

B 2199 no 3; witch 007, Collatte veuve Cesar Lorette, of Laitre-sous-Amance

26 October 1615; PG de Lorraine (C.M. Rémy) orders investigation into her reputation. This follows remonstrance from Noel Perrin, manouvrier of Laitre, who claimed that she had left to live with her son in Allemaigne, because of her bad reputation in Laitre. Had given power to son to settle affairs, and he had made deal with Perrin to sell a few goods left behind, and over usufruit of a room in the house Perrin had bought from her and her late husband. Now she was constantly molesting him with lawsuits, and since son-in-law was absent could not get attestation that he had power to settle matter. Asked that in view of reputation as witch she would not be allowed to return to Laitre until she had given satisfactory account of her conduct during her absence, and of arrangement with her son.

26 November 1615; informations preparatoires

(1) Mengin Richard, laboureur, 30

General reputation. Some 5 or 6 years earlier wife had fatal illness, during which she often said that it was her witchcraft. Followed incident when she had been working for his wife and asked for 'eschaude' she forgot to give her, over which she was very angry. Around same time heard her quarrel with la Grande Valentré and tell her she would repent, after which she fell ill and died, and he heard her claim this was witchcraft by accused.

(2) Thiebault Thiebault dit Patticier, vigneron, 50

Had come from Sercoeur about 20 years before, and become his neighbour. Shortly afterwards, as messier, caught her son stealing beans and took caution to officer; she came to his house angrily demanding its return, which he refused. She then looked at cradle with child in it and lifted linen, saying 'mon enfant ne voudrois tu pas bien estre mort'; witness said he would be very upset, let God preserve child, which was his first. Next day child fell ill, and neighbours who visited and heard about her words suggested he send for her. She refused to come, saying he was cause of the illness, and the child died next day. They subsequently had seven children, which all died of sudden illnesses; suspected this had been her witchcraft, since she was always quarrelling with his wife, 'jurant maugreant et maudisant contre icelle'.

(3) Marguerite femme du precedent, 50

Same story; said that when she told husband that death of child was their fault, it was 'les maulgrens et donnans au diable par plusieurs fois'. When she and her late husband lived at Sercoeur they were both reputed witches, and quarrelled with her uncle Chrespaille le Barry, who later fell from a tree and was killed. Often when quarrelling with witness she recalled this, saying 'qu'il y en avoit desté qu'avoient eus le col rompu, et qu'il y en auroit encor d'autres.' Had never had 'bonnes heures' while she was neighbour - always threatening them.

(4) Noel Perrin, manouvrier, 32

Said he could not say whether she was a witch, but she was a thief, and had stolen utensils and food when they lived in same house. Had several times called her witch, and she merely said she was as good as those who called her this.

(5) Simon Bretton, vigneron, 40

Had heard her called witch, but did not know if she was such; ordinarily found around gardens, 'rapinan et rompant les hayes'. Had once stolen logs from behind his house.

(6) Barbe, femme du precedent, 40

Le grand Thiebault had called her witch and accused her of causing death of child. Also reported theft of logs, after which she had begged mercy and returned some. Said she was 'fort mal plaisante, et qu'elle se scavoit bien revanchée'.

(7) Mengeotte, femme Nicolas Rémy, chartier, 22

During last wine harvest a horse had suddenly gone blind and died in 3 days, during which time accused had been to house asking for water twice, which she was not accustomed to do. Asked if husband was in fields with horse, although neighbour had told her it was ill. Suspected she was cause, partly because she often complained that they had bought her property cheaply while she was away in Allemaigne.

(8) Demenge Remy, huillier, 44

She had told him that several called her witch, complaining bitterly that she was not such, but lacked mean to avenge herself. He replied 'qu'elle se prenoit et querelloit a ung chacun, qu'elle vouloit avoir le hault bras partout'.

(9) Nicolas Remy, chartier, 30

Repeated wife's story of death of horse; during illness had not come to house as usual, and turned back on them. 5 years earlier 2 of his father's horses died suddenly, then he bought another horse at Brin, and having forgotten to give the 'denier dieu' there, gave it to the accused. She said that it had been hasty to say she had killed his father's horses, at which he was astonished and said he had no such opinion - as he had not. 2 weeks later his horse died, but this was result of a fall, and he had not suspected her.

(10) Honn homme Remy Dieudonné, cy-devant maire et échevin d'Amance, 80

General reputation; much feared. Had heard of suspicions by le Grand Thiebault, and of accusations that she had killed la grande Valentré.

(11) Nicolas Lyenal, manouvrier, 33

Reputation for 'mauvaise vie' and witchcraft. Had several times heard late Didier Bretton claim she had caused death of his wife, la Valentré, without giving motive. Had often seen her with dead wood from hedges, and did not know where she had taken this.

(12) Françoise femme du precedent, 30

10 years earlier had been arguing at an 'escraigne', where she had threatened she would give 'un plat de son mestier' to her husband, because they had quarrelled when he was working as salpétrier, and she claimed he had wronged her. Did not know if any harm had followed.

(13) George Hillaire, gentilhomme dit de la Grange, 45

Reputed witch and thief in Laitre and Sercoeur. Told story of quarrel with la grande Valentré and subsequent fatal illness and accusations.

27 November 1615; substitut for PG orders arrest

29 November 1615; PG orders interrogation and confrontations

2 December 1615; interrogation

Said she was 67, and had been widow for 8 years. Claimed not to know reason for imprisonment, and when asked if she was witch denied this. Also said she was not a thief, but admitted taking fruit and dead wood from gardens. Denied stealing utensils, but had stolen some logs and confessed this to the owner.

Agreed that she had been very angry with Thiebaut 20 years earlier, because he had not just taken caution from her son, but stripped him naked, adding that 'un faussaire ne doit sonner les cloches'. Had not lifted linen of baby, because there was none, but had said 'Bien mon fils sy tu viens a chef croistre, et que tu fusse devestu comme le mien', then left. Denied having been called to see child during sickness, but claimed neighbours told her its mother had frightened it. Agreed they had too many quarrels, and these had cost her money.

Asked about quarrels with Chrespaille le Barry, said these had been with husband, and le Barry had wanted to kill him. His fall had been when she was living at Laitre, and would not have happened if he had gone to Mass, or if he had not wanted to get a second birds' nest - had heard this was what he himself said.

Asked about occasion when Nicolas Remy gave her the 'denier dieu' for horse, agreed this had been case, and that Noel Perrin's wife was annoyed about this. Asked whether she thought he believed she had killed his father's horses, said no, but Perrin's wife suggested this to her, which was why she asked him. Had not known about subsequent death of the horse, but 'nous sommes tous subjects a fortunes ne sachant quant ny comment'.

Did not remember disputes with wife of Nicolas Lyenal, but he had dug further than he should in one of her rooms, taking up floor, and she threatened him with husband's halbard to make him leave.

2 December 1615; confrontations

Said Thiebault Thiebault was a murderer who had beaten her with a stone in her poisle, and 'un faussaire'; he admitted beating her. During reading of deposition she several times said he had lied like 'faussaire', then he added that some years before he had met her in street with apron full of beans. Started to beat her, calling her witch and accusing her of causing death of children and illness of wife, while saying that if she did not heal wife he would beat her until the devil carried her off.

She went and complained to her husband, who did not take much notice, until she said to him 'Jeunot, sorcier il te fault brusler, adquoy il luy fut repliquée que c'estoit une femme fascheuse et querelleuse, se prenant a un chacun, et qu'elle se feroit faire du mal.' Within a week his wife was completely cured, and was sure it had been her witchcraft - during illness wife was in such distress that she sometimes tried to take him by throat and strangle him.

In reply to his wife, said 'ne la vouloir maintenir femme de bien que selon les chansons qu'elle chantera elle luy respondra, disant arrogamment que les clerics ne scauroient chanter s'ilz ne scavent pleinement leurs charges'. Said that Noel Perrin was thief and murderer, but that she had no witness to this. Otherwise no reproaches, but continued to deny all charges.

12 December 1615; PG asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

14 December 1615; Change de Nancy approves

18 December 1615; interrogation under torture

Agreed that she had disputes with Thiebault, which had cost her money because of lawsuits between them. Had heard neighbours talking about fetching her during illness of child, but would not go because they had angered her too much.

Withstood thumbscrews and rack. Asked about disputes with Margueritte femme Mengin Richard, said she had no memory of these, but had several times begged alms from her, with no evil intention. Continued to deny, saying she would not confess even if drawn by 4 horses, and finally released.

Shortly afterwards judges were told she was now ready to confess. Said she had been witch for 2 years, seduced when living with son at Rodde, village on border of Allemaigne. Had quarrelled with daughter-in-law, who finally drove her from house, and was sleeping in wood at night when Persy found her and promised to help her. Met her again 2 weeks later as she was on way to seek alms at Guermange, and asked if her son had agreed to take her back, which she said he had. At another meeting near Languebert gave her money which proved to be oak leaves, and had intercourse with her. Had never been to sabat. Met him again on way back from feast at Sercourt at last St Laurent, where she had been begging. Twice met her on way from la Neuflotte and gave her powder, but she threw this away, and had never harmed anyone.

19 December 1615; interrogation

Confirmed previous confessions. Now admitted she had been to sabat twice, but could remember nothing much about first time. Second was at fontaine de Houditemps, where witches were said to meet, and were 7 or 8 other masked witches there. Danced back to back, and ate black soup and black, burned meat - she did not want this, and Persy allowed her to leave early because she had difficulty walking.

Had used powder to kill a horse belonging to late Nicolas Hugues, who had spoken harshly to her when she begged for alms, and another belonging to Remy Dieudonné, who had also spoken harshly to her when he met her on road.

23 December 1615; PG asks for death sentence, and Change de Nancy approves

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26 December 1615; had now accused la Vilaume and Mengeotte of Verhange as accomplices, saying she had not recognized them at sabat, but saw them on way home. Confronted with la Vilaume.

2 January 1616; formal death sentence from court at Amance