

Witch 330, Barbe Barbier 1

B 8986 no 2; witch 330, Barbe veuve Francois Barbier de Saint Nicolas

7 November 1613; informations preparatoires

(1) Claudine femme Nicolas Richard marchand de St Nicolas, 31

She had been living in house of Didier Crance where they also lived, and witness on hearing of her reputation told her not to come into their dwelling. She left, but soon afterwards her husband became ill with 'alteration de son esprit', and in belief that Barbe might be cause she found her at Amance and told her of suspicions. She denied being reponsible, but after being threatened with arrest offered to suggest remedy. Suggested he should be confirmed, then said he should be taken to Bon Bernard, but nothing should be said to the priests. She herself would make a neuvaine for him while fasting on bread and water and praying to Holy Spirit; however she had been arrested first.

(2) George Guerin cousturier de St Nicolas, 30

Reputation as witch; believed she had caused him to be possessed by the devil, after he had persuaded his mother, with whom she was living, to put her out in belief she was a witch. Under conjurations of various clerics the spirit which possessed him had declared several times that she was responsible. Had brought her to house in hope of cure, and while making remedies had said 'que lors que les sorcieres estoient au sabbat le diable mettoit au corps du pendu, et que c'estoit ce qu'elles disoient que ce diable avoit affaire a elle'; witness could not restrain himself from saying she must be a witch to say such things. Then his small child laughed at her, and she said 'je ne te ris pas, tu ne riras plus guere, sy bien que l'enfant fut mort deux jour apres, ce que voyans ladite Barbe dit loué soit dieu, ma priere est accomplie, l'enfant a racheté le pere, affirmant sur ce que sy elle ne fut arrivé au logis dudit Guerin il fut mort et enterré et qu'elle en feroit serment sur toutes les evangiles'.

(3) Demenge l'Huillier de St Nicolas, 22

During illness of Guerin had heard his wife arguing with accused, who used various threats including 'que l'on veroit ce que l'on n'avoit encore veu'.

(8 November 1613)

(4) Abraham Thomassin cuisenier de St Nicolas, 36

Some 18 months before she had asked to be his 'chambriere', but he refused 'ad cause du mauvais bruit qui par le vulgaire redondoit contre elle'. Some days later came into shop on pretext of buying 'une escuelle de gresse', but could not agree price; 'dissimulant de le flatter', touched him on thigh and left. Suddenly fell ill, with hands and feet very cold, and had to be carried into house, after which condition worsened. Suspected her, and sent his wife to get her to come and see him; after much persuasion agreed, but kept putting it off, even hiding. When she

did so she suggested remedies, saying 'qu'elle craindoit de ce faire parce que aussy tost que les vyeilles gens enseignent quelque chose aux malades l'on dict qu'ilz sont sorcieres'. Told them to collect 'racines de burdine' at dawn, but they asked her to do this herself; she did so and made 9 'courals' which she put round his neck in the form of a 'chappelet'. Then powdered ashes and mixed them with water, making mixture for him to take every morning, at same time as he bit into one of the 'couralz' and threw it away. Treatment to last nine days, while she made 'neuvaine' to St Pierre. Even before it was finished felt much better, which encouraged his belief that she had both given and taken off the illness.

(5) Bastienne femme George Guerin, 30

Said 'qu'elle tient pour certain ladite prevenue estre sorciere ou qu'il n'y en a point au monde'. Previous April had wanted to reside with them, offering to put money in their hands for them to draw profit from; had lent them 6 francs, but was angry when 'pretensions' were refused. Later heard of reputation from neighbours and asked her not to frequent house, telling her why, at which she feigned innocence and lamented. Soon after husband fell ill, losing use of limbs and with something in his throat which threatend to choke him. They both suspected her, and asked her to provide remedy, but although she 'fit semblant' to do so it was to no effect. Then repeated husband's story about possession, also death of child. During subsequent quarrel witness accused her of causing illness; she took a handful of salt and said 'qu'aaultant de diables puis elle avoir au corps qu'il y avoit de graines de sel en sa main sy elle scavoit davantaige a l'endroit dudit Guerin qu'a leur enfant'. Had also heard her say 'que quant le diable vouloit aller au sabat il se mettoit au corps d'ung pendu et que c'estoit ce que les sorcieres se faisoient accroire avoir affaire a luy'.

(6) Claudatte femme Nicolas Duhan sergent au bailliage de Nancy, de St Nicolas, 57

Had known her 30 years earlier when she was in service of her brother Messire Mansuy Pinot, then had not seen her until she came to St Nicolas 18 months earlier. After her daughter Anne, wife of Claude Grillot, had refused her a piece of cod; immediately became blind, and so ill that she died. During illness heard her claim repeatedly that accused had given her the illness.

(7) Jehanne veuve Nicolas Guerin tixerand de St Nicolas, 60

Previous summer accused had been to demand payment of debt of 6 francs from her son George Guerin, but he could not pay because of poverty. She said he would repent, and he promptly fell ill; witness persuaded her to offer healing, although she protested she did not know what to do and thought it was 'gouttes'. She applied cow-dung cooked in the milk of a black cow, which failed to cure him, 'saulfz que quant l'on traictoit bien ladite prevenue il ne sentoit sy grand douleur, et quant elle n'estoit sy bien traictée il s'en ressentoit plus grand douleurs'. Also told of possession, and belief she had killed child.

(8) Jeannon femme Jehan Conat manouvrier de St Nicolas, 38

Some 9 years earlier her late father Jean Charpentier had quarrelled with accused, and then had bad arm, so that he had to use crutches for 7 weeks. Did not believe she had caused this, but was commonly reputed a witch.

(9) Barbelline femme Nicolas Meon le viel de St Nicolas, 60

When they had been neighbours had seen no harm in her, but more recently had heard of reputation. Had seen her around house of the Duhan, and had asked wife why they supported her in view of rumours, to which reply was that it was without her knowledge, and indeed that she suspected her over death of her daughter.

(10) Jeannon femme Mengin Demenge cordonnier de St Nicolas, 40

Around last Rogations had come and asked if she could lodge in their 'chambre', but witness told her that husband and one of her children were very ill, so it was impossible. Immediately afterwards another child became ill, emaciated but unable to die. Went and asked her for remedy, but did not use it; later accused asked her if she had done so, and she said no because she had forgotten it. Now did use it; was again a 'neuvaine' accompanied by drink made with ashes and necklace of 'corials' which were to be bitten then thrown into fire. Also told her to make three little cakes using her son's urine and give them to a dog. Now used remedies, and child was cured; did not know if this was her witchcraft, but thought so in view of reputation.

(11) Alizon femme Demenge Moreau, bouchier de St Nicolas, 27

2 years before had a fever, and accused asked if she wanted her to make a 'neuvaine' or prepare her a drink; she refused, and Barbe picked up child which was in room, saying 'voicy ung beau enfant'. Child became very ill, so she was 'contraincte de le faire veoir aux peres ambroisines lesquelz l'ayant veu luy dirent que sondit enfant estoit gasté d'une sorciere'. Witness then remembered case of Abraham Thomassin, who was rumoured to have been made ill and cured by accused; was also advised by neighbours. Asked Barbe to supper, and asked her for a remedy; she used 'fil retors' with which she made several crosses around child in cradle, while saying prayers. Child recovered and was now very well, so she reckoned accused had made it ill, since she had healed it so quickly.

15 November 1613; interrogation

Said she was Barbe Gantier, widow of Francois Barbier surgeon of Epinal, of which town she was native. Was aged about 70, living in service of la demoiselle de Gournay at Manno. Had only one child, a daughter who had died of smallpox at age of 6. Father had been Mengeon Gantier draper of Epinal, mother Jeannon, both dead before her own marriage. 4 siblings alive at that point, only one still surviving was Mengeon Gantier, also draper at Epinal.

Had left Epinal 24 years before after being married for 2 years; served late Mensuy Pinot priest at Marsal for 3 years, returned to Epinal for 4 years, then 20 years with Claude Francois priest, now of Moyenvic. Recognized that she was suspected of witchcraft, but asserted innocence. Said that wife of Nicolas Richard drappier of St Nicolas had found her at Amance in house of substitut, taken her to Esguells, where she stayed 3 days. Went into church of Capuchins, where she talked to one of the fathers, then Sr Pioit substitut at St Nicolas fetched her; was astonished to find herself made prisoner.

Previous year had been called to help wife of Didier Crance, who was ill with fever, and had lived for a fortnight in her house, where Nicolas Richard also lived. Agreed that Claudine Richard had not been content at her presence, and had warned her not to remain there. Judges said that when Claudine had found her at Amance and told her of suspicions 'elle fait responce n'avoir cause tel accident sans autrement s'esmouvoir, chose qui demonstre assez qu'elle est cause dudit accident'. Replied that she had wanted to seize her and beat her when she said such things. Agreed to advising pilgrimage to bon Bernard, which was undertaken by many others with similar afflictions.

Agreed that she had lived with Jehenne veuve Nicolas Guerin for 3 months, and that she had lent her son George 6 francs which she had been unable to recover. Denied causing his illness, saying mother herself had attributed it to 'froidures et gouttes'. Jusges asked her whether during exorcisms he had not declared that Barbe had caused illness, calling her 'sorciere tante de pretre'; she replied that 'le diable estoit un menteur et le pere de mensonge'. Agreed to having treated him with cowdung, which she had seen done for gout, but denied alleged remarks about devil in body of hanged man. Also denied any threat to child; said it had been very sickly already. Remark about it being 'bienheureux' and having 'rachepté' the father might have been made when neighbours came to visit after death, since it was 'un dire assez commun'. Agreed to using mixture of ashes (made by burning 'serment') and water to bathe Guerin's hands and feet; husband had taught her this as good remedy for all swellings except hydropsy.

Agreed to having taught wife of Mengeon Demenge remedy for her child; had learned at Marsal that it was good for jaundice. In case of Abraham Thomassin denied touching him, said it was well known he had jaundice, and agreed to methods she had used to treat him. Said small child had come to her in church and asked her to make neuvaine for Alizon femme Demenge Moreau, and giving her candles for the purpose; had been to house to tell her she had done as asked. Denied incident with child or having offered any remedies.

19 November 1613; confrontations

Witnesses confirmed depositions; Alizon femme Demenge Moreau added that Barbe had asked her for 4 gros for her trouble, which she had given her. Jeannon femme Mengin Demenge added that she had insisted the roots must be cooked before dawn.

Confrontations passed without any serious incident; no reproaches against witnesses, admissions of some healing and of incidental details, otherwise denials.

Witch 330, Barbe Barbier 5

24 November; PG de Lorraine (C.M. Rémy) asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

28 November 1613; Change de Nancy approves

2 December 1613; interrogation under torture

Despite being given thumbscrews on hands and feet, and racked as far as her strength would permit for half an hour, called on Jesus Christ to be her aid, and continued to deny all charges.

6 December 1613; procureur general asks that she be renvoyée jusqu'a rappel

9 December 1613; Change de Nancy agrees

12 December 1613; court at St Nicolas passes formal sentence to this effect