

B 8678 no 4; witch 171, Libaire femme Guillaume Bouchier, de St Dié

29 August 1596; informations preparatoires

(1) Jean Mareschal du Vieu Marché, 44

10 or 12 years before, when they were neighbours, she had several quarrels with his wife, who then developed trouble with her breasts. Spent over 100 écus in vain attempt to find healing before 'ung viderteiff' of Ste Marie healed her, saying it was a case of poison and witchcraft. Had lost use of limbs for a year and had to be fed like a child. She had always maintained that Libaire, who had long reputation, had bewitched her. Had quarrel with husband over insults, for which witness obtained reparation, after which he was putting bread in oven (he was baker) when he and his wife suddenly fell ill. Had to get others to finish baking, and were ill for 6 weeks; only able to find healing when friends advised them to obtain bread, salt, and ashes from her house. Used this in soup, and had always suspected illness was her witchcraft.

(2) Jennon femme Claudon Woiriat, du Vieu Marché, 36

13 or 14 years earlier, as next neighbours at Vieu Marché, had quarrel about hens of witness getting into Libaire's garden. Latter said 'que son mary avoit desja eu une autre femme qui luy avoit guiere demeuré, et que peult estre elle n'y demeureroit encor guiere'. A few days later suddenly felt pain in side as if she had been struck with stick, and remained ill for 5 years, with body as if it had ben skinned. A German doctor who was tending Colas Meclin told her she had been bewitched by her neighbour, and she was told of a woman in a town in Germany called Rossey who healed such complaints. Went to see her, was told she was bewitched and given something like mithridat. This caused her to excrete some very foul matter, including some 'franges de sappin'; was given other remedies, and had since been somewhat better. Had also lost her milk and been unable to suckle children, although she had had several since then. She had obtained bread, salt, and ashes for first witness. Within a few days had another illness herself, and was advised to get something to eat from house of accused; obtained a plate of cabbage, after eating which she recovered. Suspected her of causing all this, long reputation. Had accused her directly of causing her illnesses, and she had replied that she did her wrong.

(3) Barbon fille Demenge du Viller, de Grand Ruix, servante à Jean Marlier, 28

Previous year her master had tavern next door to house of accused, and masons who were building for late Grand Doyen were living with Libaire, while carpenters lodged with her master. Masons had dispute with her and went to live elsewhere, which angered her; seeing carpenters passing she said that once they wer in the house 'que le grand diable puisse tomber, sur ladite maison, sur eulx et sur tous ceulx qui estoient'. When they came in said they had been cursed by a witch and needed to cross themselves - then without warning house was struck by lightning, causing various minor forms of damage, blows to those inside, terrible smell of sulphur, but no serious injury. Was said in public that she had caused this. Around same time Marlier's wife had great quarrels with her, fell ill, and died within a year, always maintaining that she was cause of illness and lightning.

(4) Barbon femme Bastien Marande, de St Dié, 60

In carnival week previous year her daughter Claudatte had been disguised, with other girls, for mascarades; dressed as boy, she teased daughter of Libaire, who was angry and told her off roundly. 3 days later girl fell ill, losing use of limbs, and died in a week. Believed this had been her doing - long reputation.

(5) Jean Marlier, du Vieu Marché, 40

Story of lightning after threats. Was day of fair, and they put story about there, while for himself 'son intention estoit bien de faire apprehender ladite Libaire pour sorciere et luy faire faire son proces, Mais comme les moiens luy manquoient pour subvenir a telle chose il se depporta de son opinion par le conseil de ses amys soubz esperance de quelque fois il auroit quelque accusation contre elle.' His wife was pregnant, and Libaire asked her to be 'commere' for her or one of her daughters, but she refused. After giving birth had trouble with breasts; Libaire heard she suspected her, and came to tell her off. After this had another illness, from which she died a year later, having always maintained that Libaire had given her this, and was cause of her death.

(6) Jacquot Bergier, du Vieu Marché, 40

Long reputation.

(7) Jean Didier, bourgeois de St Dié, 40

Long reputation, had heard Jean Marlier's wife blame her for her illness.

(8) Claudon Woariat, du Vieu Marché, 52

18 years before his wife Annon quarrelled with Libaire, who was neighbour. Later had baby, fell ill soon after, and died in 4 weeks. Then story of present wife's quarrel over hens and long illness, as already told by her. Thought all this had been her witchcraft - long reputation.

(9) Catherine femme Nicolas des Escus, du Vieu Marché, 40

13 or 14 years earlier, a certain German who came from 'la Chastellaine Victor de Magnieres', and who claimed to be able to cure unknown illnesses, identifying their cause, stayed with her. Claudon Woariat's wife consulted him, and he told her she was bewitched by a neighbour with whom she had quarrelled over her hens, who had tried to make her lose her mind. Libaire was nearest neighbour; did not know if she was cause of illness, but had long reputation.

(10) Mengeatte femme Mengeon Gille, de St Dié, 50

On various occasions had helped her take bread to surrounding villages, but was not well treated, so next time sent daughter to say she was too busy. Said angrily that she hoped she would break her neck, so that she could not help anyone else; same day fell on pavé outside her house, hurting her arm. Told neighbours who came to help of threats, but then fell in doorway to house and hurt side, where an abscess formed, finally going to her knee. When she met Libaire in market

apologized for refusal to help, promising to go willingly next time she had need of her. Knee then began to get better, although still a little painful; suspected she had caused this, long reputation.

(31 August 1596)

(11) Claudon Chavortey, bourgeois de St Dié, 37

Had heard Jean Marlier's wife claim that Libaire had bewitched her. Also story of threats to carpenters and lightning, which had also damaged his house; all neighbours suspected her, long reputation.

(12) Nicole femme Michiel Aulbert, 28

Masons had come to live with her after leaving Libaire's house, and latter had been angry, telling her off, although she explained that she had not asked them to come, and they told her they would go to another tavern if she would not have them. A few days later fell from hayloft, injuring herself so that she was ill for 3 months; believed that if she was witch she had caused this, long reputation.

31 August 1596; interrogation

Said she was about 48, had been married to Guillaume Bouchier for 28 years. Native of Rambervillier, daughter of Melchior le Havenaire and his wife Libaire; husband was from Bousseu near Neufchâteau. Were living at Epinal when they married, stayed there 5 or 6 years, then 18 years in Vieu Marché before moving to present house - had rented all their houses. Only quarrel had been with Claudon Woariat's wife over hens - but latter had not called her witch. Denied threatening her, or causing her illness, adding 'et quand bien l'on mauldiroit une femme qui est femme de bien il ne luy sauroit mescheoire'.

After denying quarrel with Jean Mareschal's wife, admitted that latter had called her witch, accusing her of causing illness. She had called her 'meschante femme', for which husband had been forced to pay reparation, but her own husband 'n'eut l'esprit de poursuyvre la reparation de ce que l'autre l'avoit appelée sorciere. et que une femme qui est femme de bien, comme elle est, ne scauroit faire aucun mal par ses maledictions'.

After insisting that she was a good woman, suddenly said 'que sy elle a offensé quelque personne par malediction qu'elle en crie mercy a Dieu et a Justice mesme s'il y a quelque chose qui l'ayt poursuyvy pour faire lesdites maledictions, toutteffois qu'elle n'a esté au Sabat.

Sy doncques il y a quelque chose qui l'ayt poursuivye

Dict que sont environ douze ans, qu'estant en son meix dict a Varcosey bien fashée s'aparut a elle un grand homme noir et commença a luy dire qu'elle estoit bien fashée et sy elle vouloit croire a luy qu'il luy donneroit tant d'or et tant d'argent qu'elle seroit bien riche, et toutes les personnes qu'elle mauldiroit ilz leurs mescheoieroit. Elle luy respondit qu'elle estoit riche assé, et luy demanda qui il estoit, il dict qu'il estoit un riche homme et vouloit faire riche ses enfans, et en fin elle luy demanda tant de fois son nom, qu'il luy dict, qu'il s'appelloit mre Percin.'

Followed by normal seduction scene; money was horsedung, given powder to kill which she threw away. Then admitted trying it on a pig and a hen of her own, which died.

Claimed she had then thrown it away, and had Mass said at chapel of la Croix at Bertrichamp by Messire Pierre, then chaplain at St Martin. Under sheet on altar she placed a piece of stone and a waxen image of Virgin which her grandfather had brought back from Jerusalem; after this wore them round her neck in a little bag, and Percin had no power over her. Asked to have it brought to her, since it had been taken away at arrest previous day. Was then examined and found to contain wax image and other objects, which she claimed included stone from wall of holy sepulchre and pieces from crown of thorns; also various fragments of writing.

Said Percin had visited her 3 weeks after first temptation, beating her because she did not obey him and used holy water. Also told her to take a broom and grease it, which would cause her to leave by the chimney and see marvels. Refused at first, then did so, calling on him to come for her, and was carried in air. Found group of people dancing and feasting between two mountains, but did not know any of them, and did no harm.

Then said she had seen l'hospitaliere, Claudatte Michiel, and Barbelline, already executed, and Noel des Aulx and his wife, now dead (later said he was dead, wife had fled long since). Could not recognize others because they were masked. (Pattern of denial followed by admission is repeated feature of interrogation).

Asked about actual charges of causing harm, said that if these were result of her curses she begged pardon from God, but she had no longer been a witch at the time.

2 September 1596; interrogation

Repeated story of seduction; had been angry because they were in great need at the time. Also stuck to rest of story. Finally said she had also seen at sabbat Marion, femme Demenge le Masson, and Barbelline femme Holbin Jalley of Trois Maisons. 'mais qu'elle ne les osoit accuser, a cause qu'elles sont riches et que leurs parens, comme le maire Jean de Sarruix et les autres luy feroient desplaisir'. Now said she was prepared to accuse them, and would maintain charges until death. Added 'que ladite mairesse Masson et ladite Barbelline se fassent desrompre tant qu'elles voudrons et obstant qu'elles ne voulussent rien confesser, sy est ce qu'elles sont sorcieres, aussy bien qu'elle l'est et que puis qu'elle a confessé ce que dessus, ainsy volontairement et sans contraincte, elle supplie qu'on ne luy donne point la question d'aultant qu'elle est maintenant bonne chrestienne en vertu du brevet qu'elle a porté a son col.'

4 September 1596; procureur asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

7 September 1596; Change de Nancy approves

19 September 1596; interrogation

Threatened with torture, finally admitted she had been to sabat more than 12 times, and had helped to make hail. Claimed there had been up to 120 present, both men and women, from St Dié and surrounding villages. On another occasion Marion veuve Demenge le Masson persuaded them to harm belltower rather than crops.

Still denied causing other harm with powder; begged them to have pity on her children, who were so poor, and whom she would dishonour by her death.

20 September 1596; interrogation

Added several names to list of accomplices; Meline veuve Martin Gentilhomme of St Dié, Georgeatte femme Jean Larmites of Trois Maisons, Jehenne femme Didier des Chievres (he had kept goats, did not know present abode), Jennon veuve Didier Pernot (who had fled previous year), la Renarde de Robache, veuve Hidoulx le Renarde, and widow of Jean Peu de Cuire of Remomeix, now of Val de Champ.

Threatened with torture, admitted using powder to make Jean Mareschal's wife ill. Had also cursed Bastien Marande's daughter in name of her master, but did not know if he had harmed her. Placed on rack, begged not to be tortured.

Admitted making Claudon Woiriat's wife ill with powder, then curing her with another powder in soup. Had killed Anne fille Diey Bazelaire, who had beaten her daughter, and Claudatte fille Bastien Marande. both with powder. Also killed wife of Jean Marlier, and asked master to make lightning strike their house - on condition there was no fire, since she was neighbour.

Blamed Richard Didier Anthoine for their ruin, because he had cost them 500 francs over sale of house, and agreed to Percin's suggestion that he should kill him. Was having black horse he had bought in Germany shod by smith Claudon Chavortey when it kicked him in stomach, and he died next day. If master had not killed him would have used powder herself as soon as she got a chance.

Said that these were all her maléfices, and asked to be put to death as soon as possible, but would prefer a Wednesday rather than a market day, so that there would be less people present.

21 September 1596; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions and accusations, only saying she could not be sure about la Renarde of Robache. Asked if she had power over all those she cursed, said not over those who commended themselves to God in the morning, making sign of cross and washing their hands.

22 September 1596; procureur asks for death sentence

25 September 1596; Change de Nancy approves, subject to reiteration of confessions without threat of torture

26 September 1596; interrogation

Repeated earlier confessions. Said Percin had given her 3 sorts of powder - brown/kill, black/languish, white/cure.

30 September 1596; execution carried out