

B 3804 no 1; Witch 066, Nicolas Adam de Dompierre

20 January 1620; order from procureur general du bailliage des Vosges that since Nicolas Adam, mesnetrier de Dompierre, is greatly suspected of witchcraft and feared by all, prévôt de Bruyères should proceed secretly to take depositions of witnesses.

27 January 1620; informations preparatoires

(1) Jean Clauchier de Dompierre, c. 80

On Whit Tuesday nearly 3 years before, following 'feste annale', the young men 'faisoient des tours de ville au son des menestriers'. Nicolas Adam was playing his 'hautbois', but also 'renioit dieu par fois et a autre niroit et blasphemoit la mort, la chair, et la teste de Nre. Seigneur'. When witness reproached him 'charitablement', he attacked him, and had to be restrained by witness's wife and brother-in-law. Then menaced him that 's'il ne le pouvoit avoir ouvertement, il l'auroit et attraperoit par la cheminée'. Next day fell ill, losing appetite and use of limbs. Sick for six weeks; recovered after sending offering to bel Bernard.

(2) Bastien Hanna de Dompierre, c. 24

Previous summer, around St. Jean, had been in fields with cart. Saw Nicolas (from whom he had been trying to collect a debt) and another man, then found a hare running near his cart. Thought that Nicolas might have transformed himself into hare, and that animal was to procure or foretell some harm. Said to hare 'Nicolas Adam je te cognois bien, s'il arrive quelque fortune sur moi, ou mes chevaux, je te publieray et t'accuseray si tost que je seray en ville'. Animal promptly disappeared.

(3) Nicolas Hanna de Dompierre (previous maire), c. 28

Some 18 months before had gone to abbey of Chaulmonsey to do some business with abbot, in company with another, but this had nothing to do with Nicolas Adam personally. On return passed by Vadeville, where Adam was playing at 'feste'; was seen by him, and told that he would repent of what he had done. 3 weeks later a horse, sent to graze in herd guarded by Adam, became ill and died same night. Believed Adam to have caused this by witchcraft, and also earlier death of a cow after quarrel over some oats.

(4) Demenge Pretamol de Dompierre, c. 50

Told how 6 years earlier Nicolas had returned at 2 a.m. from playing at feste of Bul; when he reached his house he called out to his wife that someone was trying to kill him, and she should open the door at once. When he went to enquire next day, saw his face was scratched; wife replied that 'un gros noir homme' had chased him trying to steal money he had gained by playing. Subsequently called him witch during a quarrel, without receiving any reply.

(5) Jean Colignon le Vieux, de Dompierre, c. 60

Six years before his daughter-in-law had quarrelled with Adam's wife Jannon; subsequently became sick, and died after a year. Believed this to have been result of bewitchment by Adam. Had previously asked Adam if she would have any more children, her only child being dead; he replied falsely that she would not. Repeated story of late return from Bul, as in (4) above.

(6) Florentin Cole de Dompierre, c. 60

Confirmed story told by Jean Clauchier (1st witness); Adam had called him 'vieux diable'. Witness had been to make offering on his behalf to bel Bernard at Vic.

(7) Jean Micquay de Dompierre, c. 40

Some 18 years before Adam had suspected him and his companion, who had been at feste where he was playing, of stealing a couple of tartes from him, quite wrongly. Had later been informed by others that Adam had said they would never go to feste together again. Next year, as feast approached, both fell ill. Companion (Claudon Demengeot) died; he was ill for 3 years. Believed Adam to have caused this.

(8) Demenge Durand demeurant a Dompierre, c. 36

Told of death of Nicolas Hanna's horse some 18 months earlier; Adam had been helping him to guard herd at that time, and had previously quarrelled with Hanna.

(9) Nicolas Ozele de Cugniécourt, c. 30

Said that on Sunday after last St. Martin, at Ognieville, Adam had admitted he was a witch on accusation of Jean Grand Maire of that village; said 'Monsieur j'en serois bien net, sans un meschant homme de Sercueur, qu'on appelloit Bernard.'

(10) Jean Ozele de Vimesnil, c. 33

Reported same conversation at Ognieville previous 11 November; Jean Grand Maire had asked Adam about rumours concerning his witchcraft, and he had replied 'qu'il en seroit bien net sans un certain qui luy avoit appris a sonner du hault bois.'

(11) Nicolas Jean Blot de Dompierre, c. 30

Told how after playing on last Whit Tuesday Adam had invited young men to a 'collation'; had not gone because one of their number, Adam Binaud, said he preferred to go home. Adam threatened that he would repent, and he had soon

developed an illness from which he was still suffering; witness and others suspected that Adam had bewitched him.

(12) Clement Villemin jeune homme de Grandiviller, c. 25

Adam had accompanied him to feste at Dignonville, and told him that the late Bastienne wife of Jean Brisay d'Aidoile, executed as a witch, had accused him. Said he didn't know what to do; witness said that if he were 'homme de bien' he had nothing to fear. On return harped on same subject; said he might 'se retirer'. Two others were about to be executed, and one would see what they said.

(13) Antoine Binaud de Grandiviller, jeune homme, c. 24

Had various illnesses while in service at Dompierre, one of which he blamed on Adam, since it followed his refusal to lend him 6 ecus or stand surety for a loan of wheat. Repeated evidence of previous witness about conversations on way to Dignonville.

(14) Antoine Binaud d'Aidoile, c. 40

Gave much fuller account of events at Dignonville. He had been drinking with others when Adam came to play an aubade 'Lequel d'abord proposa qu'il ne sonneroit jamais plus feste que celle la, que luy ayant esté demandé par George Grand Maire de Padoux, pourquoy il tenoit tels propos, il dist pour ce qu'un soir ou un matin on l'iroit prendre prisonnier, a quoy Jean Grand Maire repartit qu'il ny avoit moyen qu'il fust sorcier, et qu'il en donneroit bien caution pour luy, Chose que George Grand Maire contredit, et luy adressant sa parole allegoit qu'il voioit bien qu'il estoit sorcier, et alors ledit Adam en perdant toute contenance et laissant tomber son hault bois dit qu'il n'y avoit pas trop grand'assurance, Occasion que luy qui parle repartit que s'il estoit sorcier il avoit donc apprins cela d'un certain Bernard vagabond, qui parfois logeoit a Sercueur, Ce qu'il advoua librement, en disans que neanmoins il n'avoit oncq' fait mal audit Dompierre. Que le lendemain en suite de telle confession, qui fust aussitost sceue de plusieurs, Antoine Villemin pria luy qui parle d'assentir de luy s'il n'estoit vray qu'il luy eut donné le mal, duquel il est encor presentement detenu, et qu'a ce sujet l'ayant tiré a part, et luy proposé le fait, Mesme de le guerir en paiant, il fit response qu'il y adviseroit, Qu'au surplus il y a plus de seize ans que par bruit commun il est soubconné du crime de sortilege.'

(15) Mongete femme Nicolas Claudon de Fontenay, c. 48

Another report of same conversation. Said that she and others had tried to console him when he said he would have to leave bailliage because of the accusation. He said 'qu'estant apprehendé on luy feroit sentir les tourments de la question et qu'il ne pourroit plus gaigner sa vie de sa pratique qu'il aimoit trop mieux mourir, et qu'alors il prieroit nous prevost de luy faire bander ses yeux, et puis l'harquebuser, afin de n'endurer tant de peines.'

(28 January 1620)

(16) Honorable Jean Grand Maire tabellion de Dogneville, c. 28

Agreed that he had defended Adam when someone 'commença a luy faire la guerre, en luy disant qu'il estoit sorcier et qu'ils le scavoient bien'. Adam had said he didn't believe he was a witch, but if he were accused he would wish to be blindfolded, placed against a wall, and shot. (Signed by witness).

(17) Bastien Begel lieutenant de maire de Dignonville, c. 50

Told how when he was entertaining family and friends on evening of feast, Adam had told them he would have to leave bailliage of Vosges, on account of accusation by a woman of Aidoile he didn't even know; could only explain this on basis of having once frequented 'un certain vagabond nommé Mre Bernard, y adioustant qu'il faisoit beau hanter bonne compagnie.' (Signed by witness).

(18) Jean Bocquel le Jeune de Dignonville, c. 38

Reported how Adam had spoken about accusation when in his father's house; said 'estant a table, et touchant sur son pect, qu'il avoit la un mauvais morceau, a cause de l'accusation qu'avoit fait contre luy une femme d'Aidoile . . . que s'il scavoit et estoit entaché en quelque chose de cela, le fait seroit provenu de ce qu'il auroit autresfois hanté un certain Mre Bernard vagabond, qui en estoit soubconné, et puis a l'instant se reprenant adioustoit ces mots, mais toutesfois je n'en scay rien, et que si pour ce cas il estoit apprehendé il desireroit qu'il fust applicqué a un arbre et y harquebusé, pour eviter les rigueurs de prison et de la question, et qu'au surplus il le recogneut tousiours pensif, et d'un mantien peu asseuré.' (Signed by witness).

(19) George Bocquel de Dignonville, 30

Told how Adam had been sad at table in Bastien Begel's house; witness had taken him aside and said he had never seen harm in him, and it was strange he was now accused of witchcraft. Adam replied that it was on account of suspicions against one named Topinot (now dead) and Mre Bernard; had now decided to flee for fear of arrest 'a raison aussy que n'ayant gueres d'assurance il seroit tout aussy tost espouvanté.' (signed by witness).

(20) Humbert Berton de Dignonville, c. 30

Nothing to depose.

(21) Humbert Rodot de Dignonville, c. 24

Nothing to depose.

(22) Florentin Brisat de Dignonville, c. 26

Had heard Adam express dismay at accusation, but maintain innocence.

(23) Bastien Rodat jeune fils de Dignonville, c. 18

Had heard Adam say that if he was a witch he had never harmed man or beast. (Signed by witness).

(24) Curien Gonnell de Dignonville, 21.

Nothing to depose.

(25) Alix femme de Jean Becquol de Dignonville, c. 50

Told how she had tried to console Adam, telling him that as 'homme de bien' he had nothing to fear; 'lequel pour response allegua qu'il alloit souvent mal a ceux, qui estoient detenus de justice, et en seroit ainsy de luy cela arrivant par ce qu'il n'avoit point de front ny de deffense.' If he saw things were going badly, had decided to take instruments and seek refuge with brother near St. Nicolas.

(26) Marie femme de Jean Bocquel le jeune de Dignonville, c. 45

Told how on day after feast Adam had come and confided in her as she 'tramoit du lin'; told her of accusation, and how it originated in his having served a master who was suspect, although he had seen no harm in him. She tried to console him 'et mesme l'advisa de se retirer si vray qu'Il fust entaché dudit cas'. He said he was almost resolved to take his small child and go, although none in Dompierre wished him harm.

(27) Libaire femme de Bastien Begel, c. 30

General account of conversation in her house. Adam had claimed to have chapelet which he said every day.

29 January 1620. Substitut for PG des Vosges orders arrest of accused, in view of evidence that he would flee. Order from George Milot, prévôt of Bruyères, to two sergents to carry out arrest.

31 January 1620; interrogation

Said he was Nicolas Adam, native of Pallegney, bailliage d'Espinal, resident of Dompierre, aged about 45. First wife Jennon Besdel - one son - second Jennon Jean Baiche of Cugnécourt - three children, oldest now 12. Agreed - after initial denial that he knew cause of arrest - that he had been accused by Bastienne veuve Jean Brehey.

Admitted swearing at Whit Tuesday celebrations 3 years earlier, but said this had harmed no-one, and he had later confessed it. Had been rebuked by Jean Clanchier, but claimed that it was Clanchier who had attacked him and thrown him

down. Also admitted threatening 'qu'il l'attraperoit, et fut il aussy grand que sa cheminée, et non que ce seroit par la cheminée.'

Denied various other charges. In respect of illness of Jean Collignon's daughter-in-law, said that both Collignons had told him they suspected Thomasse, previously a prisoner. Admitted some parts of conversations at Dignonville, but with important reservations.

Claimed that Anthoine Villemin had later agreed that he had taken ill 'en s'eschauffant'. Denied having intention of flight; had thought of going to consult his brother.

4 February 1620; confession

On hearing that Adam was now prepared to confess, judges went back to château of Bruyères. Said 'que sont six ans a la Sainte Semaine se retrouvant fort necessiteux de grain pour son entretènement et de sa famille, il s'achemina au village de Padoux Bailliage d'Espinal, pour y en prendre, par prest, credit, ou autrement, et que neantmoins personne ne l'en auroit voulu accommoder, occasion qu'il s'en retourna tout fashé et contristé. . . ' Met devil by wood called la Voivre, and agreed to serve him and renounce God, against promise to give him wheat and make him rich. Soon repented, and made confession at Easter to curé or a neighbour who was helping him, 'et en eut telle et sy bonne contrition que depuis il n'en a esté inquieté, et ne la reveu ny ouy.'

Then became 'roidy et opiniastre'; would confess no more.

5 February 1620

Now began to confess freely. Had been often to sabbat, sometimes weekly; had either walked or been transported by Devil. Many people there, but he had always been a little way off playing hautbois for the dance, and had not seen them well. Feast consisted only of tasteless meat; fire seemed to have little strength, and didn't know whether it had been used for cooking. Nothing to drink, no bread or salt, 'Mais que tousiours luy ny ladite assistance n'y restoient, et n'en retournoient guieres joyeux, parce qu'ilz voyoient bien qu'ils estoient trompés.'

At first claimed that he had taken diabolical powders only to throw them on fire; judges objected that it was well known the devil beat those who acted thus, and he admitted various maléfices. Had made Jean Clauchier ill after their dispute. Had killed Bastienne wife of Jean Collignon by putting powder in her drink after a quarrel. Had killed Nicolas Hanna's horse because Hanna 'l'avoit tansé'.

Denied any other malefices. Had not been able to recognise any accomplices, since they were all masked.

6 February; confirmed earlier confessions.

7 February: now claimed that he had seen two people at Sabbat; Demenge Demengeot, miller of Dompierre, who was old and had a white beard and white hair, and Thomasse wife of Jean Poirat of Dompierre, who had been arrested earlier, and had now abandoned her husband and fled. Started to waver when it was suggested he should be confronted with Demengeot - wasn't sure of identification.

Said he was frightened that Demengeot would revenge himself on his children if he heard of accusation. Having again said he was a witch, started to waver afresh about both him and Thomasse.

10 February; repeated accusations against Demengeot and Thomasse; denied suggestion by judges that there had been some deal with former under which he had promised to assist his children if he kept quiet.

14 February 1620; PG of Vosges asks for death sentence.

15 February; Change de Nancy approves

19 February; sentence carried out.

Inventory taken on 9 February showed that all property had already been sold, even room where accused lived had been sold to Didier Mengin, and mortgaged to Bastien Chonte of Padoux. Clothes, bed, and utensils only worth 16 francs; along with credit note for 30 francs made up entire product of confiscation, which had to be shared between Duke and Abbey of Remiremont.