

B9560 no 5; Witch 333F, Helaine femme Estienne Deslois

? 11 June 1592; informations préparatoires

(1) Jacot Masson de Sainte Marie, 30

12 years before he was in service with Demenge Cuvellier, and took horse to be shod; Helaine came along and asked him what he fed the horse on to make it so fine. He said just hay and oats, then she passed hand along its back; it died a few days later, but he did not know if she had been responsible.

(2) Collette, veuve Jean Voiriat (myneur de Sainte Croix), 60

Had been very ill 8 years earlier, unable to walk or eat for 18 weeks, feeling as if there was a creature inside her, and unable to get any rest. Accused had often been to see her, and husband heard of her bad reputation, so said in her presence that if he could find out who had made his wife ill he would run them through with his sword, and he would send for a man from Lorraine who could identify the culprit. Helaine then did everything to find her a cure, and advised her to go to a woman at Ebersheim; when she said she had no money she offered to lend her some, and she could pay it back at her leisure. Her husband found the money and arranged for Demenge Cuvellier to take her, but Helaine insisted that she would provide cart, horse and servant free of charge. As soon as she told her she was ready to go she rushed from her garden and gave her a 'speckpierre' (pear), telling her to cook it 'en la breyse'. Ate it the same day, then next morning when preparing to leave she was able to take some soup with a good appetite. Visited the woman with Helaine, was given some herbs and she said many prayers, then they went off to eat in a local inn, and she found she had a good appetite. On return next day was able to go about as she wished, and was completely healed, suspecting that the accused had made her ill and then cured her. About six months later her husband became ill and languished three years before dying, suspecting that Helaine was cause, as did witness, and as long as she lived she would not abandon belief that she had brought about her adversities.

(3) Anno, femme Stoffel Remy, myneur de Sainte Croix, 27

About ten years earlier, after first marriage to late Jacob Poinsat, a miller, had come to mill of Melchior Cublaire at Sainte Croix, soon after which she had a slight illness. Marguittre Marande came to mill and asked after her, then came up to see her in bedroom, advising her that a woman called la Tixatte could give her a drink to make her better; she agreed to this and Marguittre brought her the drink in two small bottles. Drank one and half the other, then heard of their bad reputation and threw the rest in the water. Later there was a baptismal feast at the mill, and the midwife of Sainte Croix made remark about witness not giving her any work, then Helaine intervened with remark that she was sure she would not do so, and if she did she would give her some of the finest wheat she could find. Believed that she and Marguittre were reason why she had subsequently been unable to conceive any children.

(4) Pierratte, femme Nicolas Martin als Dagnier, bourgeois de Sainte Croix, 34

A long time before the accused had wanted to sell a white horse to her husband, and when he did not want it told him he would repent. When he bought another horse it sickened, was always eating, and finally died, followed by two other horses and six goats; believed this had been her doing. The accused and la Tixatte [this was Helaine's sister, tried in 1594] had acted as midwives for her three times, but babies died, whereas those she had before and after this did well, so suspected she was cause of this.

(5) Odille, veuve Blaise Beck (myneur de Sainte Croix), 48

Two years earlier had gone to a devineresse who was then living at Trimbach in Val de Viller, where there were several people from Sainte Croix including the accused and the wife of Jean Noirewoye. The latter asked the witness to serve as interpreter, since she did not know German, and consult her about inability to suckle children and losses of animals, which she believed la Tixatte had caused because she had not wanted to marry one of her sons. The devineresse took her aside into garden, and told her that she did not want to tell Noirewoye's wife 'd'autlant qu'elle la raccuseroit et que ladite Tixatte ne luy avoit donné le mal, ains que scavoit faict la grosse Bolengier dudit Sainte Croix, qu'avoit mal au peuche, entendant ladite devineresse que c'estoit ladite detenue, estant lors a poille d'icelle, et qu'elle estoit la royenne des sorcieres, et que les aultres n'estoient que ses servandes.'

(6) Francois Val de Jo, bourgeois de Sainte Croix, 65

Some two years earlier he had caught Tixatte's daughter-in-law taking pears from his tree and damaging his flax crop, and told her off roundly; after this they had both hated him, and later that year were at marriage feast for one of his nieces. Was at table with accused, and they brought their glasses together 'affin de se faire raison'. Since then had been unwell and unable to work, with little appetite, and had developed hatred for fruits he had willingly eaten before, believing accused and la Tixatte were cause of his sickness.

(7) Demenge Cuvellier, bourgeois de Sainte Croix, 46

Told story about horse as already recounted by first witness; had seen episode from window, and told servant off roundly for having anything to do with that witch. Five or six years later had bought another horse from Jean Paulus of Sainte Blaise, and drank on this at tavern of Pierrat Moser. Two months later Moser's wife told him he should watch out, explaining that she had sent out to get bread from the accused when they were drinking, and she had asked servant why they wanted so much. When she heard the reason, she said that he could buy it but he would hardly make any more profit from it than from the others – in fact no harm came to the horse, but about seven weeks later he met her outside the blacksmiths, and told her he knew about what she had said, and if any misfortune followed it would only need one such as him to have her burned, for which she had never sought any reparation.

(8) Jerg Beck de Triere, myneur de Sainte Croix, 32

About 11 or 12 on night of last All Saints woke and heard noise in his field – thought it was accused with plough, and wife went to look. Next morning around 4 he and another miner went to inspect field, but nothing seemed to have changed.

That evening had a cow sick, and after two or three days were advised to conduct a ceremony using three 'jeunes boulettes', some milk from the cow, and a tablecloth – smashed up the 'boulles' using a knife, later heard that accused and another had been ill and wounded, and suspected she had been cause of his misfortune.

(9) Chrestienne femme Jean Noirewoye, de Sainte Croix, 25

Since marriage had borne four children, but three had died, and had not been able to suckle any of them. Believed this was Tixatte's doing, because she did not want to marry her son Claude, but devineresse of Val de Viller had told others that the accused was the cause.

(10) Nicolle, femme Demenge Villaume, Rowier et bourgeois de Sainte Croix, 50

One day was in childbirth, and when she found midwife was at church for a baptism - sent for accused to act in her place, but she did not come, so she sent again for the midwife. When Helaine arrived and saw delivery had already taken place she left without saying a word. About two days later she dreamed that the accused had a small loaf the size of a 'Roleis' in her hand, then woke and felt as if it was choking her – almost fell out of bed in terror, and from Christmas to St George seemed to have lost her wits. Heard a voice telling her to go into the woods, but when she set out another voice told her not to do so and she recovered. Two years later had another child, and six weeks after birth was at a feast where accused and other women were; asked her if baby could stand on its legs. She was frightened of her, so said yes, but when she handed baby back to her daughter to return it to their house it fell like a stone, and was ill for a year. Believed that she had caused these misfortunes.

(12 June 1592)

(11) Allix, femme Nicolas Fournier, 40

Had been in service of Helaine for four years, and one day she told witness how she had made two 'torteaux pour les laidz et les ratten' and put them on a chest, but two charcoal-burners' wives, one being Jean Joliat's wife, came seeking bread and took them. Had started to eat them, then begun to empty themselves at both ends – otherwise might have died, so she was very frightened until she discovered that they were still alive, and gave great thanks to God.

12 June 1592; interrogation and confrontations

Told she had been accused by Chrestienne Waudelskindt and Prinson Francois, who had seen her at sabbat; denied she had ever been there.

In response to Collotte Viriat, said she had just done duty of a good neighbour in taking her to Ebersheim, and did not remember giving her a pear.

Said that she had helped deliver Pierratte Martin of two stillborn children, and that Pierratte had admitted to her that during pregnancy her husband 'la faisoit preitir.'

Jean Noirevoye's wife had told her that she had quarrelled with a 'Romaine' who was serving Bastien Noirevoye, who wished that she might have neither health or joy of the child she was carrying; then some witches were arrested and the servant fled.

No other statements of any substance; just denied other claims, apart from story about making 'torteaux' with 'couble de montagne' for rats. Was confronted with Prinson, who repeated accusation, but denied it.

2 July 1592; interrogation and confession

When brought from prison started to confess. Some nine years earlier had been very angry when she found her husband 'qui se jouoit avec sa chambrière' while baking bread, went out and on way to fetch barley from mill, when she met a black man with ugly hands who said she was angry and should go with him. Name was Goudat, made her touch his hand and say she would obey him and come with the others, also renounce God. Took her off to place where there were three other women, including Prinson; had some milk and danced. Asked about powder, said Goudat did not give her any, but she obtained it from accomplices whenever she needed it. Had been to sabbat again three years earlier, where she saw la Monciatte and la Baltzatte; latter told her she had killed children of Humbert Deschamps and was trying to impoverish him. Only use she had made of powder was to try it on her cat, which died and whose body she threw in the river. Denied other charges, but said she had been to another sabbat where she saw Baltzatte and Marguise Morgande.

Was now threatened with torture if she did not make a fuller confession. Said that she had killed horse of Demenge Couveller by rubbing powder on its back in name of her master – was angry because he was envious of quantity of bread they sold and was always provoking them. Had been angry with Jean Wiriat's wife, so made her ill with power in milk, then when they were reconciled cured her with a pear that Goudat had given her. Others she had seen at sabbat were wife of Christin Klotz and wife of Sagaire. Only other harm she had done was trying powder on one of her oxen which died three weeks later.

Asked if she and accomplices had not made many attempts to spoil crops, said that they had made several, but they did not always succeed. Had beaten water and raised a cloud which went beyond woods of Berckheim.

3 July 1592; formal request that executioner be sent for, to put her to death, but also noted that she was now withdrawing confessions, so would need to be put to the question.

7 July 1592; interrogation under torture

Started by saying that all previous confessions were lies, but when racked she offered to confess.

Now said temptation had been when married to previous husband Jean Parroie and living at Beurbeuche; Bastien Friedrich had been courting her daughter Jehennon, who was now his wife. Her husband had been very jealous of Helaine and Bastien, and she was almost out of her mind, when evil spirit appeared to her one night and promised to give her money and help her. His name was Satan, and he gave her a purse with bits of black glass in it, then black powder to kill men and animals. She renounced God and promised to serve him, then he had intercourse with her. Took her to sabbat at Cleretache, where she saw la Baltzatte, la Monciatte, two German women, and Mengatte Taincquiere of Petit Rombach.

Had killed ox belonging to Vallencin Langhee of Petit Rombach, whose wife had angered her – had forgotten for what reason. This was 17 years earlier. Asked if she had done much harm to Nicolas Urban, as Marguerite femme Jacot Jean Martin

had confessed, said she had killed a cow and a horse belonging to him, and made him ill so that he was out of his wits for a year and a half, before she took pity on him and asked Satan how she could cure him. Was told to blow powder on him as she had done to make him sick – greatly regretted making him ill, having realized that he was a good and honourable man, ‘et qu’on ne debvoit laisser vivre aulcunes sorcieres soient pauvres ou riches pour estre une maudicte et mechante herbe.’

Asked how she and Marguerite had attacked his animals, said that at noon they had entered stable in form of cat and dog respectively to put powder in feeding trough – this might be burned if they were still frightened about it, but they had removed the powder later.

Repeated story about Jean Viriat’s wife, adding that she had taken her to ‘medecine’ at Ebersheim who had blessed her with various prayers as a cover for her own healing with the pear. Had given Viriat mortal illness on Monday of wedding of the mayor, rubbing some powder on rim of his glass as they were toasting one another.

Said that she and accomplices had regularly made clouds at sabbat, but as soon as first bell was heard they said it was the dog barking and they had no more power.

Named accomplices as a short squat woman from Sainte Marie named Mathiatte, wife of Jean d’Orbey from Rawaiecoste, Mengeotte Taincquiere, la fille Quentin, la veuve Jacot gouverneur de Stimbach, la houtmande de Musloch, femme de Christin Klotz, la grosse Suzanne, la grosse Mengatte de Musloch, la cordonniere de Sainte Croix and her daughter, la teincturiere of the same place, la Micklaude de Rawaiecoste, and la femme Loux.

Was then racked again when she would confess no more. Added that she had killed a horse belonging to Demenge Dieudonné some three years before, for no particular reason. Had killed the wife of the late Didier Frelich after a quarrel about her late husband. Finally had strangled horse of Claudey Riotte with its reins in anger at his mother-in-law.

10 July 1592; formal death sentence.