

Witch 343; Dumont, t. 2, i-xxvii, Claudon Hardier, de Hesse

Denounced by Estienne Chauffel, herdsman of Nitting, who had been executed as witch. Date of denunciation given as 19 June 1608.

End June/early July 1608; informations préparatoires

(1) Medart Grand Bastien, 50

Knew him from before marriage, and had never suspected him until after accusation. Since then had remembered a quarrel followed by death of a sow, which was ill for a month, which he now imputed to his witchcraft.

(2) Thomas Damance, alias Martin, 44

Around Easter had been speaking with accused, and said that although people said that his replacement as herdsman knew nothing of his trade, he was doing well and animals were very healthy. Claudon replied 'que ce n'était encore rien et que devant qu'il fût leur fête, qu'il verrait bien comment il lui en irait'. Since then some animals had died, and herdsman was complaining he was plagued by wolf, which his dogs ran away from. Wolf only scratched animals in most cases, but they died later; this and recent accusations made him suspect Claudon was cause.

(3) Frels Jean Martin, 40

Around St Remy in 1606 was carting manure, and crossed Claudon's land. Latter appeared from behind a bush and said 'où diable il allait, qu'il lui puisse rompre le cou', to which reply was 'mais à toi les jambes'. Claudon retorted 'Mort Dieu, je te ferai tuer un cheval', and witness said 'qu'il n'oserait avoir fait la folie'. Next day his best horse fell ill, and died 2 days later 'comme enragé et d'une maladie inconnue et extraordinaire.' Later Claudon told him he knew he had been angry with him that year, and he replied that he had, because he had threatened to kill his horse. Reply was 'qu'il jurerait bien pour soi, mais qu'il ne voudrait jurer pour sa feue femme,'

(4) Hanezo Didier, de Vic, 46

Had heard of threat to previous witness and death of horse.

(5) Stepf Georges, 40

6 years earlier had been talking to him as he kept herd, when a flock of sheep belonging to some merchants appeared, and he said 'Voilà un diable de troupeau de moutons; je voudrais estre sorcier pour huit jours, je ferais un loup qui leur donnerait bien la poussée.' In present year, when it was question of appointing herdsman for cattle, he had said 'que quiconque en aurait la charge, qu'il aurait de l'eau sur les mains'. Witness had taken the job, and found this was true, having great trouble with the herd 'qui est quelquefois infesté d'un loup, les poursuites duquel ne semblent estre d'un animal de telle nature, en tant qu'au lieu de se dresser contre quelque bête pour en prendre sa pâture, il ne fait que virer et tourner à l'entour et les égratigner, comme il est arrivé ces jours passés à deux ou trois génisses, lesquelles, le lendemain de ses poursuites, se trouvèrent avoir des

égratignures en la joue droite, d'où provenaient enflures qui leur fermaient l'oeil, et depuis en peu de jours sont été mortes.' Claudon had undertaken to treat one of these, and when witness complained of wolf, saying it was not a true wolf, he said 'que c'était le diable, et que le déposant ne savait la manière de guérir telles égratignures: il fallait signer l'animal et le frotter en la partie offensée avec mithridate.' He had not known of use of mithridate as ointment - it was usually given orally to animals which had eaten something poisonous.

(6) Hilaire Claudon Henri, 30

Had quarrel when he was herdsman, because cow returned limping and he accused Claudon of beating it. He swore 'qu'il l'aurait bien d'une autre façon'; when calf was born cow lost its milk, so he had to sell it at a loss. In view of quarrel and threats, thought this was his doing.

(7) Estienne François, 34

Since his father-in-law had quarrelled with accused, from whom he had withdrawn lease of a meadow, had lost 3 animals. He had tried to cure them, but as soon as he saw them, although they only had small scratches, he said there was no cure and they might as well be dead already.

(8) Guillaume Masson, 55

After quarrels with accused his wife was crippled and had to use crutches. One day she was at home while he was in church, and was frightened when a stick fell noisily in front of her. When he returned he inspected it, and found it was 'tout artisonné' and slightly greased at end, so made enquiries of neighbours. Claudon's wife said it came from their house, and had belonged to her late father. After dispute over pears from a common tree witness fell to ground while Claudon watched, and thought he might have been killed; imputed this to him, in view of reputation.

(9) Jean Florentin, 53

Same story as son-in-law Estienne François about meadow and losses of animals by latter.

(10) Clauss Bernet, 40

Had heard him say 'qu'il voudrait être sorcier pour trois heures et qu'il ferait bien du mal à tel. Depuis, il lui a oui reconnaître qu'il savait une herbe pour faire courir les vaches et pour les arrêter quand il voulait, et que un certain Jean Jehenne (en son vivant fort suspect de sortilège) la lui avait enseignée.' When he was looking after herd he employed witness to harvest for him, but was angry when he said Claudon should be looking after herd rather than harvesting. Met his wife as she was taking food to children who were guarding geese, and complaining angrily that husband was interfering in his affairs. 2 days later both children became ill, one of them unable to speak for a month and having to be force-fed; imputed this to him, on account of dispute and reputation.

(11) Austette Petter Fretz, 56

At end of previous year had told him he was glad village had hired another herdsman, since he knew there would be heavy mortality of animals that year; knew this because Jean Jehenne had taught him about a herb whose appearance was sign of this. Before this witness had turned on his land, although grain had not sprouted so he did no harm, and he told him he would repent. Same day one of his best horses was strangled by wolves, although they did not drag it away. Later lost a cow in herd, and thought these misfortunes were his doing.

(12) Hays Bernet, 50

Some years earlier, threshing at Sarrebourg, accused said he wished he could be witch for 2 or 3 days, to avenge himself on those he hated.

(13) Fiacre Cherrier, 55, maître échevin en la justice de Hesse

Had never quarrelled with him, but suspected him over loss of 3 fine cows 4 years earlier. First died in fields, but most of animals which ate flesh died, even 'verrat', and several dogs. Second returned as normal in evening, then Claudon told wife of witness that it had trouble with its teeth, asking for 'une nape' to assist it. Some hours later it was found kicking out at other cows in stable, and although witness rushed for some 'mithridate' to treat it with, it died before he could do so. A third died next day; behaviour in case of second made him suspect him over the other two.

(14) Demenge Valtin, 21

Had served him when he was herdsman, and realized that one of dogs was very dangerous - if it bit any animal it usually died. Told him about this, asking him to get rid of the dog, but he refused, saying 'qu'il le pouvait bien tenir en bride quand il voulait'. When a calf belonging to his father-in-law gave difficulties he threatened 'de lui donner son chien en queue', and after being bitten it died. One day he and the herdsman of Nitting quarrelled because they wanted to use same pasture; Claudon called him 'viel triart, viel sorcier', to which he replied, wagging his finger, that he should be quiet and watch himself. Later told witness that the other herdsman had said much worse things to him on other occasions.

(15) Claudin Lhuilier, 40

After wife of witness refused him a gallon of oil their cow became lame, with a little scratch which produced yellow water, and was found dead in stable next day. Claudon saw body and said 'que s'il y en avait un cent, que pas une n'échapperait', which made him suspect loss resulted from his witchcraft.

(16) Claudon Blaise, 55

He was 'commis de ville', and 2 or 3 weeks earlier Claudon, who was behind him at communal assembly, was impatient at slowness, asked how long they would be there. Witness turned and told him no-one was forcing him to stay, and he should leave. 'Lesquels propos ledit prévenu attira au sujet de son accusation qui avait un peu auparavant précédé, et témoigna par sa contenance que cette réponse lui touchait au coeur; comme de vrai, l'intention du déposant touchait sur ladite

accusation'. However, 'il ne porta pas loin la vengeance', because 2 days later his cow was killed by a wolf, which he thought was doing of accused, angry at what he had said.

(17) Georges-Jean Thiriet, 40

Fretz Jean Martin had accused him 'en pleine taverne' with having caused death of a horse; he replied that he was a good man, but could not answer for his wife.

(18) Mathieu Durant, 62

Had quarrelled about a young ass under his guard, which was eaten by wolves in woods, and for which witness demanded payment. Since then had a cow sick, and when he came to see it he said it was witchcraft, and not one of a hundred would escape.

(19) Austette Clairier, 35

When he was commis de ville in 1606 Claudon asked for 15 'paires' as payment for being herdsman of cattle; told that it was only 14 and a half, they had violent quarrel, after which his wife became insane. She was taken to Vergaville, and sent back with assurance that she was bewitched - he thought this was Claudon's doing, in view of reputation.

(20) Mariatte femme Médard Grand Bastien, 46

In 1606 Austette Petter Frels had undertaken to plough a field adjoining that of Claudon, and had to turn on his land. When he complained about this they offered to resow affected part, but he refused, saying he would do it himself; after this he showed resentment by refusing to talk to them. Same night one of Austette's horses died - did not know if he was cause.

(21) Anguenesse, femme Frels Jean Martin, 40

Story of threat to kill horse - told in more detail by husband, but she added that they later lost 3 more horses.

(22) Anne, femme Claudon Lhuilier, 41

Same story as husband about death of cow, but she added that his remark about not one in a hundred escaping was in reference to those with similar scratches.

(23) Catherine femme Clausse Bernet, 45

Same story as husband about quarrel becasue Claudon had been harvesting rather than guarding herd, after which he had been 'causant et murmurant toujours à part soi'. Child then fell ill, was unable to speak for 4 weeks or eat for 5, and so weak afterwards that he had to learn to walk again at age of 9.

(24) Jeanne femme Austette Petter Frels, 42

After husband trespassed on field they had horse killed, but not eaten as it would have been by animal seeking food, then lost a cow. Did not know if this was his doing, but had evil reputation and it happened just after the quarrel.

(25) Zabel femme Mathieu Durant, 46

Had been unable to make him pay for dead ass, because community 'ne s'en voulait mêler'. Then she complained that her cow feared him, and she had been told he had given it a great blow with a stick. He replied that she had already tried in vain to make him pay for the ass, and she said 'Je ne te crains, si tu n'es sorcier; sur quoi il ne répondit rien, ains s'en alla toujours grommelant'. When cow sickened he came to see it and said it was bewitched; when she asked 'quelle sorcellerie ce pouvait être, hocha la tête et s'en alla, et depuis la bête mourut'.

Procureur d'office for abbé of Haute-Seille then asked for his arrest and interrogation.

8 July 1608; court at Hesse approves arrest, 'après fait voir par gens versés en droit'.

19 July 1608; interrogation

Said he was native of Petit-Mont, son of Demenge and Marguerite Estienne 'gens mendians et vagabonds', whom he had left as soon as he was old enough to go into service. Had been 5 years at priory, then married 10 years earlier, living at Hesse where he had been herdsman for 8 years. (Petitmont is between Badonviller and Cirey-sur-Vezouze, 17 km SSW of Hesse)

Asked if he had threatened anyone, agreed that he had been angry with Frels Jean Martin when he damaged field, saying 'qu'il ne tiendrait à guerre qu'il donnerait son hache à l'un des chevaux dudit Frels, ou qu'il couperait les rays des roues de son char.'

Said he had left post as herdsman when wife became ill, and realising she would not live long he did not want to continue. He had left willingly, because it would have been so difficult to do the job as a widower.

Asked why he had made remarks when office was made open to lowest bidder, saying they could well reduce the cost, but the taker would have problems. Why also had he said that new holder did not know the job, and although animals were currently healthy he would have much to do before the local feast-day came?

Replied he had said 'que son successeur aurait de l'eau sur les mains, mais n'y ait entendu mal aucun, ains seulement à la peine et au travail que pâtre endure pendant les neuf semaines.' Had not been discontented, and spoke from compassion for successor.

Asked what dogs he had, said a white one, which he had lost at Christmas; earlier a red and a grey, red had been lost, and he drowned the grey because it was useless for keeping animals. The white one had sometimes bitten animals, but did them no harm.

Denied predicting harm which would come to animals; said 'qu'il voyait bien que chacun lui mettait sus, ce qu'il ne pouvait, mais qu'il ne craindait Dieu ni le monde qu'il dût être trouvé tel qu'il avait accusé.'

S'il n'a pas autrefois souhaité être sorcier?

A répondu, après avoir été remémoré du lieu où il en pourrait avoir parlé, qu'il a souvenance qu'un troupeau de moutons amaigrissait fort la pâture de Hesse,

et que voyant approcher ledit troupeau, il se laissa à dire qu'il voudrait être sorcier; mais il nie qu'il ait dit qu'il ferait un loup pour leur donner la pousse; bien en est-il qu'il dit qu'il n'en viendrait plus sur la pâture.'

Asked what he would have done to prevent them, said 'qu'il ne le sait et ne le veut savoir'.

Asked if he had commonly treated sick animals, said he had, as 'homme de bien'. One illness was for cows with 'une ampoule percée' under their tongue; used magical prayer learned from old herdsman Jean Jehenne (Delcambre 21, which says illness was 'aphtes') after which he burst the 'ampoule' and bathed it with fresh water. Second was for illness of feet, 'le blanc mal' (Delcambre 22); no additional treatment, learned from wife of Jean Boccart. Third was for 'enflure' between flesh and skin, (Delcambre 20), and cow was to be given some 'mithridate' steeped in water and taken with bread. Fourth was for cows with intestinal worms, using prayer only (Delcambre 31); both these learned from Jean Jehenne.

Said he had not healed cattle in any other way, so was asked about teeth. Said he had not counted this among illnesses, but treated them by pressing teeth 3 times with corner of a napkin in name of the Trinity.

Denied having any method for healing scratches, or saying that a hundred would die from them; nor did he know a herb which was sign of death of animals. Asked about Jean Jehenne, said all he knew was that he had left Kerprich (village 8 km NW of Hesse).

Denied that he had been called witch, accused of killing animals, or that he had claimed animals were bewitched.

Confrontations followed; no details given by Dumont, who says that witnesses and accused both persisted in their statements.

28 July 1608; court at Hesse orders question ordinaire et extraordinaire. Has taken advice of qualified lawyers, but no sign of reference to Nancy.

29 July 1608; interrogation under torture

Asked about mark on head, said it was result of a fall. Rsisted thumbscrews and strappado, until 50 pound weight was added to feet, when he said his master was the Devil. Name was Persin, and he had been witch for 3 years. Then said they did him great wrong, he was not a witch, 'et qu'il disait choses qu'il ne savait, lui étant force, pour échapper à la rigueur de la question, de dire ce qu'il avait dit'. Maintained denials, and was finally sent back to prison overnight.

30 July 1608; interrogation

Intention was to submit him to torture again, but first he was told that bu his own earlier confessions 'il y en a assez de fait pour conclure infailliblement qu'il est sorcier: comme quand il a confessé avoir guéri des animaux avec des oraisons et sans y appliquer aucun autre remède, et choses semblables qui ne peuvent partir que d'un homme qui a convention avec le malin esprit'.

He then asked to be allowed to speak privately with a bourgeois named La Verdure; the judges thought this showed he might confess, so allowed him to do so. Then returned and admitted he was a witch. Had been seduced by Persin 3 years earlier at bois de la Dilatte; he had appeared as black man on black horse, asking him to go to wars with him. He said he did not know if he would, then was given leather purse. Went with him about a league; Persin said that since he was content

to go with him he should renounce God, and when he did so marked him on head with his claw. Found money was leaves.

Since then had appeared more than 7 times, telling him to kill animals with black powder he gave him. Did so by making them eat it, or walk over it; had another kind which was yellow for cattle.

Asked about wolves, said they were witches who were 'ainsi transfigurés'; had not done this himself, but heard about it from others who did. Said his dog had poisonous teeth, because it came from mother's first litter, then said he had put yellow powder on teeth. Judges objected this would have killed dog, so he said it was his master in form of dog; finally changed story again, saying it has poisonous teeth because it ate carrion. Judges recorded all these contradictions without further comment.

Denied many of specific maléfices about which he was asked, but agreed he had killed Claudon Lhuilier's cow, also that of Mathieu Durant.

Asked if he had been to sabbat with Estienne Chauffel, agreed he had, at spring of Hrenborn and another spring near Lorge. Had seen old maire of Nitting, Mengette femme Martin Mengens, and Michel (previously herdsman of goats at Lorquin). Also Jean Sauvages, who lived in forest, the wife of Fririet, of le Woyvre, the wife of Colas le Fou, of Nitting, the maire Martzelof Georgeon and his brother Clauss. Asked about last 2, said he had seen them 4 times; knew Martzelof by face, Clauss by bearing and clothing, because he was 'couvert'.

Asked what they did, said 'qu'ils convenaient ensemble pour faire perdre les grains'. He had not done this, because he was too needy. Only master was Persin. Asked what they ate, said it was only bread and water. Master had been in form of man, and took him to sabbat on shoulders or horns.

Those he had seen transformed into wolves were Estienne Chauffel and the old maire of Nitting.

Since Clauss Georgeon was fugitive, was confronted with Martzelof Georgeon; maintained his accusation against him, after which they were both sent back to prison.

30 July 1608; procureur asks for death sentence. Approved by court at Hesse and read to convicted man in presence of most of inhabitants of Hesse on 31 July.