

B 2583 no 4; witch 018, Mengeotte femme Nicolas Colombain, de l'Estraye

4 August 1624; substitut for prévôt at Arches asks for her arrest, since she is greatly feared, and over last 4 or 5 weeks had been so frightened of arrest that she had been thinking of flight. Adds that she had previously been accused by her mother-in-law Chretienne and her son Nicolas.

7 August 1625; informations préparatoires

(1) Bastien Houat, 35

Long reputation, previous accusation. His late father had told him that he had wanted to marry her, but was discouraged by friends, who said her mother, who came from Bresse, was already suspected. He himself had called her witch when their children quarrelled, without her reacting. Had always appeared sad since some other witches were arrested and taken to Arches. Her son Jean, aged 12, had told his daughter Claudine, 10, as they were guarding animals, that his mother had told him 'qu'il ne falloit rien dire qu'on le prendroit et luy presenteroit on du plain blanc pour luy faire dire quelque chose, mais qu'il ne falloit rien prendre, autrement qu'on les emmeneroit et que si il ne disoit rien on les lascheroit.'

(2) Mre Pierre Roucelot, tabellion, 50

Since accusations 16 years earlier had been much feared by neighbours, who complained of quarrels and losses of animals. No personal suspicions. (Signed)

(3) Demenge Lamouratte, 60

Similar deposition to above.

(4) Jean Mongin dit Haxat, 50

Suspected since accusation.

(5) George Parmentier, 33

General reputation. Suspicion that she might have caused two cows belonging to his sister Marie to suffer broken legs; same evening Marie had turned her away from veillée, saying there was no more space.

(6) Nicolas Grand Demenge, 63

Feared since accusation.

(7) Remiere femme Nicolas Villaume, 40

Ditto.

(8) Didiere femme Demenge Jacques, 60

Had seen no harm in her, although was suspected of being a witch. Had quarrelled with her, and had animals dead, but did not want to suspect anyone.

(9) Nicole femme Demenge Thiebault Lamouratte, 27

General reputation.

(10) Martin Jacques, 50

Widely feared; his wife, who came from la Bresse, said her mother was already reputed witch there.

(11) Mengeon fille Nicolas Villaume, 18

Reputation, but had seen no harm in her. 3 years earlier small son Jean was guarding animals with them on a fine day, and they made fire to cook apples. He said that if they did not let him join in he would bring hail on them; they refused, so he stood in middle of field waving his hat and calling 'dredard, dredard'. Great storm of hail and rain came down, so they could hardly see; dragged him to fire by feet, saying unless she made it stop she would burn him, and immediately the sun returned.

(12) Barbe femme Remy Choffel, 40

Reputation and accusation.

(13) Magdelaine fille Nicolas Villaume, 17

Reputation. Son Jean had told witness that he went to sabat with his mother, and danced; said they would take her, at which she slapped his face. His sister Mongeotte, now in Burgundy, had threatened to bewitch her when they were guarding animals.

(14) Jean Demenge, 50

General reputation.

(15) Catherine femme Delon Choffel, de la Mouline, 27

General reputation. Had heard that son Jean said he had been to the sabbat with her, 'et que quand il jectoit une pierre il la jecteroit bien au diable s'il vouloit et que c'estoit plus de cent lieu long'.

(16) Mathieu Mathieu, 50

Reputation and accusations. Remy Claude and his servants had said they suspected her of taking milk from his cows.

(17) Colatte femme Jean Demenge, 40

Reputation and accusation. Previous Whitsun her son Jean had quarrelled with son of witness, Claudon, and told him he would make him eat rotten meat and all his teeth would fall out.

(18) Anne femme Romain Thiebault Lamouratte, 30

General reputation.

(19) Jean Venin, cordonnier, 50

Taken to Arches 15 years earlier; had lost many beasts himself, but had no suspicions.

(20) Remy Choffel, 41

Reputation since accusation. 10 years earlier refused to lend her a horse, and she said he was 'un pauvre homme' to refuse such a small thing - horse died 2 weeks later. 2 years later again refused loan of a fine mare, which became wild within 2 weeks, so that it could not be controlled. Ran away when he took it to drink, and accused brought it back. His wife 'print resolution d'envoyer au divin, encore qu'il ait deffendu qu'on n'y allast; ou on dit qu'on scavoit bien celle qui l'avoit retourné lors qu'elle eschappa de ses mains'. Mare still died soon after, and suspected she was cause.

(8 August 1624)

(21) Nicolas fils Demenge Lamouratte, 15

Had heard Jean talk of going to sabat, eating black flesh, and getting money. Also said that Royne veuve Jean des Thiales of Remonchamp was there.

(22) Estienne fils Jean Haxart, 9

Had heard from Claudon Demenge how Jean had threatened to kill him, and make him eat rotten meat, salt, and bread so that his teeth fell out. Had heard him tell another boy that whole family went to sabat, except for little girl who could not walk. Ate unsalted and uncooked black meat, went on black horse, and were given money.

(23) Claudon fils Jean Demenge, 11

Told of quarrel with Jean when guarding animals a month earlier, and threats to kill him and make teeth fall out. Also said he had made him ill already - was true that a year earlier had been very ill for 2 days, without knowing cause. A year earlier had told him and other boys 'qu'il alloit au sabat avec sa mere, et que son pere alloit querir de l'argent en un prey dit menaprey dans des rochers sur un petit cheval noir, qui avoit de grandes aureilles, point de poil et qu'on ne pouvoit se bonnement tenir dessus, disant que sa mere disoit qu'il ne le falloit dire aux autres.' Since Easter were again with animals when Jean became angry with them, said 'Tantedient, mon pere aura bien tost de vos bestes'. A big wolf then appeared and carried off goat belonging to Romain Thiebault - his father was working nearby at time.

(24) Mongeotte femme Remy Claude Parmentier, 40

General reputation. Some 9 years earlier her daughter came asking for milk; did not know if she gave her enough to satisfy her. 2 weeks later could not make butter, and complained to neighbour, who suggested that if she feared someone she should get her to come to house, or obtain something from her. Offered Mengeotte some pastries if she would fetch them, then showed her problem with butter; she advised heating water and adding it, which worked. Did not suspect her on this account.

(25) Mongeotte fille Nicolas Villaume, 13

Told how when they were guarding animals and looking at a house Jean said it was small, claiming that he, his father, mother, and 3 sisters went to a much finer one where they feasted - also story about father going on black horse to get money, which came from a great black man who only gave to them and to no-one else. Previous month said he wanted to kiss her, and when she refused said 'qu'il en baisoit de plus belles en un lieu ou il dancoit menant le devant et le derrier, qu'ils entroient dans une maison toute de fer (feu?) ou tout brusloit, neanmoins ne sentoient aucune chaleur, de là entroient en une chambre ou on cuisoit de la chair et du milliot, puis en une autre ou il y avoit plusieurs grands hommes noirs qui dresssoient la table et dela en une autre, ou ils dansoient, que ses pere et mere et ses soeurs y estoient, que la chair qu'ils mangeoient n'estoit pas bonne ny bien cuite, puis ce fait s'en retournoient sur un cheval noir, qui les reportoit au lieu ou il les avoit prin, sur ce elle deposante et les autres luy dirent que c'estoit un sorcier, qu'il le falloit brusler, A quoy il repartit qu'il les feroit mourir, que les dents et les cheveux leur tomberoient. Dict de plus que ce matin gardant le bestail avec ledit Jean iceluy luy avoit raconté et a sa soeur Mongeon qu'hier estant par devant nous on luy avoit fait donner du pain blanc, de la chair et des pastenees et qu'on l'auroit voulu pendre avec une courroye de cuir pour luy faire dire quelque chose, mais qu'il n'avoit rien voulu dire et que pour ce subject son pere luy avoit promis une chausse et pourpoint pareille a ceux du fils du gruyer et qu'il avoit bien fait ce que sa mere luy avoit dit ayant rejecté tout ce qu'on luy donnoit, de peur de parler et que s'il parloit on le feroit pendre bien hault, et qu'il se garde bien de boire du vin, que son pere luy avoit deffendu de dire qu'il eut faict la gresle ny dit dredard et qu'il ne seroit plus battu.'

(26) Marie fille Jean Colin, de Ramonchamp, 10

Story of threat followed by attack on goat by wolf, and how he talked about father going to get money.

(27) Claudon fils Vincent Choffel, 16

Told of Jean's threat to kill son of Jean Demenge, also claim he could use salt to take milk from cows.

(28) Nicolas Barthremin le jeune, 38

4 years earlier his father caught her stealing wood from hedge, and took her to house of Nicolas Villaume to have him as witness; said they would repent, and next day an ox sickened, dying 2 or 3 days after, which he believed was her doing.

(29) Remy Claude Parmentier, 40

Reputation since accusation; knew story of his wife and the butter.

(30) Nicolas Barthremin le viel, 70

Story of theft from hedge; had struck her with stick, and she had called him murderer - he told her she was a witch, and ought to be burned.

(31) Mongeotte femme Joseph Claudel Dirhay, 29

Long reputation. When Mengeotte Bourgman was being taken to Arches asked another woman why they were not taking accused as well; she heard this, and said she had been to Arches already and returned as 'femme de bien'. Witness replied that it was not good women they took there, at which she went off angrily, muttering and shaking her head. Next day two wolves attacked their bullock in middle of the herd, and it would have been killed if not rescued - suspected she had caused this.

(32) Royne femme Remy Martin, 50

2 years before her husband had dispute with her after finding 2 of her cows in his field; threats made, and he had since been ill. Suspected she had been cause.

(33) Remy Martin, 50

Same story; placed quarrel 3 years back; she said he would repent. Later became ill, and could not eat, drink, or rest for a year, over which he suspected her.

(34) Remy Demenge Parmentier, 60

General reputation; suspected her of causing death of animals because she had been in his house one morning, although no quarrel.

9 August 1624; interrogation

Said she was about 50; knew she was suspected as witch, but claimed she was a good woman. Asked about stories told by son, denied they were true. Agreed he had been beaten, but this was for losing 2 animals. Denied long series of charges, but agreed she had been beaten with handle of axe by Nicolas Barthelemin when he found her stealing wood. He had called her witch, but on another occasion. Otherwise admitted nothing.

9 August 1624; confrontations

At recollements Mongeon fille Nicolas Villaume added further account of conversation with Jean the previous day. Essentially the same as account given by her sister Mengeotte. Her sister Magdalaine added that 18 months earlier she had quarrelled with Jean and his mother told her she would repent; immediately became so ill she thought she would die. Same evening one of her companions obtained bread from their house (given by daughter Mongeotte, after eating which she was better next morning).

Jean Demenge said that during storm previous summer had been sheltering under tree with 2 of his children and Jean; latter said 'dredard, dredard', and he did not know what he meant.

Jean Mongin said that 2 days before had been going to le Thillot with cart, and met Nicolas and Jean Colombain, 'ausquels il demanda ce qu'on disoit, lequel respondit qu'on leur en vouloit bien et qu'il falloit que luy qui depose conduise encore au soir son garcon pour deposer contre eux'. A little further on one of his horses took fright (which it had never done before), so that he fell and dislocated shoulder, but did not wish to suspect anyone.

Confronted with witnesses, no serious reproaches. Did say she had heard that Jean Demenge had stolen some cheeses. Otherwise merely said 'qu'elle n'y scauroit que faire' to most charges.

12 August 1624; confrontation with Jean and interrogation

After reading of his deposition she said 'Mon dieu! Que dois-je faire, jamais je n'ay faict mal. Et par ledit enfant reparty qu'il avoit deposé la verité et dit apres avoir un peu songé, que sa mere presente l'avoit mené jusques sur les gottes et qu'elle a esté avec son pere et ses soeurs au sabat.'

After one or two more questions a cleric was called in to remonstrate with her; heard her confession, then told them she was ready to tell the truth. Said she was a witch, had taken the devil Sorpy for her master during lifetime of mother-in-law, when she was 'toute desolée'. Admitted taking Jean and his sisters Claire and Mongeotte to sabat. 'Lesquelles confessions on a tiré d'elle avec beaucoup de peines y ayant apparence a ses deportements et discours que le malin l'assistoit, disant s'il y avoit moyen de faire sortir quelque chose d'elle qui l'empeschoit de dire la verité, et ceux qui estoient au sabat avec elle.'

Was given holy water to drink 'et usé du cierge beniste a lentour d'elle'. Then said her accomplices were late Marie Faurel and Jeannon Garnise, 'que le diable Sorpy leur faisoit de belles promesses mais que c'est un trompeur, qu'ils y dancoient et banquettoient et faisoient des choses qui ne valoient guiere.'

Finally said that George Garnise had been at sabbat.

19 August 1624; interrogation

Said she had been seduced when miserable because her husband had gone away. Told Sorpy she could not go with him because she had a small child, but he told her to take the child with her. Others she saw were George Parmentier and Jean Brice de Xouarny - her son Jean had thought he was her husband. Grand Colas of la Mouline was the marlier when they said mass, and Brice replied and sang mass. Royne des Riales of Ramonchamp was the cook. Had not seen Arnoult Martin, whom she would willingly have denounced since he had offended them, and did not know Remiere fille de Richard, 'que son enfant s'est peu tromper, d'autant que le diable prend des figures telles qu'il luy plait'. Said that Jean Brice had brought dead sheep, which they had all eaten.

Also told of how her master had turned himself into a wolf 6 weeks earlier to kill a pig. First time she went had given her money which turned out to be oak leaves. After she was confirmed did not see him for 7 years, but then he sought her out again. When she took Jean sabat was at Mortbieu (col de Mortbieu, 790 m., is 9 km WNW from Taye as the crow flies).

22 August 1624; PG des Vosges asks for death sentence, after she has been subjected to question ordinaire to confirm accusations. Since Jean has not yet reached age of puberty, he should be sent with siblings to bishop of Toul for confirmation, then entrusted to curé to be brought up in Catholic faith.

23 August 1624; Change de Nancy approves further torture.

16 September 1624; court at Arches orders interrogation under torture.

17 September 1624; interrogation under torture

Confirmed previous confessions, but said she had not caused any harm to men or animals. Given thumbscrews, then racked - during latter seemed to lose consciousness, so torture was brought to a halt. Now said the only person she wanted to charge as an accomplice was her son. Followed by formal death sentence.

Costs of trial for mother and son came to 55 francs for prévôt. Costs of court at Arches for action against Chretienne Parmentier, trial of Mengeotte, and taking of depositions against those she accused, came to 385 fr.