

Witch 029, Mathieu Margeron 1

B 3323 no 5; witch 029, Mathieu Margeron de Leintrey

22 March 1602; informations preparatoires

(1) Allison femme Jean Claudon Claude, laboureur, 40

Reputation 20 years (residence). Lived 2 houses away, thought he had caused death of son aged 7 some 10 or 11 years before. Child had gone out, and she had not paid attention to where he was going, as one would not normally bother with children of his age. Had better of a fight with son of accused, who told him off, then developed pain under arm and died in 2 or 3 days; accused reported to have said he would not recover.

(2) Nicolas Mongein, fils feu Claudon Mongin, 22

Long reputation. Father of witness had held him to be a true witch; had numerous quarrels with him, to point of fighting with him. Suspected him over losses of animals, and had wanted to take him to justice; according to mother his father had died 9 years earlier believing himself bewitched by him. Reported compromising remarks made by son of accused to sister of curé, also that when he had been with the son on the church tower he claimed he could jump down uninjured.

(3) Jean Claudon Claude, laboureur, 49

Reputation more than 20 years. Repeated story of son's illness and death.

(4) François le gros Henry, 27

Long reputation. His late mother had told him that when succession of his grandfather Nicolas Margeron was divided, part had gone to accused, who was his son-in-law. A horse came to his mother, but Mathieu said to her 'qu'elle l'auroit mais qu'elle n'en feroit grand profit' - he had wanted horse himself, and it died within 2 or 3 days. Also believed that Mathieu had caused death of his nephew (cousin to witness) Nicolas Menuisier - a young man without heirs, who had lived in his house, and whose death had advantaged his children.

(5) Jean Barbe, laboureur, 42

Reputation since residence. 11 years earlier was loading cart with hay, helped by pregnant wife, when Mathieu went by, and the load suddenly slipped. After this was never able to bring a load safely to town until after wife's delivery - had never quarrelled with him.

(6) Meline femme Pierson Hannix, laboureur, 40

Reputation 20 years (residence). Told of death of Jean Claudon Claude's son, adding that wife of accused had told child she would 'luy faire sa saulce aupres

dudit Margeron'. After this Mathieu became very hostile to her (by implication because he knew of her suspicions), and had her husband summoned to justice at Blamont - but when he got there (according to first husband) Mathieu didn't proceed against him, 'au contraire luy crioit mercy, et dit que sans l'importunité de sa femme il n'en fut ja venu en avant, toutesfois que pour cela la hayne dudit Mathieu ne fut estaincte contre eulx ains s'augmenta de plus, et eurent sondit premier marit et luy plusieurs rancunes et disputes . .' Had further losses of beasts, and after passage of Bouillon's army could not raise calves, which all died. Were reduced to keeping a single cow, and she and husband were convinced misfortunes were caused 'par art sortillegique' of the accused; husband wanted to start prosecution, but she dissuaded him, 'luy remonstrant qu'ilz y mettroient bien tous leurs moyens, qu'ilz ne le scauroient faire brusler.' Whole household later suffered from a strange malady, which seems to have made them delirious; husband died, reproaching witness with having stopped him acting against Mathieu.

(7) Demenge Breton, natif de Leintrey, de Blamont, 24

Reported family belief that death of 2 horses, 15 or 16 years earlier, had been caused by Mathieu, who had quarrelled with his late father Didier Jean Breton.

(8) Margueritte soeur Messire Dieudonné Claudon, curé de Leintrey, 20

7 or 8 years before she had been working in her brother's house when he was keeping school for village children. Mathieu's son Colas, aged 7 or 8, was attending, and said of hail 'que de sa part il ne s'en soucioit poinct, et que quant a luy il en feroit bien'. Also told how mysterious black man came to father's house, and they went out at night, beating water of a stream with 'handelleure' (broom) and 'vergerons'.

(9) Jean Courtier, 40

Told how on day after wedding feast for Mathieu's cousin François le Gros Henry at Frumenil the bride was weeping; Mathieu touched her knee and said 'Jehenne, tu te veindras plaindre a ta tante Margueritte, mais il y aura ung homme qui ne s'en souciera guiere'. On another occasion large part of community was assembled outside church when Claudon Mathieu, son of la Grande Marie, said publicly 'A quoy n'estoit il que je ne fasse prendre le plus gros Genox ou sorcier qui soit a Leintrey, declairant que sy l'on luy vouloit donner chacun six gros ou un franc qu'il le feroit prendre, sans le nommer toutesfois'. Witness understood him to mean Mathieu, and next day asked him if he would do as he said - for his own part would give him as much as an écu. Later he found himself in company of Mathieu and Demenge le Grand Colas; latter said to Mathieu ' Voicy Jean Courtier, qui dit qu'il donra dix francs pour ayder a te faire brusler.' Although he had only spoken of an écu, witness acquiesced in this, and Mathieu said nothing - 'toutesfois du depuis encore que ledit Margeon luy demonstra aucunement bon visage, ne peut oncques estimer en soy qu'il ne luy en voulut'. Next year lost a calf, which he suspected to be work of accused 'a cause que sy librement et sans dispute il avoit en son endroit usé de telles parolles'.

(23 March 1602)

(10) Michiel Hellenix, laboureur, 48

When he and Mathieu were both newly married, 21 years earlier, had agreed to work their land together. At ploughing time Mathieu went off threshing in another village, leaving his wife to hold the plough. One morning witness wanted to start ploughing, only to find that she had not even milked cows yet, so reproached her with the 'mauvais tour' her husband had played him, in going off at hardest time of ploughing. 'Laquelle luy reprocha sur ce, qu'il avoit desja usé de quelques paroles contre son mari Jusques a avoir dit qu'il n'avoit pas encore esté arrachée la cuisse de sa mere (pendue qu'elle estoit a une fourche proche de Manonviller) ce que ledit deposant ne desnia beaucoup, ains replique que ceulx qui avoient fait cela ne pourroient contre aultres que du parantage de ladite deffunte, d'aultant qu'ilz en recevroient deshonneur, et non autres, et fut la mere dudit Mathieu exposée a ladite fourche en la presence dudit deposant s'estant icelle precipitée en prison a Herbeviller sur l'accusation et apprehension qu'elle estoit sorciere, comme du fait ledit Mathieu a eu aussy une sienne soeur executée pour crime de sortilege audit Manonviller peult avoir cinq ou six ans.' When Mathieu returned he reproached witness, who repeated remarks and received reply 'Bien, bien, tu verra combien tu en gagneras, ce que tu en gagneras tu le mettras en ta bourse'. 6 weeks later 2 horses sickened, and later died. Said also that when talking with Mathieu, notably about wife's relatives with whom he had a dispute, he said 'qu'un homme qui croit verroit merveille'.

(11) Jean Breton, fils feu Didier Jean Breton, 20

His mother, who had died 3 years earlier, had believed accused responsible for death of 2 horses.

(12) Thoussainct Claudon Thoussainct, laboureur de Leintrey, 36

2 years earlier was helping another laboureur to cart stones and build wall, and found it convenient to go across field belonging to Mathieu which was fallow. He upbraided them, and witness felt angry because he was threatening to take them to court at Blamont. yet had previously done greater damage in one of his own fields. He quarrelled with Mathieu while others remained silent, and 7 or 8 weeks later a horse sickened and died in 24 hours.

(13) Remy Grand Demenge, 28

3 years earlier had gone to sleep on 'sollier' while in Mathieu's service. Latter came in to give hay to horses, then began signalling and talking in language he didn't understand towards a window in the roof. Also said that when he was a child guarding animals Mathieu's son had talked of not fearing hail and other extravagances. One day Mathieu had quarrelled with his nephew François le Gros Henry, also in his service, and threatened him 'qu'avant qu'il fut trois ans, ce qu'il en

gagneroit, il en mettroit en sa bourse', to which François replied 'que telles menasses tendoient au fait de sortilege', whereupon Mathieu's wife 'se leva et luy donna ung tres grand coup de baston, tellement que du depuis ledit François a toujours de diminué des bons moyens qu'il avoit et est presentement reduicte en grande necessité.'

(14) Germain Hans Germain, maire de Leintrey, 33

Told story of trip to interrogate Commandeur of Gelaucourt about revelations of Jean Bon Claude (see previous case). His first wife, Margueritte Claudon Claude, had quarrelled and fought with Mathieu's wife Margueritte. Went to law at Blamont, and when they thought officials there had settled the matter Mathieu threatened his wife 'que dans bien peu de temps elle se donroit garde de leur dispute ou bien quelqu'un de sa race' - same week her niece died.

1 April 1602; interrogation

Said he was native of Manonviller, aged 46, son of late Demenge Thirion alias Margeron and his wife Catherine. Left home at age of 10 when father died, then in service for more than 12 years at Manonviller, Gondrexon, Orgeville, Paroye, Arracourt, and Leintrey, until marriage to present wife 'avec laquelle il a vescu le mieulx qu'il luy a esté possible en prenant grande peine'. Said he was 'sy troublé' that he couldn't remember his confrontation with Sebille femme Jean Pierson. Agreed that his mother had died in prison at Herbeviller, though he didn't know her offence, and that sister Jennon femme Edmont de Herbeville had been executed as witch at Manonviller. 2 brothers had died abroad, another sister Allison was married to Jean le Blanc of Laudrange.

Asked if he had said that Colas fils Jean Claudon Claude would not recover, denied this with curious claim to have said 'lors qu'un homme se rejouissoit de quelque chose, c'estoit alors qu'il ne l'avoit point.' (In later version 'perdoit'). Admitted that he had heard from Grand Colas that Claudon Marye, with whom he had quarrelled, was seeking to have him burned, and that Jean Courtier had offered 10 francs towards costs, but had been unable to verify this. Agreed that he had beaten his nephew François le Gros Henry, telling him that if he behaved like this his property would be worth nothing to him.

Agreed that there had been a quarrel between his wife and the first wife of Germain Hans Germain - latter had bad foot, and was accusing him of being cause. They had reached a settlement at Blamont.

4 April 1602; confrontations

Generally denied accusations, while not objecting to witnesses as such. Claimed that he had obtained reparation before officers at Blamont for accusations of Claudon Marie. On testimony of Remy Grand Demenge, said 'qu'il falloit louer Dieu qu'il scabvoit tout le fait', and that he had not taken goods of his nephew François but 'que s'il devenoit pauvre c'estoit de mal prendre garde a luy'.

François le Gros Henry himself added that he had heard his late uncle Jean and cousin Nicolas Menuisier tell of finding Mathieu in stable where they were fattening oxen, trying to give them something to eat in order to kill them.

13 April 1602; procureur fiscal asks for question extraordinaire. Change de Nancy approves.

18 April 1602; interrogation under torture

Resisted thumbscrews, but confessed when racked. Said he had been seduced by Persin 7 or 8 years earlier, then started to hesitate, so given another turn, at which he cried he would tell all. Had been approached 2 years after passage of Bouillon's army, when angered by losses (including 18 cattle) and illness which lasted a year. When visitor offered to replace lost beasts, 'doubtant quelque malheur' he commended himself to God, and other struck him and vanished. Reappeared a year later when he was guarding his horses and lamenting that one was sick; offered him money, and this time he agreed to renounce God. Money was oak leaves, although horse recovered, so he was he was deceived 'et a bien tasché par plusieurs fois de se depetrir de ce malheur Mais jamais n'en a peu trouver les moyens.'

At first denied any maléfices, so given another turn on rack and left until later. Now confessed to killing cow belonging to wife's brother-in-law Nicolas Menuisier because of dispute over inheritance - Nicolas refused to let him see the documents, and settlement had 'plus avantage ses premiers enfans que ladite Margueritte'.

Denied other points in accusation until racked again; now confessed to various killings of persons and animals with powder.

Said his accomplices at the sabat were la Jobarde, la Grande Marye, Pierson fils de Petit Pierson, le Petit Noel of Blemerey, and the wife of Jacquot Sernay of Gondrexon. Asked what they did at sabat, said 'que les uns dansoient et les autres faisoient de grands appareils, toutesfois que tout cela n'estoit que pauvreté et abus'. When Petit Noel wanted to make hail he had disagreed and left.

19 April 1602; procureur fiscal asks for death sentence

20 April 1602; Change de Nancy approves, subject to final repetition of confessions

27 April 1602; execution. Withdrew accusations against Poirson le Petit Poirson, and wife of Jacquot Sernay.

Widow applied on behalf of herself and 3 children, claiming that after payment of costs and debts goods would only be worth some 600 Fr. Allowed to keep them for payment of 491 Fr and costs.

Request from Hector Huron, ducal gardener at Nancy, for allocation of goods; he was allowed 600 Fr. Other grants were made against confiscated goods in general; 150 Fr to Jean Maislart, valet de chambre, and 130 Fr to Nicolas Collegnon, archer des gardes.