

Witch 208, Mengeon Claude Perrin 1

B 8687 no 10; witch 208, Mengeon Claude Perrin de Brehimont

13 January 1600; confronted with Jean fils feu Demenge Arnoulx, of Sauceray, and Barbeline veuve Demenge Mareschal, also of Sauceray, who both maintained accusations.

12 December 1600; informations preparatoires

(1) Jean Grand Didier, laboureur, 40

Long reputation, no personal suspicion.

(2) Demengeon Claude Girard, laboureur

Reputation 16 years, mother also suspected. 3 years earlier had been on way to church at Nompateize with other bourgeois of villages(including accused), when they started talking about way he had enclosed common land. Witness spoke up, saying Perrin had done this, and even enclosed place where dead animals were buried; when he replied by denying any such act, said he was an evil man and his acts were clear to everyone. Never sought reparation, but 'le regarda des yeulx de travers avec grincements de dentz', which showed his intention of avenging himself. Within a few days he had a fine mare killed in strange fashion, which he suspected had been his witchcraft. 12 years earlier had taken him to court because he had encroached on a field, and obtained judgement against him, over which he was very angry. For next year his horses became unmanageable when harnessed, and he had various accidents and injuries on the road; put about his suspicions that this was Perrin's doing, and suddenly the problem ceased. Previous year had enclosed a piece of land to make a field for young animals, and Perrin raised various objections although he had no interest in the matter. Had a dozen calves in the field, some of which went lame, and even died, so suspected this too had been his witchcraft.

(3) Colas Claude Girard, laboureur, 50

10 or 11 years earlier Perrin had prevented him taking cartload of hay through his meadow, and they had a fight, after which Perrin told him he would repent (in presence of Demenge Colas Girard and his wife). Later that day came to find witness, who was with animals, and asked him to kill him, saying 'que s'il le tuoit dieu luy auroit faict une belle grace d'estre ainsy tué', to which he replied that he would do no such thing, and it would be much better if the devil killed him. A few days later a cow died strangely, which he imputed to his witchcraft.

9 years ago had similar quarrel when he passed through meadow, and Perrin threatened him, wishing he might be buried in the field. Same day his children were guarding animals when a wolf appeared and tried to attack the children; witness rushed up on cart to help them, and wolf fled, but only to a certain distance. As he looked at it he thought it was Perrin transformed into a wolf, and still believed this to have been the case. Same day heard him say that he wished the devil had carried off the animals of the maire Michiel, which grazed around his meadow, and that Michiel was buried there; immediately after these threats a horse belonging to the maire broke its leg in the stable.

A year later had quarrel with him as they left church, and 2 or 3 days later suddenly fell ill, whole body covered with 'petites boutteilles comme du feu vottage', and in such pain that he said to his wife 'que c'estoit faict de luy, et qu'il

estoit perdu'. She put holy water on his hands, which immediately became better, then treated whole body similarly, at which he made complete recovery. A few days later she fell ill in different fashion, and languished for some 15 weeks. During this time Perrin told children of witness that she would not die until the leaves fell, and this caused him to say in public that he would do nothing until he saw if his wife died as Perrin had predicted; if she did he would complain to the seigneur and the officials. Once Perrin heard of this his wife made a sudden recovery, which increased his suspicion that this had been his witchcraft.

- (4) Catherine femme Jean Thierion le jeune, 30

Reputation 11 years (residence); no personal suspicion.

- (5) Halbix femme Demenge Colas Girard, 50

Long reputation, and sister already executed; no personal suspicion.

- (6) Didielle femme Colas Claude Girard, 36

Reputation 20 years (residence). 4 years earlier her husband had quarrelled with him, and he said he would repent. A few days later something like a wind surrounded her in her house, and she fell down. Next night this happened again, except that she was in bed, and felt as if she was being strangled. When she got up felt pain in feet, which then extended to much of body, and was ill for some 2 years. Had always thought this was his witchcraft, and more so because he asked one of her daughters how she was, and when she replied she was very ill and might die said she would not die so soon. Finally recovered, although still suffering from back and stomach pains.

While still ill had dragged herself to back of house to get some air, and saw him in adjoining garden, so called him 'meschant sorcier', complaining that he made her languish for a long time, and ought to heal her. He said nothing, although he could hear her. Mengeon Galdrimy of l'Hoste du Bois told her that his wife had been strangely ill at same time as she was, and one day when he came to house accused him of having bewitched her and the witness. He replied by asking 'sy elle pensoit qu'il donne du mal a des personnes, et que c'estoit une sotte'.

- (7) Marguitte femme Jean Laurent, 46

Long reputation, no personal suspicion.

- (8) Marguitte femme Didier Seigaire, 40

Reputation 12 to 15 years. 3 years earlier her daughter Barbeline and the daughter of Claudon Jean Perrin were guarding their animals, and some got into meadow of accused. He chased them out with threats, and as they were fleeing down a road a hare passed in front of them several times. It then vanished, and they saw Perrin in front of them with a spade on his shoulders; were so frightened they took another way and went back to village to tell story. Girl was trembling with fear the whole night, thinking she saw Perrin and the hare around her, but was better next day and came to no harm, thanks to God.

- (9) Estiennatte, femme Colas Ferry, 40

Reputation 10 to 12 years; no personal suspicion.

(10) Catherine femme Jean Girard, 30

Reputation 15 years (residence); had suffered great losses of animals, but did not suspect him because he had not threatened them.

(11) Peccatte femme Demengeon Claude Girard, 40

Reputation 15 years. Same story as husband about how Perrin had been angry about their making place for young animals, which she explained as being because he had wanted to rent the field himself - losses of calves followed. Also suspicions over other losses of animals.

(12) Dieudonné Jean Thierion, 30

18 months before he had sold a pig to his father, and a week later mother told him it was bewitched after being in front of Perrin's house, dying same day.

(13) Marguitte femme Jean Thierion le vieux, 70

Reputation 18 years. 12 years earlier had been very angry when they bought a meadow he wanted, and a few days later lost a fine mare, which they had always imputed to his witchcraft. 18 months earlier had been very angry with her after hearing report that she had prevented his marriage to widow of Ydoux Grand Didier of la Vacherie; a pig got into his porch, and died after returning home, which she again thought was his witchcraft, as she did losses of some other animals following quarrels. 10 years before she and other women were on way back from market at St Dié with Barbeline veuve Demenge Mareschal, later executed as a witch, who told them Perrin had been to the devil more than 7 times, and still went.

(14) Jean Laurent, laboureur, 49

Reputation 10 to 12 years; no personal suspicion.

(15) Claudon Jean Perrin, 50

4 years earlier his young daughter Jennon had been to fetch animals when Perrin met her; called her ribaulde, saying she had accused him of taking pears from their tree, then put hand to ground and took form of a wolf, running after her. She rushed home, and was in such a frightened state for 2 days that they were afraid she would be ill; had always continued to say she had seen him transform himself into a wolf.

(16) Jean Grand Michiel Ratonge, 40

Reputation 8 years (residence); no personal suspicion.

(17) Jean Perrin, 50

Reputation only since execution of sister from La Chapelle a few years earlier, 'et ne luy a point ouy tenir de propos qui ressent son sorcier', except that 6 years earlier he had dispute over amount a man from Grandviller charged for castrating 2 bullocks, and finally said that another time he would take them to the devil to be done rather than pay so much. Those who heard this were scandalized, and he had not thought well of him since.

(18) Jean fils Jean Thierion le vieux, 25

Reputation as long as could remember. When his father, still under arrest, was tortured, Perrin sought out witness and asked him to see father as he was taken to St Dié for execution, so that he could beg him not to accuse anyone wrongly. This made him think that Perrin feared he would be accused.

(19) Demenge Colas Girard, 50

Reputation several years, and 5 or 6 years earlier he had refused to go and work some days for him, at which he said he would repent, and he lost several animals, although he could not affirm he had been cause.

(20) Jean Girard, 40

Reputation 16 years; no personal suspicion, since he had avoided quarrels with him.

(21) Jean Symon, 36

Reputation 16 years; he himself had many losses, but did not know who to suspect.

(22) Colas Mariatte, de Sauceray, 50

Reputation 15 or 16 years; 10 or 12 days earlier had asked witness if he had any news of Jean Thierion. When told the rumour was he would shortly be tortured, said he was a poor man, and ought to let himself die in prison. When witness suggested this would be difficult even if he wished it, he repeated that he could easily do it, without saying how. A year earlier, when Marion from Sauceray was being taken for execution at St Dié, having accused him, he and others met her on way, and Perrin asked why she had accused him. She reminded him that long before he had asked her not to accuse him if she was arrested, promising her some wheat and that he would take care of her children, at which he retired in confusion.

(23) Jennon fille Claudon Jean Perrin, 14

2 years before had reported seeing him taking pears from a tree which belonged to her father and others. A few days later went to garden to fetch a pig which had strayed when Perrin met her, called her 'ribaulde et trompiere', saying that this time he would have her, then transformed himself into guise of a wolf and chased her on four legs, still saying he would have her. She was quick enough to get into house, and looked back to see he had vanished, although up to then had been within 5 or 6 paces of her. Was troubled for 2 days after, thinking that she saw him chasing her in form of wolf.

(24) Mengeon Galdrimey, de La Salle, 40

4 years earlier Perrin's son had asked for his sister in marriage, but his friends persuaded him he should not give her to the son of a witch, so marriage was broken off. He was very angry with the witness and his wife, and she immediately became very ill, remaining so for 2 years, and saying he had bewitched her. One day he came to house for no obvious reason, and she accused him of having bewitched her, to which he only said that was what she thought. Died still maintaining he had bewitched her.

13 December 1600; interrogation and confrontations

Said he was laboureur aged about 60; knew he had been accused by Jean Thierion, but he did him great wrong. Told that others had accused him previously, said they too did him wrong. Agreed he had been suspected for some years, notably since execution of his sister. In response to charges kept saying that good Christians did not do such things, and did not have the power.

Asked to be confronted again with Jean Thierion, who maintained his charges, and said that he suspected him of killing several of his animals. When he spoke to him about this he laughed and said 'qu'il avoit donc bien heu de la chair pour manger'. Perrin appeared astonished at this, then asked that they should seek out Mr d'Etival and offer him 100 francs so that he could be released and sent home; otherwise they should put him to death, but he would die a good Christian.

No reproaches to any witnesses. Continued to deny all charges, except that he now admitted saying someone could die if they wanted - this was by refusing all food..

After confrontations was exhorted again to tell truth, and said he would like to say something, but was afraid that this would harm his children and lead to confiscation of his property. Was told that he should think above all of his soul, and that Mr d'Etival was a good seigneur who would treat his children generously.

Now said that 2 years before had been putting up a fence when a big man in a long coat of green appeared, saying his name was Persin. The suddenly said 'qu'il sera prins a bricquet parce que ne nous voudrons contanter de cela, ains luy ferons dire encore autres choses, et vault mieulx qu'il se taise.' Then would only say 'qu'il a ja trop parlé, et veoit bien que le voullons surprendre', asking again that he be allowed to make an accord.

15 December 1600; Change de Nancy approves torture

18 December 1600; interrogation under torture

Given thumbscrews, then racked, finally given tortillons, when he asked to be set down. Tried again to get accord for 100 francs, but when refused started to confess. Said he had been seduced by Persin 15 years earlier, and promised so much money he would never want. Gave him money which turned out to be oak leaves, and black powder. Tried this out on a pig and a horse of his own, which both died.

Admitted causing loss of mare and illness of Colas Claude Girard, but not illness of his wife. Denied causing misfortunes of Demengeon Claude Girard, saying this must have been some other witches. Had killed animals of Jean Thierion

le vieux, a cow of Colas Curien Ferry, and a calf of Jean Symon. Had caused fatal illness of Mengeon Galdrimey's wife.

Admitted turning himself into form of wolf with grease given him by his master, and chasing both daughter of Claudon Jean Perrin and children of Colas Claude Girard.

Had been to sabat more times than he could say. Those he had seen included long list of those already executed; only ones not very familiar are wife of Jean Gerard l'Huillier of la Bourgonce and one called la Tabouratte of Nompateize. The living were Jean Grand Didier alias Remeguey of la Vacherie, Henriat Mathieu of la Bourgonce, the wife of Jean Perrin of le Mesnil, and Mariatte veuve Curien Willaume of Sauceray.

Usual description of dancing, feasting, and hailmaking. Jean Gelyat and Mathieu Claude were greatest masters at sabsats, and had directed hail, notably great hailstorm some 6 or 7 years back. Sometimes went on foot, other times his master carried him. Gave annual chicken not to have to go more often. Cooking done by 'diablotins', but inedible because of lack of bread, salt, and herbs. Were 6 or 7 devils present, of whom Persin was the leader. Said that ringing bells was protection against hail, and that Persin would send it to one side or the other; when he had been margulier of their parish of St Michiel for 3 years some 25 years earlier had rung bells so diligently when he saw clouds that they never suffered any damage.

Said that Persin had been in his body during early stages of torture, preventing him feeling pain, but had left when tortillons were applied.

19 December 1600; interrogation

Repeated earlier confessions.

29 December 1600; repeated confessions, then handed over by inhabitants to duke for sentence.

2 January 1601; death sentence from Change de Nancy