

Witch 279; B 8715 no 2, Epon veuve Jean Charbonatte, de Sachment

12 June 1615; informations preparatoires taken by Prévôt of Saint Dié, at request of PG de Lorraine's substitut, against Epon, widow of Jean Charbonatte, of the village of Sachment.

(1) Bastien Colas George de Sachment, c. 30

Reputation more than 20 years. Previous winter she had come to his house and asked servants for milk, and come and gone among animals; when it was refused 'commença a dire qu'on luy refusoit du laict, qu'on en bailloit bien a d'autres, et qu'on s'en pourroit bien repentir'. 2 or 3 days later a bull worth 50 francs, which had been well previous night, was found in morning lying down so that 6 men could not raise it. Because of suspicions he and others had of her, took advice that he should seek bread and salt from her house. She gave him this, and bull seemed to recover on eating it, only to become sick again a few hours later, and finally die.

(2) Michiel fils à Mengel de la Hault, de Sachment, c. 32

Told of incident some 18 months earlier when a daughter-in-law of the accused had come to their house, and reported how shortly before her mother-in-law had got up (they shared house) during night when it was thundering, to do something with a cauldron under bed. Next day husband of this woman (la Royenne) had accused his mother of having been to sabbat by the 'cramet'.

About a week later witness was one of a group talking in the street when Epon came up; he made reference to this incident without naming her, then she seemed to cry and said 'qu'on faisoit quelque fois bien grand tort aux personnes'. Two or three days later became ill, with swollen neck and throat; when he had not improved after a week and could find no cure, remembered words he had said to Epon, and her long and great reputation. Thinking she might have made him ill, went to seek something from her house; she left hurriedly when she saw him coming, but daughter-in-law gave him yeast, salt and 'joutte', which he ate, and immediately began to recover.

(3) Claudon Grinel de Sachment, c. 50+

Reputation 6 or 7 years. Some three years before she had come to ask for something from his cow, but servants told her they could not give it without their master's permission - in any case he often did make gifts when she came to house. She was discontented, and soon afterwards (1-2 days) a pig worth 6 francs sickened, dying within a week. Believed that if she were a witch this had been her doing, the more because after pig's death she ceased to frequent house as she had previously done. On another occasion had asked his daughter to make some toile for her, only to be told that she didn't have time at present; this was followed within a few days by sickness and death of a foal worth 8 ecus.

(4) Claudatte femme de Colas Claudon Grainel, 60+

Epon had been resident more than 30 years, and always suspected as a witch. Some 2 years before one of her sons had died, and after customary dinner following burial Epon had come to beg; dissatisfied with plate of millet she was given (and ate), but witness told her everything else had been eaten, and she went away

without showing any resentment. 5 or 6 days later witness began to suffer terrible pains in face, with mouth twisted almost backwards - still not completely cured. Had been told by neighbours that some 'egiptiens' who had been in village declared it was witchcraft, and therefore suspected Epron.

(5) Elizabeth femme à Claude Marie de Sachment, c. 34

Reputation 10 years (residence). Some 18 months before Epron had come to her house while she was out, but her mother was baking, and did some baking herself. Servants told witness that she had passed and repassed in front of animals, and now a bull was ill. She sent her mother with message that if Epron did not take sickness off the animal, she would have her arrested. This was passed on through son-in-law, and next day she came to say that she was a good woman, and was distressed to be blamed for illness she had not caused. Witness replied 'que suivant le mauvais bruit qu'elle portoit elle l'en soubconnoit, que sy toutesfois elle estoit femme de bien comme elle disoit qu'elle la laissoit pour telle aussy'. Same day the bull began to recover.

(6) Claudon Colas le viel homme, de Sachment, c. 32

Reputation very strong. Some 9 or 10 years earlier, after his wife had given birth, they had held customary feast for women, to which Epron was invited as neighbour. Didn't know if she had felt neglected, and had also heard that she was discontented because they gave her nothing to take to her sick husband; same day his wife became unwell and lost her milk. Midwife recommended that they seek remedy from a woman of Souche, so he went to see her. She gave him some bread and something else he didn't know, and said that wife should eat a little of this for nine days. Also said that if they suspected someone of causing illness, and she came to house before dinner offering something to eat, his wife should have no fear about accepting and eating it, because it would help her. As they were at dinner same clay Epron appeared with some cherries for his wife; when she ate them her appetite returned, and she made a quick recovery. Had often called her witch after this, and was sure she had heard of this, but had never taken any action.

(7) Catherine veuve de Fleurant Hagimont, de Sachment, c. 60

Always suspected since residence. Some 10 years before, when they were neighbours, she was raising 5 goat kids; Epron also had some, and one day when they were all together she remarked that those of the witness were better than hers. It was after this that they went blind, their eyes literally dropping out, and she had to sell them as best she could – thought that if Epron were a witch she might have caused this through envy.

(8) Jean Masson de Sachment, 40

During 9 years he had been resident had always heard her suspected. Some 7 years before had bought half of her house, and while moving in started to get violent headaches. These returned at 3-day intervals for some 11 weeks, after which he had seemed cured, only to have a relapse when working in Allemagne. Returned home, and told Epron and her husband of his affliction, saying that he had been told of someone in Burgundy who would identify the person who had caused it. Went to do so, and got as far as Remiremont, where 'il eut ung remord de conscience, et pensa

en luy mesme que c'estoit mal fait d'aller ainsy au devin, que comme il soupconnoit ladite prevenue dudit mal, ad cause du bruict qu'elle portoit d'estre sorciere, s'en ayant descouvert a elle et a sondit marit, peult estre elle luy pourroit apporter quelque remede'. Did in fact recover on return home.

Around same time had shared out garden; Epron's husband was too ill to participate, so he did it himself in her presence, but she was apparently discontented and complained to others that he hadn't done it fairly. Thought she had caused death of two goats as a result. On another occasion a third goat, which had been giving abundant milk, started to lose this, so that he sold it - his wife had been giving Epron milk from the animal, but perhaps not enough.

(9) Mengeon Chandel de La Hault, de Sachment, c. 35

General reputation. Some 7 years earlier, after his mother's death, she had come to ask if there were any of her clothes she could have; he replied that he had no right to give them to anyone but his sisters, who had far more claim to them than any stranger did. She then said 's'il ne vouloit point donner qu'il le laisse, et qu'elle luy pourroit coster trois fois plus que ce qu'il luy donneroit pourroit valloir'. 2 or 3 days later a fine 2-year-old bull died. Had lost another bull some 6 weeks earlier, after which he had threatened her with having her taken to St. Dié and tried as a witch; since then she had not visited his house as she ordinarily did.

(10) Bastien Jean Chesne de Sachment, c. 32

In 7 years he had been resident had always heard her reputed a witch. She had married his wife's father, so that they now lived together. Around St. Jean 2 years before. during thunderstorm in night, had heard a voice calling her to go out; she got out of bed, and when asked next day gave unconvincing explanation about taking milk off fire. This had made him suspect her the more. She had also told him that she was often called witch, and didn't know what to do about this; he said that she should seek redress if she was 'femme de bien', 'autrement sy elle l'enduroit, qu'on l'apprehendroit quelques jours, et luy feroit on son proces, laquelle sur ce luy replicquoit qu'elle estoit seulle, et n'avoit aulcune deffence ny adsistance pour ce faire.'

20 June 1615; interrogation

Said she was about 60, a poor widow who did day labour or begged to support herself. Daughter of Colas Martin of Chanry in Ban de Tantrux. Last husband had been Jean Chesne alias Charbonnatte, who had died three years earlier; he had been carpenter, mason, cooper and charcoal burner. They had lived peacefully together with 'fort bon accord ensemble'. Had two children by him, one of whom was alive, being about 18 and keeping horses towards Val de Moustier in Allemagne. First husband had been Mongeon Mathieu of Tantrux, who had died after only 6 weeks of marriage; second Claudon Mengel of Sachment, who died after a year. Had a daughter by second, but she was 'innocente', and she had died a few years later - it had been a 'belle grace' of God to take her, in view of her infirmity. First husband had died of 'rouge nal' after being sick 4 days; had felt something in stomach, and had been very fearful that it had been caused by some 'mauvaises gens'. Second husband had been ill 8 days, and had told her that a certain Auparlier of Avould, with whom he had been in company there, had struck him on the head with a 'pot d'etain'. Her father-in-law had brought a case against Auparlier, in which she was a

party, and she had been told that he was to pay compensation, but she never received the 100 francs she was promised (200 were supposed to go to his children by previous marriage). Third husband had been ill for three years, emaciated and bedridden.

Said she was now very poor, owning only part of her house, and could hardly see, so that she now had to beg rather than work.

Agreed that she had been in house of Bastien Colas George on occasions; he had given her alms as a good man, but she did not remember precise visit described. Knew that he had been angry with her over sickness of bull, and had willingly given him bread and salt when he asked for it, but did not know what he had done with it. Also said that she knew that Michiel son of Mengel de la Hault had put it about that she had caused his illness - had left house when she saw him coming because she hated him on account of this. Her son-in-law had told her of accusation about Claude Marie's bull, but this had been in the morning, and she had later heard that it recovered during previous night.

Agreed that she had not been entirely satisfied over sharing of garden with Jean Masson, but had not wished him ill. As for death of his goats, she had numerous animals which died, but did not blame anyone 'et que ce sont fortunes qui arrivent, comme il plaist a dieu'. Claimed that she never used threats, nor even complained, when she was refused something, but went her way quietly.

Said that voice in the night would have been that of wife of Jean Jacot le Masson, who lived with her, and had wanted to put papers and holy water on fire on account of thunderstorm.

25 June 1615; interrogation and confrontations

No result; Epon continued to make sensible denials of crucial points, while often agreeing to circumstantial detail - in this respect was an unusually consistent case.

26 June 1615; additional witness

(11) Mengel Forbain, de Clemmency, c. 66

Claimed that some 3 years earlier, after childbirth, the accused had given some dried cherries to his daughter-in-law Mongeatte. She had immediately become ill, and had since remained 'chaitte ou etique', unable to work.

On confrontation Epon denied whole story. Further said that it was impossible to stop people speaking ill of others, and that her reputation as a witch came from 'les langues des meschans gens'.

4 July 1615; procureur general of Lorraine (C.M. Remy) asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire.

Approved same day by Change de Nancy.

July 1615; interrogation under torture

It was pointed out to her that there were numerous witnesses, to none of whom she had objected, also that she had recently been accused by a woman of Tantrux, had been taken to confrontation with her, and that the woman had maintained accusation up to her execution.

Said that the accusation had caused her to remember an occasion some 30 years before when an unknown man, dressed in black and like a soldier, had come into a room of her house at Sagemont when her husband was away, seized her, and had intercourse with her. He had not spoken to her, and had left immediately. Asked if at that time she had quarrelled with anyone, said that she did not remember it, although she had disputes with her husband because he spent too much on drink.

Given thumbscrews, then racked (noted that she endured much pain, but was resolute). Questioned repeatedly about episode with stranger; she declared at first that it had been rape, then said that he had promised her some money, so that she gave in more easily, but he had been a normal man like her husband. Denied any pact or malefice.

9 July 1613; interrogation

Now said that she had been thinking of man who had raped her, and thought it had been Vincent du Foire, of Ban-le-duc, whose wife had told her he ran after other women, and kept two or three. He was said on the village to be 'le thaurel ou voirel de la ville'.

14 July 1615; procureur general asks for further torture, but Change de Nancy rules that she should be renvoyée jusqu'à rappel, unless he produces further evidence against her

16 July 1615; note that she has been released with warning about future conduct.