

9 August 1596; informations preparatoires against Claudon la Romaine of Charmes, accused by Barbe Mallebarbe up to her execution, and suspected by others of giving strange illnesses.

(1) Mongeatte veuve de Aulbry Jean Aulbry de Charmes, 54

Believed Claudon was a witch and had given her the great illness from which she was now suffering, with her right thigh so swollen that she could only move by crawling. Thought this was because her late husband's son had refused to undertake a lawsuit at Nancy for her, despite being asked to do so by his father; on hearing of this Claudon had said 'ha ha il n'y a plus de bonne gens au monde les pauvres sont maintenant delaissez d'un chacun.' Had repeatedly come to house, telling witness she loved her more than her own mother, while she was troubled with the illness which began with a swollen and ulcerated foot. Spread to thigh after Claudon had touched her there, apparently in sympathy. Unlike others who believed themselves bewitched, she had never accused Claudon, but tried to be polite to her. However, one day Jean Regard (in whose house Claudon lived) said that illness was 'le diable', at which Claudon went out in a fury. Later witness asked her to 'l'estuver', but she refused saying she was no doctor; had not come to house since. Also said that Claudon had asked her several times if people were talking of 'mauvaises gens', and if it was said that the late Didier Colardot had been bewitched - had made similar enquiries in respect of late prévôt 3 years before, when he had lost use of limbs.

(2) Sebille fille de feu Harmant Aulbry de Charmes, c. 24

Believed the great illness from which she was now suffering had been given her by Claudon previous Christmas - she had struck her on shoulder as she was taking holy water at church door. Claudon had always been around their house, particularly when they took dinner or supper, and even when they tried dining earlier to avoid her visit. Believed she had caused her mother's fatal sickness, during which she had come to door begging and asked how she was; advised remedy used by Italian women, making mixture to wash head. Mother refused to try this, since her sickness was in her stomach; when Claudon heard she had not tried remedy, turned head and walked away. Ceased coming to house; even when she had been in habit of doing so had tried to avoid the witness.

(3) Isabel femme de Jean Pordon de Charmes, 40

When Claudon had been ill she had asked witness to visit her twice a day; she had done so for a time, but then stopped. On recovery Claudon came to her house, and told her she had 'bien commencé mal achevé'; when given plate of cabbage she didn't like it, and threw it and bread away. Witness was angry and told her she should not throw away 'le bien de Dieu', which another might have liked better than she did. Went out 'mal contante et grondant'; witness immediately felt pain in leg, which became so swollen she could only walk with a stick. When Claudon returned 8 days later asking to warm herself by the fire, witness said she could hardly make a fire for herself, because of leg trouble she had since last visit, and 'je ne quel diable

me la donne sy on ne me l'oste il faudra tuer des gens'. Claudon then advised her to rub it well with butter, and this cured her.

(4) Idatte femme d'Aubry Perin tailleur de Charmes, c. 40

Had been ill for a year, and was now so emaciated that she could only move with husband's help. Illness had begun when Claudon touched her; had come to ask for some stockings, and witness had said they had none, but she should come another time (already feared her, and did not willingly have her in house). Recently her husband had called her in to show his wife's state, but she had merely said she had seen others in same state; asked to suggest remedy, said she was not a doctor. Husband then said to her that if she were one like la Mallebarbe (then in prison) doubtless she had given the sickness, and now she should remove it - replied 'Vous dites doncque que je suis Jenoché s'il vous le semble rendez vous partie contre moy et faictes ce que vous pouvez', and left.

(5) Claudon veuve de Jean Pelletier de Charmes, c. 40

Believed that accused had given her sickness from which she had been suffering for a year. Had been to get alms (2 sols) from Nicolas Flamand commis de l'hôpital; met Claudon on way back, who was evidently put out when she realised that witness had received alms and she had not. After being touched by her, became all swollen and had to be helped back to house. When struggling around town begging, she met Claudon, who told her to be quiet and touched her stomach - after this had been gradually recovering.

(6) Nicolas Sellier de Charmes, 22

General reputation, although he himself had not feared her. Told of mysterious noise in her house a fortnight earlier, followed by whirlwind in street.

(7) Barbe Sellier, c. 30

Said that the mysterious noise had been caused by a cow which had got loose.

(8) Claude Rossel de Charmes, c. 40

Had heard noise, but did not know what had caused it, since he had stayed in bed.

12 August 1596; interrogation

Said she was native of Bar-le-Duc, aged about 70, daughter of Claude Martinet and his wife Didon. Had no memory of father; mother had been day labourer. Had been in service for two separate years, but normally had lived with mother until her marriage at age of about 30. Was interrogated with unusual severity on early life, since it was evidently found implausible that she should have had no proper profession. Said her mother had been helped by a rich relative, the merchant Jean Faillon of Bar; she had done spinning, and had sometimes helped look after Faillon's children.

Was then asked about marriage to Bastien Thiery of Charmes; why had he married a girl from Bar ? Common report was that she had been his concubine, and this was the more likely because when strangers married they normally had to produce evidence of birth; although she claimed to have been properly married in Bar, she had said that her husband had no such evidence. Asked if she had a dowry, she said she had not - had met husband when he was serving in shop of a cousturier at Bar. Prévôt continued to suggest that it was unusual for a man with some property to marry a girl with none, unless he had abused her outside marriage.

Said that after marriage they had lived for 3 or 4 years at Charmes, until her husband decided to go to Rome, where he had been as a child. They were found employment by Messire Mathieu Grec, of household of Cardinal Rodolphe, and stayed about 4 or 5 years. Then returned to Charmes, where they lived for 22 years, before returning for another 3 years to Rome. Finally came back to Charmes; husband had died 15 years before. Had then lived on charity of good people.

Said that she had been arrested after accusation by la Mallebarbe, but denied that she was a witch. When told that several irreproachable witnesses would be produced against her, said she would tell them they lied, and that 'tous ceux qui sont malades, s'ils vouloient dire qu'ils sont ensorcellé ilz ne feroient pas bien, et que c'est dieu qui envoye les maladies.'

Said that La Mallebarbe had accused her out of hatred; had been an occasion when she had avoided her on road, and she had been angry. She had also reproached her on several occasions for hindering other poor from gaining entry to houses, because she would demand alms for her husband as well as herself, refusing to leave until she had them.

14 August 1596; interrogation

Asked whether she had been called witch, she denied it, but other replies suggested that she had - said that a poor widow was exposed to insults from everyone, and could not take offence every time. When she said she was too poor to go to justice, was objected that she had pursued a case for her 'dolbaire' against the late Demenge Meschi, both at Charmes and at Nancy.

Noted that she had been shaved as normal that day. Had a great scar on forehead, which sergent had pricked without her feeling anything - suspected it was devil's mark.

16 August 1596; confrontations

Mongeatte veuve Aulbry Jean Aulbry added that Claudon had told her that she had been sad at husband's death, and in bed had started to call 'Bastien, Bastien, vien moy trouver', after which he appeared and struck bed with a stick. Continued to appear even after she had moved house - witness suggested it was really her master.

No result from confrontations; Claudon maintained innocence, but said nothing against witnesses.

In subsequent interrogation, asked if she had not had a conversation with la Triffatte when they were together on first night of imprisonment, during which they complained that the poor were taken to be executed, while the rich were able to escape - she denied this.

After being taken back to prison, sent for prévôt and started to confess. Had been seduced 18 years before, when returning from begging at Branthegny; was upset at having to do something to which she was so unused, and devil promised to allow her to live at her ease, so that she should not have to beg again.

First malefice was committed at Grainville, where she was refused alms, and put powder on shoulder of refuser - did not know result, as she had never asked for fear of discovery. Had done similarly in various other places on different occasions, and did not know what had happened. Agreed that she had given sicknesses to Mongeatte Aulbry, Seville Aulbry, and Ysabel Bourdon, but denied it in cases of Seville Aulbry's mother and Aulbry Perin's wife.

Had been many times to sabbat - nothing remarkable about description. Said that Jean de Socourt was a witch, but had known no other accomplices because they were all masked. Finally said she had made many people ill, and could not remember details, but had never killed people or animals.

21 August 1596; PG des Vosges asks for question extraordinaire, to extract fuller confessions

23 August 1596; Change de Nancy approves, with moderation suitable to her age.

26 August 1596; interrogation under torture

When she saw instruments of torture, admitted that she had caused miscarriage of wife of maire Nicolas Meschy; he had turned her roughly away from door, and later she pretended to tell wife she would have a fine child, and rubbed powder on her stomach. Maire, who was present, confirmed the story.

Having said she had nothing else to confess, was placed on rack and slightly drawn; asked to be released, and she would confess the rest. Now said she had killed two horses belonging to late procureur général des Vosges, sieur Harrimont; this had been with powder, in revenge for his failure to take sympathetic attitude in her lawsuit over her 'dolbaire'. Asked if she had attempted anything against him, she said she had not, because she feared him too much.

Also confessed to having killed with powder Thiebault Dorin, gouverneur de l'hôpital, because her weekly allowance had been reduced by 2 sols, even though she knew it was the administrators who had actually decided this. Dorin had been good to her, and she repented his death soon after causing it.

Agreed to one or two other malefices of no particular interest, and in general to having caused others around Charmes which she could not remember. Said she had burned all powder on arrest of la Mallebarbe for fear of discovery.

Witch 070, Claudon la Romaine 5

Denounced as accomplices Jean de Socourt, his wife Claudon, Jannette Topin, Vincent Vinot, and Barbon Marlier widow of Nicolas Sellier, all of Charmes.

30 August 1596; PG des Vosges asks for death sentence

31 August 1596; Change de Nancy approves

3 September 1596; sentence carried out