

Witch 333B, Chrestienne Vaudelskindt

B9560 no 1; Witch 333B, Chrestienne veuve Balthazar Vaudelskindt

Was from l'Allemand Rombach, and being held in château de Zuckmantel at request of Jean Demenge Hans, maire for the duke in val de Lièpvre.

1 March 1592; depositions

Francette veuve Casper le Marchal, de l'Allemand Rombach, 40

Said that she and her late husband had frequented house of Christmant Faillé, son-in-law of accused, and Chrestienne had been very angry about this. One day told Marion, her daughter by first husband Grant Humbert, that she would stop them going there any more, and that Casper Marchal would not spend seven years with them but she 'luy couperoit le chemin'. This was about a year before, and within a fortnight they lost their cat, three goats and a lamb. Then on Palm Sunday witness returned from funeral of Claudon George Chappellier to find husband warming himself at fire and saying that he was 'frappé à mort'; said it had been a bad idea to go to Faillé's house, where Chrestienne gave him three 'soufflements de sa bouche', after which he became ill, very cold and unable to eat. Died ten days later insisting that she was cause, telling them that if they saw her on a path they should take another one.

Chrestienne femme Andreu Jean Masson, 36

Said that previous year the accused had often been in their house, then around last All Saints witness became very ill and was advised to send to devin in order to discover whether it was an illness given by evil people. Woman of valley who was sent came back saying devineresse had told her that person who had given the sickness would come to bed next day and wish her good day three times, but she must not reply. Chrestienne did visit her, lifting curtain around bed, but she said nothing to her. Then witness said to the people who had come to visit her 'qu'il en avoit heu quelcune au quaraille en cheu elle que ne luy avoit esté trop bon, mais que sy elle pouvoit raller, qu'elle auroit de leur traisses ou qu'elles en auroient des siennes', at which they all left. Asked if they had quarrelled, said not at that time, but about 4 years earlier she had been angry with accused because she maltreated a cow belonging to her and it lost its calf. Also confirmed story about Francette's daughter – Chrestienne was angry because they were causing her son-in-law to spend his money, and threatened girl that he would repent if he did not stop going there.

Marion Grand Humbert, femme Dieudonné Miclin, 24

This was Francette's daughter, and she expanded story a little. Chrestienne told her several times that stepfather would repent because he was impoverishing son-in-law; had made threats that he would not be going there in seven years, then two years, then hardly any longer.

Andreu Jean Masson, 50

Told of wife's illness, and advice to consult devineresse; took woman as intermediary, because he did not speak German, and some of wife's urine. She said

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she was 'enhervée' and would have died had they not consulted her; the person who had given the illness was about their house daily, but if they followed instructions his wife would be 'exempt d'iceux'. Gave her a drink to take immediately and another to take for nine days, plus instructions about not replying – after doing this she steadily recovered. Same day while he was heating oven to bake Chrestienne visited him and told him to take courage, because his wife was not as ill as he thought and would recover.

Benaïd Faillé, 70

Taking mountain road to Sainte Croix one Sunday morning, met her alone a little before time of Mass, and asked her where she was coming from. She answered she had been looking for a knife she had forgotten near Musloch, but later heard that she had been to make an accord after being caught taking acorns with her servant.

Nicolas Demenge Benicte, 26

Had been called to see Casper le Marchal during illness, who told her she had given him fatal illness by breathing on him three times as she passed before him at Benaïd Faillé's house; the first two had done nothing, but the third had given him the sickness. He died two hours later.

Marguerite femme Nicolas Rochiere, 50

Had seen no harm in her, but when she took some dried pears to Casper le Marchal during illness he told her about how she had given it to him.

Catherine femme Humbert Demenge Gerard, 30

All five children had died, so when last one was due she feared same would happen, and without husband's knowledge consulted devineresse at Val de Viller, taking Magdellaine the midwife of Liepvre as her intermediary. Was told that there was a woman who had wanted to marry her husband and who had taken her milk after first pregnancy; within three days she would greet her or speak to her. On the third day she was harvesting some barley in her meix when Chrestienne said to her 'Dieu vous ayde et qu'ils facent tous bellement' – after they had not spoken for six years.

Martin Clavellin George, 30

When a child became ill, asked wife if she had quarrelled with anyone who might be responsible; she said that one day Chrestienne had told her and children off because their pig had eaten her peas. Consulted devineresse of Val de Viller, who told him an evil woman was responsible; the child died on his return, and he only suspected her.

4 March 1592

Magdellaine veuve Denis le Masson, sage femme de Liepvre, 45

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Told how Catherine Gerard had taken her to consult devineresse – was unable to breastfeed infants and four had already died. Confirmed story of advice. Had also accompanied Andreu Jean Masson; he was told the wicked woman had struck three blows against his wife's breasts, then given instructions as described. Told of how accused had visited – she was there with Michiel Barbam's wife and the chambermaid, when sick woman told them to leave. Chrestienne lingered longer than the others, then when she came into kitchen said 'Beau Dieu que fault il a ceste femme qu'elle ne veult point qu'on vienne plus cheu elle', then went home.

Honneste homme Humbert Demenge Gerard, juré in justice, 48

After death of first wife had intended to marry accused, 'ayant aussy icelle bonne affection a luy', when one named Jean Rochiere, who in his lifetime was married to her sister Anne, warned him that he feared she was a witch – had come into house early one morning all wet and with hair loose. Also told of how son by previous marriage was keeping animals, and witness thought of warning him to keep them away from garden where she was working, but did not do so. That evening he asked the boy if anyone had spoken to him, and he said that no-one had. But he heard from Polline wife of Jeandlat that the boy had not heard her when she told him off. That night he developed throat trouble, and died two days later in great pain – suspected she had caused this.

Zabel femme Thomas Clerc alias le Savoyne, 60

One day Chrestienne had asked her about how Humbert and his wife were getting on, and she said she thought very well. Then she made a remark about how they had a child at nurse, and something about how the wife would be lucky if it lived [?].

Claudette, femme Jean de Romaigne, 25

Incident in 1590 when two of their sows got into her garden, and she wished them ill luck – after this all the piglets died except a runt. Then told how her husband heard accused tell Jean Sagaire 'qu'elle avoit compté ses escatz, mais que tous les diables avoient contez les siens'; he later told him in tavern that he did not know how he could endure this, and she was angry when she heard about this. They lost an ox after a three-month illness, and after they had it killed heard her singing all day – thought this was rejoicing at their loss. One of the sows mentioned above also died.

Jean de Romaigne, 40

Slightly fuller account of conversation, although meaning is rather obscure; when he met Sagaire in tavern of Nicolas Philippe he was complaining about this and how she had used terrible words about him, so that he might have to seek reparation. Witness said that he should do what pleased him, and he did take her to court, since when she had been hostile to him and threatened him that he would repent. Had an ox sick for three months and finally had it killed; suspected her over this and death of a pig that had strayed in her garden.

Ydatte femme Nicolas Vennesson, 30

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Around previous harvest time had been in barn with husband and child when Chrestienne (la Baltzatte) arrived and gave part of an apple to the child – witness took this away from child after it had eaten a little and threw it away so that it could not be reached, because she was afraid in view of her bad reputation. Child then became very thin, so she took it to a devineresse, who told her this was work of a witch who hated them and had done them much harm; gave them a remedy and child was now well, but she suspected Chrestienne had caused illness.

Mengeatte femme Michiel de Lera, marchal, 21

Just before arrest had been heard to say that if le Rolle had died in belief she was cause of his death, he had died like a ‘schelme’.

Didier Meigdey, 34

Four or five years earlier had borrowed eleven florins in Lorraine money from her to buy grain when in great need; when he paid it back she asked for twelve, but he would only give her the eleven. She told him he would repent, and had always been hostile to him since; he had lost many animals, but did not know if she was cause..

Michiel Colas de la Guesse, 40

His wife had a quarrel with her because she sometimes went to drink with her daughter, wife of Christmant Faillé; she and child fell ill, and child died, although wife recovered. Since then had suspected her over this.

Pierrat Miclin, 40

One day his neighbour Caper le Bolle was sick and sent for him; when witness asked if he had taken harm in the woods he told him about his suspicions.

Catherine femme Michiel Colas de la Guesse, 36

Same story as husband – no more details.

(5 March 1592)

Catherine femme Nicolas paistre des porcs, 40

Two years ago next summer, when helping accused, she told witness that Jean Sagaire’s wife had a bad reputation. Witness replied that she did too, to which she said ‘Qui moi’ and burst out laughing. Then became cross and said she would like to know those who wished to speak ill of her.

Hanneso, fils feu Pierrat le Parmentier, 18

Told of how she had cursed a pig belonging to Jean de Romaine that got into her garden and next day he saw it being dragged out of house dead.

Jehennon, servante à Andreu Jean Masson, 30

When in her service two years earlier had gone out to collect firewood, when Chrestienne vanished from alongside her, then found her already at work in place to which they were going.

Anno femme Colas Dedalle, 40

Told how at time when last child of Humbert Demenge Gerard died, accused asked her if she had news of it. She said she did not, since she did not frequent them; Chrestienne said that if she knew that Humbert's wife suspected her over death of child 'qu'elle luy lanceroit ung coutteau parmy elle ou elle la pourroit avoir a chayeux'.

Had several times spoken to her, and twice said she was thinking of going to devineresse of Val de Viller to see if she could give her a remedy, because she was becoming troubled in her mind over the suspicion of witchcraft against her. She said nothing at the time, but later told her she would accompany her and they should go the next Saturday. Reply was 'O mais commere, sy nous y alliens et que le diable l'allast dire a la divineresse et qu'il vinsse quant nous serions emmy les bois & qu'il me feist du mal davantaige qu'elle n'avoit.' Would not go. Had several times asked witness to house her for a franc a week, which she had not been willing to do.

6 March 1592; confrontations and interrogation

Generally denied all charges made by witnesses, saying that they lied, but made no other reproaches to them. She replied to Franceatte veuve Casper le Marchal that she had 'conseillé et mis a la teste de sondit marit de luy mescroire sa mort, et que ce qu'elle en avoit déposé n'estoient que fables.' In reply to Jean de Romaigne said she herself had lost animals. In respect of Anne femme Colas Dedalle said she had not used the words claimed and that she had misheard what she said.

Was then told that she would be tortured after dinner; when she did not want to confess was shown the instruments, then started to talk.

One day she had lost a case at Liepvre against someone she did not remember, and was very angry. That night was sleeping in poisle as usual when evil spirit came through window. Thought it was a young man from Rombach called Clement, and asked what he was looking for. He said he was looking for some nuts, then asked if she would be his 'baiselle', that she ought to remarry instead of remaining a widow. She replied that he did nothing but frequent taverns, and he was a drunkard. He said he would mend his ways, so she felt sure it was Clement and allowed him into bed, but when they had intercourse she knew she was deceived because he was not like other men. Made her promise to obey him, then threw her a sack saying there was money in it, but next morning found these were pieces of glass.

Some two or three weeks later he returned and gave her grease and powders to kill men and animals. She blew the powder from her hand on people in the name of her master Persin, and used grease on animals. When she did not want to do harm as he commanded she had been beaten two or three times. Had killed Casper le Marchal and child of Nicolas Vanesson. Had not caused the deaths of Humbert Demenge Gerard's children, except the son by his first marriage when angry about damage he had allowed animals to do.

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Identified as accomplices one Paroiatte and Margueritte Margende of Sainte Croix, la Sagresse of Rombach, the wives of Loux Kieffer and Alexandre Berthremin and la grosse Suzanne, all of Liepvre, the wife of Christlin Clotz and la grosse Mengeotte of Müsloch. Later discharged Paroiatte, Margueritte Margende and Berthremin's wife, saying that her guards had suggested she should accuse them.

10 March 1592; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions, but would not add to them, and was lightly racked. Questioned again, said 'qu'elle n'auroit tant faict de maulx comme l'on penseroit bien, et que si elle et aultres avoient la puissance qu'elles destruerioient tout le monde, et que quant elles alloient a l'eglise querrir de leaue benicte, elles n'avoient puissance de faire mal, mais quant elles y realloient trop souvent qu'elles estoient battues & tourmentees par leurs maistres.' Only significant additional confession was that she had killed ox belonging to Jean de Romaine.

11 March 1592; repeated confession, with some insignificant details added. Was sentenced to death, but to be tortured again first to obtain full confession of maléfices.

? March 1592; final death sentence, by burning alive, but no mention of any further interrogation under torture.