

B 4126 no 3 Witch 080, Claudon Martin

13 June 1625; informations preparatoires contre Claudon veuve George Martin de Charmes.

(1) George Grosjean, tondeur de drap à Charmes, c. 33

Some 6 years earlier had been living in same house when his wife gave birth. Claudon and two other women were present, and afterwards they and their husbands were asked to supper - but did not ask her husband George. She looked discontented, and next day she and husband made rather abrupt calls to enquire after mother and child; witness decided it had been mistake not to invite him, and sent some lard for his supper. Child began to sicken, and he asked advice of Claudon, who suggested pilgrimages to St. George, St. Maselin, and St. Crestaille; he had these undertaken, and went off on horse to fetch his mother-in-law. When child continued wasting away, Claudon told him that one didn't make pilgrimages on horseback; he replied that he had sent people on foot, so she said the pilgrimages could not have been properly accomplished. Child died, and he and wife suspected Claudon.

Had also asked Claudon if she could suggest any cure for Nicolas Poirat, marchand drapier of Charmes, who gave him a lot of employment making up his cloths. Husband was disinclined to assist, although he offered payment, but when he told her of symptoms she said it was the gout and needed pilgrimage to St. Alasse. Husband finally undertook this, while she made some 'estuves' with herbs to place on legs of invalid, after which he started to recover. Believed she might have given illness, since she and husband had made fuss about not getting adequate satisfaction after Poirat had injured their son. Poirat paid 5 francs and 5 aulnes of serge for pilgrimage. General suspicion of her as a witch. ('signed' with three crude initials)

(2) Françoise femme de Nicolas Moynel sergent du Domaine à Charmes, c. 28

Suspected Claudon of having killed her child after dispute over payment for 'blanchissage de chemise', during which she said to witness 'vous aurez encore affaire de moy'. Then developed chest trouble, as did baby she was suckling; went to see Messire Adam priest at Charmes, who told her to look in the pillow on the child's cot, where she found 'tortillons'. Then took child to see Claudon (giving her a new coiffe) and asked for remedy. Was told to bathe it in wine and water, and within two days it would either live or die; would have been better if it had been brought to her sooner for healing. Child died two days later; suspected Claudon, in view of quarrel and general reputation.

(3) Jannon veuve de Jean Estienne portier de la porte Laxin, c. 37

Said she had a child who had been so ill that he was only skin and bones; Claudon had advised a pilgrimage to St. Paul at Goserey (?), and child had stayed a few days in her house while this was made, subsequently recovering. Had also asked her for remedies during husband's illness, and had been given 'grains de plantain'. Had no suspicion against her, although common report was that she was a witch. Several others had made same pilgrimage on her advice for sick children, with success.

(4) Claude Vaultrin boulanger à Charmes, c. 50

Some two years before had bargained with Claudon for a pilgrimage on his behalf when he was ill; wife gave her 14 gros instead of franc she asked, and he felt better as soon as her husband left for St. Thiebault at village of St. Vallier. Had a sick daughter, with legs swollen and rest of body emaciated; Messire Adam had said this was 'un sort', and that he should move house, which he had done. Believed that Claudon might have given it, in view of her general reputation. She had visited child at his request and made 'estuves' (Signed)

(5) Janne femme à Claude Vaultrin, c. 32

Repeated essential of husband's deposition about sick daughter. General suspicion, but had never quarrelled with her.

(6) Catherine veuve Bastien Richard de Charmes, c. 40

On his deathbed her husband had constantly maintained that Claudon had bewitched him - reason not clear.

(7) Claude Habille mre sellier à Charmes, c. 22

His mother had died after an unknown sickness; had previously called Claudon witch, blaming her for death of her sister Libaire. The latter had fallen ill after refusing to lend Claudon money, and Claudon's husband had made pilgrimage on her behalf. Had brought back some white stone which Claudon had crushed and given patient to drink, but she had died nevertheless. The accused had said she had been called in too late - general reputation. (Signed)

(8) Anne femme à Remy Paris boulenger de Charmes, c. 26

Before death of her first husband, Remy Couturieux, some 5 years earlier, the neighbours had advised her to cease familiarity with Claudon, on account of her reputation; husband had given orders in same sense. Nevertheless had been unable to prevent Claudon from coming frequently to house, joining in milking etc. Claimed that her husband's daughter by first marriage had said to Claudon's daughter that her mother had killed hers; Claudon asked her to punish girl for this, and she said she would ask her husband to do so. Soon after girl became ill, dreaming she saw women around her, and witness also became very ill and out of her mind. Messire Adam said she was bewitched, while her husband, his brother, and the servants saw a small dog running under her bed when she was at her worst. Husband then became ill in same way and died; during illness cried out 'Ho la femme Grand George'. He had also believed her to have caused death of first wife, while witness 'l'a tousiours tellement crainct que sy elle luy eut demandé la pluspart de ses biens elle ne luy eust reffusé'.

(9) Janne servante au maire Claude Ulriet, c. 24

3 years earlier, suffering from swollen legs, she had been cured by ointment given her by Claudon, who said it was 'mal St. Antoine'. Had also made pilgrimage to St. Antoine at Epinal on her advice, and had given her daughter 'quelque petit rabat'

instead of ecu she asked for. Knew of reputation, but did not believe she had given her sickness.

(10) Didier Simon mercier à Charmes, c. 58

Said that previous year his daughter Anne had suffered a strange illness; advised to seek healing from Claudon, had made bargain that for 5 francs her husband should make pilgrimage to St. Aloph. He brought back water, which Anne was then to drink for 9 days; when she was still very ill Claudon said she would be cured on the morrow, and she was. After cure demanded a wooden bowl and some beer, which his wife gave her, then said of girl 'dittes luy qu'elle ne soit plus à l'advenir sy sotté ny sy arrogante que du passé'. Believed she had given her the sickness, and also made another daughter Claudon ill.

(11) Anne fille de Didier Simon, c. 23

Told of two quarrels with Claudon before illness; first when she asked for a 'patron de dentelle', and witness refused it, saying it was old. Second some 6 months later, when she was bringing back linen after washing it. Claudon took her by the arm asking 'y faict il bon' while pushing her, and when told to go and see for herself told her she would repent. When she put bundle down on return found herself all bent up. Mother sought healing from Claudon, who advised rubbing affected place with vinegar and some leaves she gave them; when asked to come and see her, one of her sons said she should not, since the witness's brother had said at the school that it was witchcraft. Nevertheless continued to tend her, telling her that she would recover, and that only her husband could make pilgrimage successfully on her behalf, while giving her herbs. Still did not recover properly, having persistent relapses, and was only finally cured when exorcised by Messire Adam.

(12) Claudon fille de Didier Simon, c. 18

About a year before, as she passed Claudon's house, latter said to her 'veux tu avoir aussy mauvaise langue que ta soeur qui nous appelle sorciers parmy la ville, par les mant dey, sy j'eusse sceu elle n'en eut eschappé à sy bon marché'. Later became ill, vomiting strange things like pebbles, pins, and nails; believed this to be through witchcraft by Claudon.

(13) Bastienne femme à Germain Soyer tailleur d'habits de Charmes, c. 40

General reputation; during final illness 2 years earlier her sister Jannon had told her that she believed either Claudon or her husband had caused death of her daughter Libaire.

(14) Barbe femme de Jean du Menil, c. 38

Told of quarrel over towel she had lost when washing; Claudon took enquiry as accusation of theft. Witness then had pain in head, and Claudon arranged for pilgrimages, also giving her some oil with which to rub it. This did no good, and she threw it on fire - cured shortly afterwards.

(15) Jean du Menil, c. 30

Said that she had cured him when he had a bad finger, and told him that she was 'bien marrie' that her cures did not always succeed. Also told how Bastien Richard had died suddenly after an individual he had fined (he was porter at gate) had assigned the fine on Claudon's husband.

14 June 1625; PG des Vosges orders arrest; carried out same day.

26 June 1625; additional depositions

(16) Lucie femme de Nicolas Remy de Charmes, c. 50

About a year before her daughter Margueritte had become ill with an unknown sickness, which bleedings and other remedies failed to cure. Claudon offered to help, and herbal drinks produced cure. After this Claudon told mother that her daughter should speak more carefully in future, and that she had said at poisle that she was happy that Claudon and her husband could not find a house, while people of good reputation could do so. Believed her to have caused and later removed the illness.

(17) Margueritte fille de la precedente, c. 20

Repeated story of her illness, and said that she had spoken evil of Claudon, who had a bad reputation.

(18) Barbe Sellier veuve de Phillibert Philbert, de Charmes, c. 43

Told how during husband's illness, which lasted more than a year, Claudon had tried to cure him with drinks, ointments, and pilgrimages. When this seemed to be doing no good, she said that she should have been called in before the doctors. Messire Adam told them it was bewitchment, and then husband remembered dispute with Claudon's daughter over price of some lace; after this he fell off horse (this seems to have caused injuries from which he finally died). Had subsequently had a son aged 7 who died after Messire Adam had said he was bewitched; believed this to have been Claudon's work again, especially as she advised pilgrimages which did no good.

(19) Seville femme de Francois Anthoine de Charmes, c. 38

Told how Claudon had helped to cure a sick child, with a pilgrimage and water which she put in its 'bouillies'; did not suspect her, despite reputation. (Child had subsequently died of smallpox).

30 June 1625; interrogation

Said she was 48, daughter of Claudon Mulnier and Jeannon Jean Busson, who had been resident at Charmes. Had spent 8 years as orphan in house of distant relative Claudon Husson, then a good many years in service in various places. After marriage had come to live in Charmes; husband was shoemaker, who earned living by going round villages mending shoes. Had four children living, two of each sex.

Agreed that she had been arrested because of suspicions of witchcraft. Had made more than 100 pilgrimages, when recognising illnesses of adults and children, to range of local shrines.

Asked who were witches, said they were those who renounced God to take the Devil for master, 'et que les uns sont a luy pour l'avarice les autres par luxure, les autres par envie, et aultres pour aultres vices, ce qu'elle a bien appris des predicateurs'.

Told of occasion around previous Whitsun, when she met a man on the road who showed her a sack of gold and silver pieces; she said she wished she had as many to pay the debts her late husband had left her, and complained of her poverty. While they were talking of the dearth, another man appeared and offered to make her the richest of her family if she would serve him; gave her a coin which vanished after she had put it in her pocket. Rushed home fearing it had been the Devil, and said 5 paternosters and 5 ave marias; still not satisfied, went to church and repeated this at font, then confessed next day.

Agreed that when in prison she had asked to be released, so that she could go so far away that the suspicions of her were forgotten - but this had simply been because of those suspicions. Would admit nothing more.

3 July 1625; interrogation

Pressed about confessions she had allegedly made in prison, to having seen devil three other times, she finally said that she had heard a voice saying 'pauvre femme tu as moult de mal' after occasions when her husband had been angry with her, and beaten her - thought it had been voice of a neighbour.

Questioned about broken cross on chapelet, with suggestion that this was normal practice of devil, said it had been complete when she went into prison, but she had stepped on it and broken it accidentally.

Agreed that she had reproached Claudon Simon with remarks her sister Anne had made about her, but denied threatening either girl. Also agreed to various pilgrimages and uses of herbs, but denied any harm.

5 July 1625; interrogation

Gave list of herbal remedies she had employed, learned in places where she had been in service, some from mother of Jean Grainel of Essegney. Had also learned from latter to parcel up little creatures called 'boeuf St. Martin' with herbs; had given these to Anne Simon, because if they died on body fever was supposed to die with them. Creature might have escaped, giving fright to Anne and women who were with her - had told her not to look at it, because this was what Jean Grainel's mother had taught her. Agreed to most other incidents of attempted healing, but denied any intent to harm.

12 July 1625; interrogation

Now withdrew part of confession about meeting devil - man had disappeared, but had made her no promises, and she had merely feared it might have been the devil.

Otherwise continued to admit treating various persons, but denied any witchcraft. Asked where she had learned so many remedies, said it was from various doctors she had served, at St. Nicolas and elsewhere.

Prévôt finally noted that she had been giving herself to the devil during interrogations (in fact she had said repeatedly that her soul might go to the devil if she were guilty of the charges against her), and that she was 'fort robuste et d'une complexion forte', despite time spent in prison.

28 July 1625; interrogation

Reverted to earlier story of meeting with devil; otherwise no additional material. Prévôt again noted how robust she was - seemed to have become fatter in prison.

28 July 1625; confrontations

No progress; simple denials of witchcraft, although she admitted various pilgrimages and other kinds of healing.

6 August 1625; PG des Voages asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire. Body hair to be shaved and nails cut back to quick.

8 July 1625; Change de Nancy agrees to torture, adding that the surgeon should search her for devil's mark.

13 August 1625; interrogation under torture

Maintained denials during preliminary interrogation, although varied somewhat on the ambiguous meeting with the devil. Surgeon searched body and found nothing unnatural; she continued to say she was not a witch or a 'magicienne'.

Held out for a long time under torture; thumbscrews on hands and feet, then rack. Finally when racked very severely she began to confess; at meeting with devil she had been seduced. Under further pressure she put date back to 7 years earlier, finally confessing she had been a witch for 11 years. Gave long list of malefices, all to avenge some slight or wrong - had been against persons rather than animals. Had been to sabbat, where she had kissed anus of Devil in form of an ox, and danced back-to-back. Thought she had seen Mansuy, once 'hospiteur' of Charmes (but not really very certain) and the wife of the viel bonnetier of Charmes, whose name she did not know (later seems to have withdrawn this).

14 August 1625; confirmed earlier confessions. Added some more details about sabbat; had been 'complots' among witches against harvests 'mais que les pauvres empeschoient le plus souvent telz desseigns a raison dequoy ilz estoient tres bien battus de l'ennemy'. She herself had been beaten when unwilling to agree to such actions because of the hardship they would bring to her children and the poor. Said 'que les riches y estoient les mieulx voulus du maling'.

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18 August 1625; confirmed confessions and declared herself ready to die. PG des Vosges asks for death sentence.

21 August 1625; Change de Nancy confirms death sentence.