

Section #4

automatically to the condemnation and execution of the accused. Several regions that used torture against witchcraft suspects succeeded in wringing confessions from fewer than half of those accused. This is true in both the Protestant and Catholic cantons of Switzerland, where the whole business began back in the fifteenth century and where the last witch was burned in 1782; it holds true for the Channel Islands, for parts of Hapsburg Franche-Comté in eastern France, and for Calvinist Geneva, famous for the rigors of its laws. Often enough the accused, who had saved her or his life by not confessing, was not liberated but was instead banished from the community for a shorter or longer period. And finally, it is very hard to escape the impression that a sizable percentage among those who did confess, under torture or not, really did have considerable guilt feelings; Delcambre's analysis of the large body of Lorraine evidence in the fourth selection seems to establish this point conclusively.

Section #4

Healers, Midwives

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I "Judgment on the Witch Walpurga Hausmännin"

(from E. Wm. Monter, European Witchcraft)

A sadly typical case of a witchcraft victim. In one way, it is exceptional: thanks to her profession of midwife, Walpurga Hausmännin was accused of the death of more than forty children. But otherwise, it is a full gamut of the ordinary witch's maleficia. Sexual intercourse with a handsomely clothed Devil, the ensuing Devil's Mark and formal pact (made despite her illiteracy), the witches' gatherings to which she rode on her broomstick, the lethal salve given to her by the Devil, the malevolent uses of dead children and sacred objects, even the manufacture of hail "once or twice a year"—all this is a standard confession. Walpurga was a typical victim in that she was old and widowed, and she belonged to a dangerous profession.¹ Obviously, an old and inept midwife, working in an age when every sixth child died within a very few months, was particularly susceptible to charges of witchcraft.

Confessions of Walpurga Hausmännin, formerly licensed midwife at Dillingen, who, for almost thirty years, practised witchcraft and was in league with the Evil One. She was burnt at the stake at Dillingen on the 20th day of September anno Domini 1587.

The herein mentioned, malefic and miserable woman, Walpurga Hausmännin, now imprisoned and in chains, has, upon kindly questioning and also torture, following on persistent and fully justified accusations, confessed her witchcraft and admitted the following. When one-and-thirty years ago, she had become a widow, she cut corn for Hans Schlumperger, of this place, together with his former servant, Bis im Pfarrhof, by name. Him she enticed with lewd speeches and gestures and they convened that they should, on an appointed night, meet in her, Walpurga's,

¹ See Thomas R. Forbes, *The Midwife and the Witch*, New Haven, 1966, and the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Part I, question 11.

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dwelling, there to indulge in lustful intercourse. So when Walpurga in expectation of this, sat awaiting him at night in her chamber, meditating upon evil and fleshly thoughts, it was not the said bondsman who appeared unto her, but the Evil One in the latter's guise and raiment and indulged in fornication with her. Thereupon he presented her with a piece of money, in the semblance of half a thaler, but no one could take it from her, for it was a bad coin and like lead. For this reason she had thrown it away. After the act of fornication she saw and felt the cloven foot of her whoremonger, and that his hand was not natural, but as if made of wood. She was greatly affrighted thereat and called upon the name of Jesus, whereupon the Devil left her and vanished.

On the ensuing night, the Evil Spirit visited her again in the same shape and whored with her. He made her many promises to help her in her poverty and need, wherefore she surrendered herself to him body and soul. Thereafter the Evil One inflicted upon her a scratch below the left shoulder, demanding that she should sell her soul to him with the blood that had flown therefrom. To this end he gave her a quill and, whereas she could not write, the Evil One guided her hand. She believes that nothing offensive was written, for the Evil One only swept with her hand across the paper. This script the Devil took with him and whenever she piously thought of God Almighty, or wished to go to church, the Devil reminded her of it.

Further, the above-mentioned Walpurga confesses that she oft and much rode on a pitchfork by night with her paramour, but not far, on account of her duties. At such devilish trysts she met a big man with a grey beard, who sat in a chair, like a great prince and was richly attired. That was the Great Devil to whom she had once more dedicated and promised herself body and soul. Him she worshipped and before him she knelt, and unto him she rendered other such-like honours. But she pretends not to know with what words and in which fashion she prayed. She only knows that once she heedlessly pronounced the name of Jesus. Then the above-mentioned Great Devil struck her in the face and Walpurga had to disown (which is terrible to relate) God in heaven, the Christian name and belief, the blessed Saints and the Holy Sacraments, also to renounce the heavenly hosts and the whole of Christendom. Thereupon the Great Devil baptized

her afresh, naming her Höfelin, and her paramour-devil, Federlin. At those devilish meetings, she ate, drank and fornicated with her paramour. Because she would not allow him to drag her along everywhere he had beaten her harshly and cruelly. For food she often had a good roast or an innocent child, which was also roasted, or a suckling pig, and red and white wine, but no salt.

Since her surrender to the Devil, she had seemingly oft received the Blessed Sacrament of the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, apparently by the mouth, but had not partaken of it, but (which once more is terrible to relate) had always taken it out of her mouth again and delivered it up to Federlin, her paramour. At their nightly gatherings she had oft with her other playfellows trodden under foot the Holy and Blessed Sacrament and the image of the Holy Cross. The said Walpurga states that during such-like frightful and loathsome blasphemies she at times truly did espy drops of blood upon the said Holy Sacrament, whereat she herself was greatly horrified.

At the command and threat of her whoremonger she had oft dishonoured the consecrated font, emptied it before her house or even destroyed the same. This she was made to do only a few days before she was cast into prison, when she was in the parish church from which she took a holy water stoup and carried it home. Then her devil paramour arrayed in handsome garments encountered her in the little street between the great cloister and the stable of Martin Müller. He desired to take the holy water stoup out of her hand and forced her to hurl it against the wall. She had also been obliged sorely to dishonour the blessed Mother of God, the Holy Virgin Mary, to spit out in front of her and say: "Shame, thou ugly hussy!" Her paramour, Federlin, came to her in many divers places in order to fornicate with her, even in the street by night and while she lay in durance. She confesses, also, that her paramour gave her a salve in a little box with which to injure people and animals, and even the precious fruit of the field.

He also compelled her to do away with and to kill young infants at birth, even before they had been taken to Holy Baptism. This she did, whenever possible. These as follows:

1 and 2. About ten years ago, she had rubbed Anna Hämännin, who dwelt not far from Durstigel, with her salve on the occasion

of her first childbirth and also otherwise damaged her so that mother and child remained together and died.

3. Dorothea, the stepdaughter of Christian Wachter, bore her first child ten years before; at its birth she made press on its little brain so that it died. The Devil had specially bidden her destroy the first-born.

4. Ten years ago she had poisoned with her salve the second child of Anna Kromt, who dwelt by the Altheim Gate, so that it died.

5. When, four years ago, the organist's wife was awaiting her confinement, she touched her naked body with her salve whereby the child promptly died and came stillborn.

6. Ten years ago she destroyed and killed at birth the girl child of the wife of the present tollman.

7. Twelve years ago she had killed at birth, with her salve and by strangulation, a girl child of the Pallingerin, who dwelt in a little house near the Danube baths.

8. Three years ago when she was called to a mill to the miller's wife there she had let the child fall into the water and drown.

9. Six years ago she was called to Eislingen to a poor woman who dwelt near the church. She killed the child by pressing on its brain at the time of delivery.

10. Eight or ten years ago she was called to Steinheim to a poor woman who lived on the other side of the river on the left bank. There also she killed the child by a special manipulation.

11. When six years ago, she partook of food with Magdalena Seilerin, called *Kammerschreiberin* (wife of the chamber scribe), she had put a salve in her drink, so that she was delivered prematurely. This child she, Walpurga, secretly buried under the doorway of the said wife of the scribe on the pretext that then she would have no other miscarriage. The same she also did with many others. When she was questioned under torture for the reasons of this burial, she admitted that it was done in order to cause disunion between two spouses. This her Devil-Paramour had taught her.

12. A child of Stoffel Schmidt she had, four years ago, put to death and after dug out of the grave.

13 and 14. She confessed that, when, eleven years earlier, the spouse of the late Chancellor, Dr. Peuter, lay a long while in

travail, she had rubbed a Devil's salve on the placenta, whereby she became so weak that she had to be given Extreme Unction. Three hours later, mother and child remained together and died.

15. She had also rubbed a salve on a beautiful son of the late Chancellor, Jacob by name: this child had lovely fair hair and she had given him a hobby-horse so that he might ride on it till he lost his senses. He died likewise.

16. Eight years ago she gave the rightfully wedded wife of Otto Vischer, when she was big with child, a drink, whereafter the child was born dead.

17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24. She did slay a child of each of the following: George Gopen, Sybilla Turnerin, the wife of Jäglein, Anna Seirin, Girg Gärtner, Klinger, the coppersmith Simon Leberwurst, the groom Hans Durst.

25. A child of the Governor here, Wilhelm Schenk von Stauffenberg, named Werner, she had so infected with her salve that he died within three days.

26 and 27. She had smeared and killed yet two other children of the Governor with her salve.

28 and 29. She had killed a boy child of both Master Niklas Brügelmaier and publican Kunz.

30. Three years ago she had sucked out the blood of publican Kunz's child, a twin, so that it died.

She confesses likewise, that the blood which she sucked from the child, she had to spit out again before the devil, as he had need of it to concoct a salve. She could work the children no harm if they were protected by holy water. But if she herself gave the child holy water, she was able to do it damage, as she had previously passed water into it.

31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43. She confesses that she killed a child of each of the following: Venedigerin, Hefelinin, Landstrasslerin, Fischerin, Eva auf der Bleiche, Weberin, the wife of the town scribe, Kautzin, Mechin, Weinzieherin, Berlerin and Martin Kautzin, but two of the Berlerin.

Only a short time since she had wished to smear with a salve the small boy of Georg Klinger, but she was encountered by people and was not able to achieve this.

She also rubbed the wife of the Governor with a salve, but as

she wore a neck ornament with blessed medals on it the salve did not work.

In the foregone winter at eventide she had rubbed the housewife of the town scribe on the arm with her salve, shortly after she suffered great pain and to this day suffers day and night in spite of all the remedies she has tried.

When eight years ago she was helping Michel Klingler to push a cart, and Klingler wanted to lift the shafts with his head, she touched it with her salve. Since then, Klingler is fading away and death is the only thing before him.

To the daughter of Hans Striegel, who is now in the little cloister, she gave a drink in her youth, since when she languishes and is in bad health.

She rubbed with her salve and brought about the death of Lienhart Geilen's three cows, of Bruchbauer's horse, two years ago of Max Petzel's cow, three years ago of Duri Striegel's cow, two years ago of Hans Striegel's cow, of the cow of the Governor's wife, of a cow of Frau Schötterin, and two years ago of a cow of Michel Klingler, on the village green. In short, she confesses that she destroyed a large number of cattle over and above this. A year ago she found bleached linen on the common and rubbed it with her salve, so that the pigs and geese ran over it and perished shortly thereafter. Walpurga confesses further that every year since she has sold herself to the Devil, she has on St. Leonard's Day exhumed at least one or two innocent children. With her Devil-Paramour and other play-fellows she has eaten these and used their hair and their little bones for witchcraft.

She was unable to exhume the other children she had slain at birth, although she attempted it, because they had been baptized before God.

She had used the said little bones to manufacture hail; this she was wont to do once or twice a year. Once this spring, from Siechenhausen, downwards across the fields. She likewise manufactured hail last Whitsun, and when she and others were accused of having held a witches' revel, she had actually held one near the upper gate by the garden of Peter Schmidt. At that time her play-fellows began to quarrel and struck one another, because some wanted to cause it to hail over Dillingen Meadows, others below it. At last the hail was sent over the marsh towards Weis-

singen, doing great damage. She admits that she would have caused still more and greater evils and damage if the Almighty had not graciously prevented and turned them away.

After all this, the Judges and Jury of the Court of this Town of Dillingen, by virtue of the Imperial and Royal Prerogative and Rights of His Right Reverence, Herr Marquard, Bishop of Augsburg, and Provost of the Cathedral, our most gracious Prince and Lord, at last unanimously gave the verdict that the aforesaid Walpurga Hausmännin be punished and dispatched from life to death by burning at the stake as being a maleficent and well-known witch and sorceress, convicted according to the context of Common Law and the Criminal Code of the Emperor Charles V and the Holy Roman Empire. All her goods and chattels and estate left after her to go to the Treasury of our Most High Prince and Lord. The aforesaid Walpurga to be led, seated on a cart, to which she is tied, to the place of her execution, and her body first to be torn five times with red-hot irons. The first time outside the town hall in the left breast and the right arm, the second time at the lower gate in the right breast, the third time at the mill brook outside the hospital gate in the left arm, the fourth time at the place of execution in the left hand. But since for nineteen years she was a licensed and pledged midwife of the city of Dillingen, yet has acted so vilely, her right hand with which she did such knavish tricks is to be cut off at the place of execution. Neither are her ashes after the burning to remain lying on the ground, but are thereafter to be carried to the nearest flowing water and thrown thereinto. Thus a venerable jury have entrusted the executioner of this city with the actual execution and all connected therewith.

This is in many ways an unusual trial for witchcraft. The time and place are typical enough—the episcopal city of Bamberg in Franconia