

B 8700 no 4; witch 239, Claudette femme Bastien Delat, de St Dié

17 May 1608; procureur d'office for canons has received denunciation of evil reputation of accused, and asks for information to be taken from witnesses.

19 May 1608: informations préparatoires

(1) Demenge Drouin, bourgeois, 35

5 years earlier his daughter Birbe had been in bed with strange illness, and neighbours advised him to try pilgrimage to St Mairin. Asked Claudette to undertake this, and when she delayed asked her why; said her husband had forbidden her, on grounds that if child recovered it would be said she had given the sickness and cured it. Other neighbours advised him to obtain bread, salt, and ashes from her to make a soup; did so, but she died in 3 days. His suspicions came to ears of Claudette, and some 2 years later she found his small son Pierre outside her house, and struck him on the head. Eyes subsequently became swollen, and was now almost blind. Another of his sons, Demenge, had quarrel with one of her children, whom witness called 'fils de sorciere'. General reputation.

(2) ?, femme du précédent

Repeated previous deposition. Added that when she wanted someone to work on linen the accused offered her services, but she refused them, which had caused her 'un desdain'.

(3) Marion femme Colas Aubertin, 40

Previous year husband had relined a vat for her, and daughter was sent to return it and obtain payment. Dispute because she wanted to reduce price by 2 deniers, and she struck girl on shoulder twice, telling her she was paid. Immediately felt ill, and took to bed; kept saying she saw the accused, who was telling her she had put a caterpillar inside her which would remain there as long as she lived. Continued to be troubled by this fantasy even after being confessed, so made a cross of wax from candle which had been blessed, and tied it to her forehead. Then complained she felt something wanted to come out of head, and that accused was prevented from entering room, but was in passage; next day she did come to grenier, and dropped a stick. Advised by person from Lusse that she should obtain bread, salt, and ashes, or otherwise herbs from her garden, and make a soup. As soon as girl drank this she made a rapid recovery; suspected that if she was witch as generally reputed she had caused this.

(4) Claudon Estienne, bourgeois, 52

3 or 4 years earlier hired her to do some work in his garden, at agreed price; later sent his daughter and another woman to undertake next stage. Claudette saw them, and made threatening remarks, saying they would repent; day or two later one of his cows died, which he believed had been her doing if she was witch as reputed. Had threatened to have her arrested if he suffered further losses, without her husband seeking reparation. Mother already suspected.

(5) Jean Martin le vieux, 75

Had been quarrel between her husband Bastien Delat and François Mengenat, portier à la Rochatte. Mongenat claimed Delat had falsely accused him of driving his own mother out of the house, saying he was 'un meschant homme' if he did not justify his complaint. Delat started to seek reparation, and witness tried to mediate, but Delat was angry when he pointed out that insult had only been conditional. After that he and his wife ignored him when they met, and he fell ill for a year. Felt as if something heavy was pressing on him at night, and could not move; when he started to recover gave them 'belles parolles et salutations' in hope of moving them to pity. Suspected that if she witch as reputed she had caused this; mother already suspected, and heard she had fled. Also told story of grand-daughter Barbe, as in deposition (3)

(6) Barbe fille de feu Rock Olry, 15

Story of dispute over payment and illness. Seemed to see her whenever she turned head, and told she had given her a great caterpillar with big feet, which might finally strangle her. Pain seemed to travel all round her body. After mother gave her something she recovered, with pain leaving by one of her legs, which still troubléd her sometimes.

(7) Nicolas Thoussaint Grattain, 28

When first married he sold wine 'en detail', and wife went to get payment from accused; gave it unwillingly, saying she would repent. Soon after his horse died, and he bought another for a journey 'en allemaigne'. As he set out he met Claudette in his porch, and thought she touched the horse; it was drowned in a shallow stream at Provencheres. Bought two more horses, only to lose them both, and in view of general reputation believed she had caused this.

Wife then fell ill, as if out of her mind, and finally used technique he was told about. Obtained fresh butter from 3 houses, melted it in new earthenware pot, and threw in 9 leaves of 'venges' while naming person he suspected. Ninth leaf was supposed to emerge 'petillant' from pot, while suspect appeared. She did indeed come in without saying anything, and when he asked what she sought said it was nothing; passed by bed and left. Did not think she touched wife, but she started to improve and was now convalescent. Similar suspicions.

(8) Claudon Daguette, 65

General reputation. Mother also suspected, and had no fixed residence, but 'courroit ca et la par le pays'.

(9) Jehennon veuve Claudon Roze de la Rochatte, 65

Quarrel 3 or 4 years earlier when witness found her taking unripe fruit from pear tree before permitted date and told her off. Called her witch, and she threatened to have her fined. Grand-daughter Marguitte was now very ill, and she had 'fantaisie' that if she was witch as reputed this was her doing.

(10) Claudon du Haud, 48

Had made a 'hotte' for her husband, and wanted to be paid without deleting debt of 6 gros; she said he or his family would repent. A week or two later his son Claude had great pain in ear, becoming deaf, and was ill for some 12 weeks. Suspected her, and asked her to visit him, but she refused. Boy finally died, with swelling spreading to throat and seeming to choke him; if she was witch as generally believed thought she had caused this.

(11) Jean Ferry alias Marande, bourgeois, 45

About 2 years before his son Demenge had called her witch near gate of La Rochatte, and she struck him with a stick so that he fell down. The porter, Nicolas Miette le jeune, thought she had killed him outright, and called out to her, at which she fled, leaving stick behind. In fact the boy recovered and went home, and witness took no action against her or her husband. Thought that if she was witch as long reputed she had caused illness from which his daughter Babon had been suffering for more than a year, only able to get about with sticks. 'n'ayant osé affliger sondit fils, de peur que l'on ne decouvrit appertement son venin'.

(12) Marguitte femme Didier Valat de la Rochatte, 24

Quarrel over picking pears early some 4 or 5 years earlier, after which she gave birth to a child which had never been able to walk or speak. If she was witch as reputed, believed she might have caused this.

(13) Mengeatte veuve Colas Rolat, 60

Although she had long been nearest neighbour, did not suspect her of doing her any harm. Long reputation, and her mother had been chased out of the town because she was so feared.

(14) Marguitte femme Claudon Jalley, 25

Although she had lived in same house, had no suspicion of her.

(15) Diez Drouin, bourgeois, 36

On Christmas Eve 6 years earlier had asked wife (in his absence) for loan of 9 gros, which she refused since she had no money at the time. That night they each had a cradle alongside their bed, and the one on his wife's side repeatedly fell over, despite invocation of God and the saints, and use of holy water. Found baby's face scratched, and finally set to praying together. When child grew it could not walk properly, and finally died. Suspected her, either because of refusal of money, or because she had to leave house when witness went to live there. Husband heard of suspicions and threatened to take action, but failed to do so.

(16) Demenge Colin, 24

About a year after marriage he lost a fine knife at a wedding feast, and was told Claudette had picked it up. She admitted this, but said her husband had taken it, and so he had to wait for his return. Since he was going to feast at Baccarat, told his wife (who was pregnant) to get it and give him a coin for drink. Now denied having had it, adding that she had been beaten by husband. Suspected that she had

been cause of stillbirth experienced by wife. Previous Christmas his wife had gone to confess, and unintentionally got in front of accused; was unable to say a word, and had to go back another time.

(17) Zabilon femme Colas Hanns, bourgeois, 27

Previous year husband bought two donkeys, and asked her husband to make harness for one of them; he was very slow, so bought one elsewhere. Did not know whether she was angry over this, but husband then fell strangely ill, and was at first thought to be dying. Recovered a little, but still subject to strange fits, starting in finger or toe, which would make him blind or dumb in the end. As he came out of these would say, naming accused, 'c'est toy qui me pense suffocquer et empescher à mon mariage, mais je diray mes prières, prendray de l'eau beniste, me confesseray, et requenteray la saincte communion sy souvent que tu n'aura nulle puissance sur moy, ou bien je te feray prendre ou apprehender, ou bien de faire et parfaire ton proces', meanwhile laughing as if out of his mind. Persuaded accused to make pilgrimage to St George at Taintrux, but still no improvement, so asked her to visit him; after several refusals did so, and said he must be patient, and such great illnesses only improved slowly. Had seemed to get better, and no relapse since Christmas, but in view of reputation suspected she had made him ill.

(18) Sebille veuve Claudon Blaise, 70

Some 16 years earlier accused was serving her as maid, and allowed some pigs to escape after disobeying instructions. When told off went back to mother, who had become vagabond and was then at Robache. Row with mother followed, then death of daughter; told them of her suspicions, threatening to have them burned if they did not cure her son Diey, who was also ill. Asked her if she had seen her mother do any harm, and she said she had seen her cook toads in a pot to kill cattle, and she was 'une ribaulde'. After this her son recovered, but believed one of them had killed daughter.

(19) Claudatte femme Didier Drouin, 28

Same deposition as husband, to which she referred.

(20) Magdelaine femme Demenge Colin, 24

Same story as husband in essentials, but no mention of stillbirth.

(21) Jacquat Durand, bourgeois, 42

4 years before had been owed 3 francs for bread, and through wife asked for payment when he needed to buy more grain. Wife became ill and died in 2 weeks, although Claudette came and cared for her for 3 days and made her a bath - was sometimes as if possessed. If she was witch as reputed thought she might also have caused trouble with arm, which he could not cure, so that he was crippled.

(22) Colas Hanns, bourgeois, 25

Same story as wife about order for harness, and his subsequent illness.

19 May 1608; procureur orders arrest, interrogation, and confrontations

22 May 1608; interrogation

Said she was about 50; relied on spinning and day-labour for her livelihood. Native of Deviller near Epinal, father was Remy le Mulnier, mother Dieudonné Chappouatte from Roville-aux-Chesnes near Rambervillers. Had lived in various mills they leased; father had died 33 years earlier, mother 3, while begging towards la Neufville en Baremback. Mother had lived with her for 6 weeks during first marriage, then was chased out as not being native of town.

Asked if mother had been suspected of witchcraft, said she had been accused by Sebille veuve Claudon Blaise, of killing her daughter - had also accused her (Claudette) of losing her pigs.

Had lived in town for 16 years, during 2 marriages; 3 children in all, but they were all dead.

Generally denied all charges, although she did admit striking the boy who called her witch.

23 May 1608; confrontations

Said that Demenge Drouin had stolen some cloth, naming others who could testify to this. His wife had beaten her son and made his nose bleed - witness admitted this was true, he had been fighting her son, and no harm came of it.

Claudon Estienne said that Mengatte femme Bastien Gros Jean, later executed as witch, who healed animals, had cut ear of his cow, and when no blood came out said it was bewitched and would die.

Zabillon femme Colas Hanns said husband was ill again, and could not come to be confronted.

Said in response to Sebille veuve Claudon Blaise that she had not told her anything about toads, but might well have said that she was reputed to have killed cattle at Robache.

Procureur then asked for question ordinaire.

24 May 1608; Change de Nancy approves

29 May 1608; interrogation under torture

When executioner was about to give her thumbscrews, begged not to be tortured and began to confess. Had been taken to sabbat by mother when she was 9 or 10; Persin, who presided, promised she would never lack if she gave allegiance to him. Gave her velvet purse, which turned out to contain horse dung, and powder - black/kill, yellow/languish, white/cure. Had killed a pig with powder.

Had used black powder on wife of Colas Thoussaint Grattain, but master told her she must take pity on her, so cured her with white powder in soup. Had killed 2 of his horses, and a cow belonging to Claudon Blaise, her master, some 24 years earlier, because during great dearth she was not always given enough bread. Had also killed Barbe fille Demenge Drouin, because he would not pay what she asked for undertaking pilgrimage, and made his son blind - could not take this off now she was under arrest. Had made Barbe fille Roch Olry ill, then cured her.

Had used powder on Babon fille Jean Ferry, because brother called her witch - she was now recovering. Mother had cooked toads with red and yellow powder to

kill cattle. Had used red and yellow powder to make child of Didier Valet ill for period of 6 years, after which she hoped it would recover, also to make Nicolas Hanns ill for one year. Had killed Claude, son of Colas du Haud, and overturned cradle of child of Diez Drouin. Had killed first wife of Jacquat Durand, and George le Havenaire, who had asked for payment for a pot he had sold her. Said she had killed her own son Jean 2 years earlier, because she and husband were poor, and unable to feed him.

Last time she had been to sabat was 6 weeks earlier; ate oysillons, no salt or drink, danced with men from village she did not know. Went in line carrying pieces of wood instead of candles, and kissed Persin's arse. Had gone on foot by day. Admitted sexual relations with Persin, and making hail.

Named as accomplices one named Mesline, la mairesse Masson, la femme Guillaume, la Canoniere, la femme Bastien Gros Jean, Jean Caillerey and his wife, previously executed, Jean Gaixatte le vieux, Jehennon femme Rembault Peu de Cuire, Bastien des Aulx of viel marché, Marion femme Claudel Flandrey of le Fain, Bastien Stablo of la Bolle, Jean Lassenatte le vieux, and Claudon Jacquemin of la Bolle.

30 May 1608; interrogation

Added some details to account of sabat. Sometimes went on foot, other times was carried by Persin in form of a wolf, who took her by arms and carried her up chimney after she had rubbed herself with blue grease.

Persisted with confessions when interrogated again in afternoon, including accusations - but did not repeat names at any stage.

31 May 1608; interrogation

Again confirmed confessions. Asked about accomplices, now named 5 - Jehennon femme Rembault peu de Cuir, Bastien des Aulx, Claudon Jacquemin, Bastien Stablo, Marion femme Claudel Flandrey. Discharged Jean Lassenatte le vieux, saying she had accused him because his son-in-law Jean Jaley, master of the poor previous year, had not given her bread of poor she wished for 12 weeks earlier.

Procureur asked for execution in usual form.

2 June 1608; Change de Nancy approves, specifying that she should feel the fire before being strangled.

17 June 1608; sentence carried out