

B 9554 no 6; witch 333A, Mengeotte la Sagresse, femme Noel de Fraisse, de Sainte Marie

24 September 1582; interrogation

Carried out before court of valley in castle of Zuckmantel.

She said that she was about 50, native of Vieux Marché at Saint-Dié; father had been Jean Jacquemin de Lavelline. Asked about box of grease which made shoes dance, said that in her youth, about 38 years earlier, had been in father's house when a box of grease fell from the wall. She put some on some new shoes, which started to dance and jump, so that she cried out, and a woman named Jeannon, who was being held in her father's house and was soon after executed with others as a witch, said the box was hers. She made the shoes stop dancing and called Mengeotte 'leschatté' saying that she poked her nose in everywhere.

Asked about advising a woman to give the umbilical cord of her child to a sheep, she said that a poor woman had once told her that if this was done with some bread and salt the child would not cry any more. She had never done this, but had told Marion wife of Colas Manne, who now accused her of causing death of her baby. She had reproached Marion with this previous Wednesday, and Marion said that she had only given bread and salt to the sheep, also that she knew no ill of Mengeotte.

Asked what remedy she had given her daughter when she was so ill, said that she had put ends of three pieces of oak in fire, then extinguished them with wine and put them in sheets to warm her; had learned this treatment from good people and there was no harm in it.

Asked why she had let herself be called witch without demanding reparation, she said the only time this had happened was when Jean Mauvais called her and his own wife witches; she threw a stool at him which knocked him over, then next day he said that he had been drunk and could remember nothing.

Asked about occasion when daughter's child had been ill and they consulted doctor at Saint Blaise, who said they should ask the grandmother, who had intended to make son-in-law ill; she said he had not said this, and they could ask the others who had been present.

1 October 1582; depositions

Honneste homme Claude Thiriot, bourgeois de Sainte Marie, 50

Had seen nothing wrong, but knew of reputation, and recently some people from Saint-Dié had been drinking in his house on way to grape harvest at Honnawiller. His wife asked what was being said about la Sagresse, to which they replied that she was 'du plus meschant perrage que fut en Lorraine'.

Nicolas Michiel, bourgeois de Sainte Marie, 36

Some 26 years earlier she had dispute with his father over some land he was working at Fenaulrux, which she said was hers. One of his three horses then died, although witness did not know if she was cause – father said he had made a great mistake.

Honnorable homme Jean Daulphin, bourgeois de Sainte Marie, 44

11 years earlier had come to live in present house, and immediately heard that she was reputed a witch. First wife died in childbed, and heard from wife of Jacquemin le Rovier that la Sagresse had said that if she had deigned to call her in she would have healed her and prevented her death. About 4 years earlier had asked his servants for ‘fleurs de foings’ which she was refused, and after this his second wife became ill, then died after 9 months always suspecting that accused was cause; he had great suspicion that she had caused deaths of both wives.

Jehennon, femme Jacquemin le Rovier de Sainte Marie, 40

Mengeotte had told her the story about the shoes that danced some 15 years earlier. One day the sons of Claude le Moulin and the accused were playing in a meadow, and le Moulin’s son beat hers, at which she and her daughter came running, and she told him that he would repent. Soon after he married, then became ill and died. During sickness he sent someone to ask her for advice about a cure, and she suggested something like oak wood, saying that within three days he would die or be cured. He did die after three days, during which she had been asking his brother how he did.

Her daughter, late wife of Hector Comta, quarrelled with her, then about a year later bought a cheese from her, after eating which her face became very swollen. Surgeon who was called in to treat her removed something like old linen from it and said it was witchcraft; shortly afterwards she became very weak and died.

When first wife of Jean Dauphin was in childbed and could not be delivered, she came to workshop of witness’s husband and said she had not called her neighbours, and if she had been called she could have saved the mother at least, by replacing the arm of the baby in her body.

Didier Richard Bollengier, bourgeois de Sainte Marie, 48

Had lost several animals when living near her, although he did not know if she was the cause. Early one morning saw a woman beating a tree behind her house with a stick or bar; called his servant, who said it was a witch, then the figure disappeared – it was a very misty morning. Asked if there was any hatred between them, said there was not.

David, fils Hannezo Robert de Saint Phillips, 14

Not sworn because of age. He had been the envoy for Claude de Molin’s son, and she told him she would not go to see the sick man because some from Sainte Marie ‘la pensoint faire meschante’, and he was one of them. When he was sent back to her she told him they should take ‘la mousse de noire espine, de la semence de la mousse de romarin’, put all this in two bags, warm them, and put them over his heart and his groin. Should also go to woods, cut an oak and some ‘thillat’. Were to burn the latter and put hot embers in boiling water, then make him drink this. Oak was to be warmed, and pieces placed at his feet and at his sides. Died after three days.

Jacquemin le Rovier, bourgeois de Sainte Marie, 62

When her house was ruined by wind, she lodged with him for seven weeks. During this time she spoke with his first wife about maid of late Jean Malleferre, and was told she came from la Bolle; she then said that she knew her well and her mother had been burned as a witch. After she had left their house she went to Malleferre's house and said his wife had told her this story about witchcraft; when she heard about this his wife was furious and lay in wait for her with two stones. He managed to make peace between them, but a year later his wife gave birth to a child that was only skin and bone. Was born on Thursday evening, died on Saturday evening, and his wife died on the Monday – he suspected she was cause.

Added that his daughter, wife of Hector Comta, had called la Sagresse in to treat her when she was very ill; felt better, spent most of day in meadow, but fell ill again at evening. Servant came to fetch husband and witness, and husband put key in her mouth to bring her round. Accused then appeared and rubbed her with vinegar; in order to take her home accused pushed aside his wife, saying she was stronger, and dragged her back holding her under her arms. Died three days later, and thought she had caused this, also death of child which suddenly died in daughter's arms without any sign that it had been ill.

Asked if there had been any quarrel between her and his daughter, said there had because daughter's children called hers sons of a witch. Told stories about death of Jean Daulphin's wife and the dancing shoes.

Catherine femme Symon Bel, de Sainte Marie, 44

One day witness and others had been to see someone who called himself a doctor in Jean Sagaire's house at Saint Blaise; daughter of accused was there to have child treated for eye problem. When accused came in she quickly left with her daughter, and the doctor told the others that he had told her to take the child away with her and seek ways to heal it, because she knew very well who had made it sick.

Marion femme Colas Manne, de Sainte Marie, 40

When she gave birth to first child was living in house of accused; because she had been deserted by husband had little with which to feed herself and child, and it often cried as babies in second week of life did. Accused wished it were dead, then told about poor woman and claim of giving umbilical cord to sheep with bread and salt to stop it crying. At her suggestion she did this, but it all fell to ground and she did not know if the sheep ate it or not. Baby soon died, and she thought that accused was cause.

Jehennon femme Hannezo le Rovier de Sainte Marie, 26

Story about her brother fighting with son of accused and later death; essentially same story as mother had told, with similar details about treatment.

Catherine femme Jean Berquin, and previously of Hannezo Claude le Molin, 20

First husband became ill immediately after marriage, told he should consult la Sagresse who had healed many others. Similar treatment to others – herbs to be cooked and put in two bags. Usual idea that something would happen in three days, and he died next evening. Also suggested cooking an egg with his urine and putting

this on an anthill, but winter weather prevented her doing this, and use of three pieces of oak. Suggested she might visit devineresse of ban de Stimay to discover who had given him sickness, and that person might be begged to remove it.

Jehenne femme Demenge Humbert dit le Poure, de Sainte Marie, 60

Hannezo du Moulin had been her son, and after quarrel with accused had called her witch several times. She threatened him, he fell ill 3 months later and died, always believing she was cause.

Elso femme Hanns Schladchauff, beougeois de Sainte Marie, 40

Story about dancing shoes, placed 15 years earlier.

Barbeline femme Pierre Gerard Bourguignon, miner of Sainte Marie, 32

Story about dancing shoes. When child of Grosse Marion died, she had said that her hens were clucking and said 'ricque ricque', telling husband that muder was being done in their house – then Marion woke and called out to her 'Ordure, qu'est ce que tu as faict?'

Jean Cordonnier, miner of Saint Marie, 30

Story about dancing shoes, also another occasion when she said she had seen a woman who was very ill (Halleberde's wife), and she would heal her if she was in her hands, and she had no fear of doctors.

Honneste homme Hector Comta, bourgeois de Sainte Marie, 38

Told story of late wife's illness, and surgeon who removed something from her face. Later accused told him he was looking for doctors far away and ignoring those who were near. Offered to pay her well if she could help, and she told him to make a fire in upper chamber and make up a bed there; then she put wife to bed and made him leave them. Followed by temporary recovery, then collapse in meadow. Was put to bed and could not speak for two days; then when accused was sweeping room after remaking bad she became so violently ill that bones seemed to be coming apart and bed was shaking, while accused dropped to her knees and raised hands as if in prayer. Suspected she had caused her death.

Bastien Loux, bourgeois de Sainte Marie, 37

18 or 20 years earlier had been watching father's cows at Fenaulrux, saw quarrel with old Nicolas Michiel after which he lost a horse. His late wife and accused had quarrelled and fought, and she pulled his wife's hair, then within a week she dried up and finally died; suspected she had caused this and later loss of many animals. Recently she had told him and others in her barn about black man whom came to her house at Fenaulrux calling for her husband, who was not there; she wore her 'pelisson' with hair on outside to frighten the man, who immediately went away, but she saw him and two other black men on the hillside for a long time.

[3 October 1582]

Mengeatte femme Mengeon Colas Bertrand de Sainte Marie, 28

One day accused came up to her at market of Sainte Marie asking for husband – she said he was not there, but would be another time. Then told her that her sister should be very happy that her husband was dead, and they would never have had any property.

Claudette femme Thomas Jean Noel de Sainte Marie, 25

She and the late wife of her brother Bastien Le Thonnaire had been to ask her to cure the latter, but she said she could not treat her any more because she had waited too long, that she had done what she could, but she had a morsel in her and she could not help her further. Two years earlier husband was ill for 20 weeks and could find no cure, so she asked accused to visit him; she refused, saying that people would say she was a bad woman. Finally agreed on second request when promised she would be well paid, but would come by night. Tried to give witness hatchet to cut pieces of oak at Fenaulrux, but she said it was too late, so accused brought them herself. Then story of treatment with herbs and with pieces of oak heated in fire; he began to sweat heavily and feel better. She told witness to come next day and fetch hyssop and other herbs from her house to make him a soup, but husband told her not to do this, and make him a soup herself. When she went to her sister's she met accused who gave her the herbs, she made the soup, and husband recovered. She paid her so well that she was content.

Barbeline femme Mengeon Thibault, bourgeois de Sainte Croix, 34

18 months earlier a certain Master Blaise was at Saint Blaise, who was curing one of her husband's daughters of 'la tigne'; when he saw accused come in with daughter and grandchild he said 'Voicy la royne des autres'.

Georgeotte veuve Jean Sagaire de Saint Blaise, 34

Same story; he was looking out of window, and witness and other women of Sainte Marie who were there started to laugh, some of them saying that la Sagresse had long been rumoured 'd'estre du hault pays'.

Mre Olry Perrin, chirurgien de Sainte Marie, 40

Story about treating late wife of Hector Comta and removing a piece of something like cloth as long as a finger from her swollen face; she later died of 'ung quataire'.

3 October 1582; interrogation

Asked about witness depositions, said she held all witnesses for good people if they had deposed nothing against her or her honour.

Said that Nicolas Michiel had quarrelled with her mother-in-law, who had same name as her, when he ploughed a field she said was hers.

Denied using words reported by Jean Daulphin as being heard by wife of Jacquemin le Rovier.

Repeated account of woman who greased shoes, whom her father had expelled from house same day.

In case of Claude du Moulin, had given him herbs from her garden, but was not cause of his death, and had said nothing about three days.

Denied everything, and said that if she had provided cures for some this had been harmless things she had learned from people of good repute.

10 October 1582; interrogation under torture

Was racked three times, the final one more harshly, but would only say that the woman executed as a witch had made her grease the shoes. Then racked twice more, urged to tell truth when so many good people had deposed against her, or she would be damned, while it was impossible the woman had not taught her some witchcraft.

Said the woman had asked her to go with her, and she replied that she would ask her father. When she did so he asked where she wanted to go, and she said she did not know – he then had her rebaptised. Then she said the woman had taken her to la Magdelaine, where there were around 30 men and women; she only knew Guillon [son of the woman?] and those who were executed at St Dié at that time. They danced and feasted, but as soon as she got home she told her father – this was when Guillon and the others were executed. The woman had taken her by the neck and carried her to the sabat when she wanted to return home. Had been 39 years earlier, around ‘voyn’, and two days before the greasing of the shoes.

Was given two hour rest when she would confess no more, then asked whether she had been tempted by Enemy, and what he was called. Said Persin had asked her to be one of his, but she had refused; his name was Persin. Shortly afterwards the woman took her to another sabbat at place called le Bichay, where she again refused him, but finally gave in – he put hand on back of head and forehead, but didn’t know what he did, and gave her some money which turned out to be oak leaves. Went a third time six weeks later, when Persin had intercourse with her (was very cold) and gave her box of grease to kill people and animals. Gave some to one of their goats with some hay and it died. At another sabbat there were about eight of them; they beat water and raised a very damaging storm.

Asked if she had used the grease at Saint Dié and Sainte Marie, said she had not done much harm, but too much, and begged God’s mercy. Had killed Jean Daulphin’s first wife, who had told her off because her children took nuts from under their trees – put powder on her neck when she visited her in childbed. Persin gave her this powder at a place called Fenaulrux, and at Hermant; told her several times to use it against her, but she resisted because she was a good woman. Finally yielded – had been beaten more than seven times because she did not want to do harm.

Agreed that she had killed horse of late Nicolas Michiel – quarrel was with mother-in-law, but she was angry because he wanted to take field for which they had already partly paid. As for wife of Hector Comta, had been asked to eat with her seven weeks before death, and when she asked her to stop her children calling her own ‘sons of a witch’ she replied that she did not know what to do about it; angry at this and that she caused them to call her witch, she put powder on a piece of bread. Asked if she had brought powder with her, said that while they were at table Persin

came in form of a fly and incited her to harm her; she was unwilling, but finally gave way and used powder he gave her then.

Said only other thing she had done was to kill some pigs belonging to Bastien Loux which did a lot of harm in her garden. Then asked about death of Hanno fils Claude le Virpelier, alias du Mollin, said she had been angry about way he treated her son; when he was passing she asked him if he was still angry with her and offered him her hand, which he took – but she had some powder in it.

Said that she could not identify others at sabbat because they were masked, but thought she had recognized a large woman who lived in house of le gros Bouchier of Sainte Marie – could not be sure.

15 October 1582; formal hearing

Was ordered that she should be tortured again, since she was now denying the truth of what she had confessed.

18 October 1582; interrogation under torture

Was asked if she had the greases and powders that her master had given her; said she had some chicken grease and some grease made with bones and soup, but denied she was a witch or had anything given her by Persin, even when racked again. Said she had only been to sabbat when taken by the woman when she was very young. Also said they were making her say things that she had never done.

Finally started to renew confessions. Said some of the witches she saw at sabbat wore scarves in style of val d'Orbey. Could not identify any properly, but had seen 'une petite taichatte' named Jehennon from Petit Rombach whose house had been swept away in a flood, and another Jehennon from same place – one spoke German and other French.

19 October 1582; she was sentenced to death by burning alive, and this was done same day.