

Tales of MAGIC

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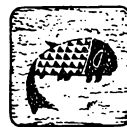
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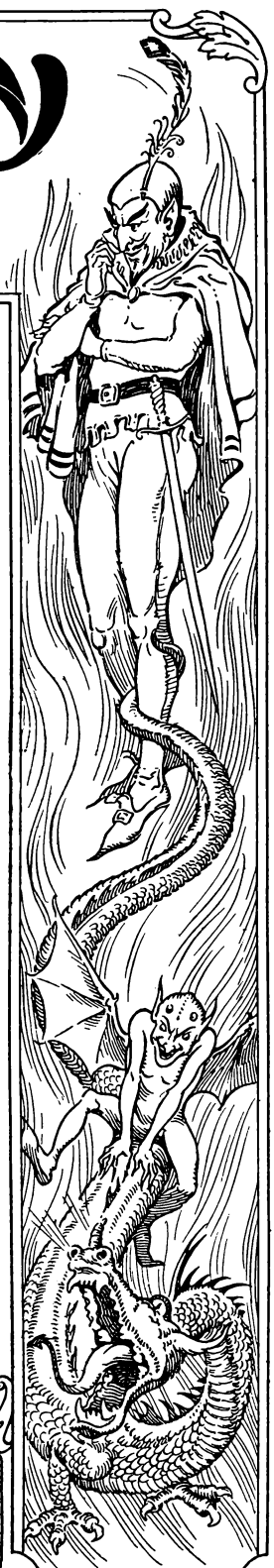
Easy Magic You Can Do 54

A department which regularly each month will explain the presentation and secret of a number of good tricks.

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THE STORY OF THE WERE-WOLVES

THE belief in the transformation of men into wolves or other beasts of prey has been very widely diffused; there is perhaps no people among whom some evidence of its former prevalence does not exist.

But it was no belief in mere transformation; the transformation was accomplished by Satanic agency voluntarily submitted to, and that for the most loathsome ends, in particular for the gratification of a craving for human flesh.

"The were-wolves," writes Richard Verstegan in his *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*, published in 1628, "are certayne sorcerers, who having annoynted their bodies with an oyntment which they make by the instinct of the devill, and putting on a certayne inchaunted girdle, doe not onely unto the view of others seeme as wolves, but to their owne thinking have both the shape and nature of wolves, so long as they weare the said girdle. And they do dispose themselves as very wolves, wourrying and killing, and mostly of human creatures."

Olaus Magnus states that in Prussia, Lithuania, and Livonia, though wolves were very numerous and troublesome, the ravages of the were-wolves were regarded as much more serious. Every year at the feast of the Nativity at night the were-wolves assembled in great numbers at appointed places, and proceeded to look out for human beings, or tame animals, upon which they could glut their appetites. If they found an isolated house they entered it and devoured every human being and tame animal it contained; after which—proving that they were not common wolves—they drank up all the beer or mead.

In the 15th and 16th centuries the belief in were-wolves was as general throughout Europe as the belief in witches, which it had then come to resemble in several respects. It gave rise to prosecutions almost as frequent as those for witchcraft, and these generally ended in the confession of the accused, and his death by hanging or burning.

The were-wolves, like the witches, were regarded as the servants of the devil, from whom they got the power of assuming the wolf's form; and it was believed that great numbers of them trooped together to the devils sabbath.

The stories of mutilations and other mishaps befalling them in the wolf state, by which, when they resumed the human form, they were identified as were-wolves, exactly resemble the stories told of witches.