He was an old man, near ninety, and I not yet eighteen at the time he told me that strange story. Strange! yes, but true, for he was the son of Bibiane, and Marianne told it to her when they were both old together, many years after the death of M. Carolus."

"But Clovis," I cried in dismay at the rigmarole of names, "what was the son of Bibiane and Marianne and Bibiane herself and M. Carolus?"

"Bibiane," he rejoined obstinately, "was the daughter of Bonhomme Pilote, and M. Carolus was the child of Basile Vaubernier, the rich man. Marianne, she was his niece, a girl of twenty years or so at that time, with a face like the paintings of the Blessed Virgin and the heart and voice of an angel. Her parents were dead, and she lived with Basile, the proud old man whom God punished. He was a widower, and richer than any man in the parish, yet for all his fortune he worked harder than any of his neighbours, worked that he might increase his riches, and so further his ambition in regard to his son. Basile's pride knew no bounds, with his wealth he thought there was

*To restore to his humanity the man who through his evil life or impiety has suffered the punishment of being changed into a *loup garou*, or were-wolf, it is necessary that the blood of the monster, if only a drop, be shed, when the transgressor is restored to his natural form and is given another chance.