

B 2521 no 1; Witch 013, Jacotte femme Nicolas François Raon de Xennenay

29 April 1598; informations preparatoires, carried out by Nicolas Pirouel, prévôt d'Arches, at request of substitut for PG

(1) Nicolas Estiennon Boudart de Xennenay, c. 50

Said that 8 years before he had bought a plot of land from Demengeon de Ranfaing to build a house on, next to house of Nicolas Francois Raon. Jacotte had been very hostile, and tried to offer twice the price to prevent this - said 'qu'il luy empescheroit ses arbres, et boucheroit son jour, et qu'il s'en repentiroit'. A year later an ox died suddenly in his stable (worth 20 francs), and following year she came into house as he was feeding two pigs; passed between them on way out. One then died, other became so ill it had to be killed. Also blamed her for illness of his son Thienon; had been very robust until age of 12, but for last 4 years had been so ill that he could only walk with help of two sticks. Also blamed her for 5-week illness he had suffered himself, after she had spoken to him while he was sowing, asking 'si sa semence estoit belle'. Evil reputation for 25 or 30 years. Jacotte was 'mauvaise voisine, crainte et haye de tous ses voisins' - he had often heard them complain of 'desplaisir' she had done them.

(2) Jean Estienne Raon de Xennenay, 40

4 years before at next harvest, had a lawsuit with Jacotte after incident when he wanted to take manure to one of his fields. Finding public way closed, he had crossed her land; she was angry, and some 10 days later he lost an ox worth 28 francs. She had previously admired the animal, saying it was a pity he was not 'accouplé'. Asked if he thought she was a witch, said whole village feared her as such; she was 'femme riotteuse', and if any of her neighbours had a dispute with her, they always suffered some loss afterwards.

(3) Bertrand Jacot, granriere maire en la chambre du moulin, demeurant à Xennenay, 33

Some 8 years before had quarrelled with Raon family after planting of a hedge close to their 'challot'; 10 or 12 days later his animals were affected by illness. Lost 'toraxe' of 2 years worth 12 francs, two oxen worth 12 ecus, and a year later a cow worth 24 francs. At time of quarrel Jacotte said to him 'qu'il s'en repentiroit, que la cloison luy seroit bien chere'. Following year they again asked him to remove hedge, so that they could 'hanter plus librement allentour de leur challot', but he said it was on his land and it would stay. Six weeks later had a foal ill, and suspected Jacotte; said to her in presence of her late son Demenge that he believed her responsible, and if she didn't cure it he would have her taken and burned. Demenge said 'Hola, hola, votre poulain n'est pas encore perdu'. During dinner saw them go into his stable, and afterward found foal eating normally; later sold it for 36 francs 6 gros. Blamed subsequent loss of another mare on her, because they had been angry when he refused to sell them some land adjoining theirs, and later sold it to Jean Estienne Raon. When his wife asked her for advice about curing mare, on

way back from Lergle (?), she said they had lost several, and that they would lose several others. Always suspected of witchcraft, feared and hated by neighbours.

(4) Jean Demengeon Boudart de Xennenay, 45

Had quarrelled with Raons, but never blamed them for any losses; by common repute she was 'bien mauvaise femme', and suspected as witch.

(5) Marc Olry de Xennenay, 26

Some 4 or 5 years before Nicolas Francois Raon, or his servants had taken some sheaves of barley for tithe belonging to his late father Olry Marc Olry, and then been compelled to restore them. Jacotte had threatened that he would repent, and he had lost an ox and a cow from rabies. His father believed her responsible, and she had common reputation as witch.

(6) Thienon Blaise de Xennenay, 25

Told of quarrel over tithe of beans which Raon had been collecting 5 years earlier. Shortly afterwards had passed Jacotte on road, when he was going to Remiremont to have a sickle repaired; seized by great fear, and on return home was so ill he had to stay in bed for 8 days. During this time Jacotte visited him, but his father said 'qu'il estoit engenauché comme les autres', to which she replied 'qu'il n'avoit garde', and left. Believed she had been cause of his father's death, since he had claimed this during his sickness.

(7) Claudine femme a Jean Boudart de Xennenay, 50

Had heard Jacotte suspected of witchcraft during 20 years she had been resident. 2 or 3 years earlier her daughter Collette had told her that she was frightened of Jacotte who 'l'agacoit toujours', and she told her to make sign of the cross when she saw her. Later, when guarding village sheep, she felt something like a thorn in her foot, but could see nothing; became very painful, as high as knee. Believing Jacotte responsible, she shouted outside her house that if the person who had given her the illness didn't cure it quickly, she would go to Remiremont to complain and have them arrested. Soon after this the girl recovered.

(8) Jannon femme François Joliot, de Xennenay, 50

Told of dispute, two years ago in coming autumn, with Margueritte, Jacotte's daughter, who had taken fruit from tree in garden they rented. A month later she had fallen ill, and been unable to eat for 3 days, until Jacotte visited her and made her a soup with some milk. General reputation.

(9) Julienne fille de feu Pierot Cordebotte de Xennenay, c. 23

5 years ago next Christmas Martin Gaspar Colas Simon, her stepfather, went to mill, in which he had third share, and right to precedence. Took out some of

Jacotte's corn to put his own in first; she was angry and said 'que devant qu'il soit un an il n'y en moudroit plus'. A week later her stepfather, her mother, and two of her brothers became ill and died in another week. Stepfather blamed Jacotte during his illness, suspecting flour he had milled, and said that if he recovered he would have her arrested. General reputation.

(10) Claudotte femme de Nicolas Boudart de Xennenay, 70

Some 6 years before her son-in law Thienon Boudart had removed a 'cloison' which Nicolas Francois Raon and his servants had put on his land; Jacotte had come out and reproached witness, saying she would repent. Within 3 days lost their best cow, which was in calf, and worth 7 or 8 ecus. A later dispute over sale of some land saw Jacotte telling her 'qu'elle ne l'auroit pas, ou que le diable y cheorroit'; shortly afterwards had two cows killed in fields, and according to herdsman was by some strange beast, not a wolf - they had only small hole each under stomach. Blamed Jacotte - generally believed to be a witch, and had always tried to ruin her.

(11) Simon le Duc, demeurant au gagnage de Meillermont, 60

At last St. Martin, collecting rents for priory of Saintmont, had asked for 'quart de blé' from Raons. Jacotte refused, and when her husband said he was willing to pay she became still angrier, and told witness that he would repent having forced them to pay. Within 3 days lost a mare worth 12 ecus which he held for Thomas Robert, which died as of rabies. Also reported previous incident 4 years before when two sows escaped into a field rented by Raon; Jacotte was not satisfied with his offer of reparation - 4 days later they died as if rabid. General reputation.

(12) Nicolas Raon de Xennenay, 36

Some three years before his daughter Mengeotte had passed by Jacotte, who was returning from washing cabbages in the stream; was struck on head by 'fugue' she was carrying. Returned home, complained of pain in head, and eventually told what had happened. Two or three days later she was still ill, and while his wife was washing shirts and sheets in the stream she saw Jacotte. Asked her why she had not visited her sick child, when all other neighbours had done so, yet it was only of her that the child complained. Same day she and her husband visited the girl, who began to recover. Asked if child had been injured, said that she had been scratched on forehead and bleeding. General repute.

(13) Jean Raon de Xennenay, 50

2 or 3 years earlier Nicolas Francois Raon's horses had done some damage in his meadow, and he had quarrelled with them over this. Soon afterwards became very ill; only recovered after Jacotte and her daughter Margeurite had visited him, and she made him a soup - knew this from wife, as he had not been really conscious. Also blamed her for subsequent death of a bullock; general reputation.

(14) Claudotte veuve Demengeon de Rainfaing, de Xennenay, 50

Two years before last Christmas Eve her husband had been one of those who put 'la cuche dit de Noel' on the fire of Nicolas Francois Raon; Jacotte gave each of them a piece of gateau. He took his piece and went to sit on a log outside his house, but his foot touched another log, and he felt a pain. Went inside and shared gateau with witness, but then started to complain of pain in his foot, two days later went to bed, and 5 or 6 days later died. Never said where his illness came from, and she thought it was 'la seroucq' which often tormented him. General reputation of Jacotte, feared and disliked, but witness did not think she had received any 'desplaisir' from her.

(15) Jannon femme de Nicolas Raon de Xennenay, 36

Repeated husband's story about daughter (aged 4) who had been hurt; said Jacotte had given her three pears. Also blamed her for death of another daughter aged 6.

(16) Colin Demenge Pierre, demeurant à la grange de Saint Estienne les Remiremont, 60

Blamed 'la Tuxine' (Jacotte) for death of three young pigs, after dispute which arose when they did some damage 4 years earlier. Previous year had also lost a mare, which had been on land of hers. General reputation - 15 years.

(17) Jean fils d'Estienne Colin de la Poirie, 26

Three years before, when in service at Xennenay, had been to feste on hault de St Jean de St Arnould, where there had been dancing; had danced with various girls, but not with Jacotte's daughters. Later heard that they were angry about this, and she spoke to him at fair of Remiremont, asking why he had not danced with them. He said he could not dance with all the girls; two hours later became ill, and was unable to work for 7 weeks. In view of her reputation for harming those who crossed her, blamed Jacotte, and when he went to her house told her daughter Epron that he held her mother responsible. She gave him some soup, and later sent him milk and tart; he gradually recovered.

2 June 1598; Procureur General des Vosges orders arrest and examination.

17 June 1598; interrogation

Said she was Jacotte, daughter of Jean Baret de Saint Nabvoir, married for more than 30 years to Nicolas François Raon of Xennenay near Remiremont. Had three children; two married into good families, third still unmarried. Denying accusations, said she thought they were made 'par envye d'autant que son marit et elle font bon mesnage (dieu mercy) et qu'ilz marient en bons lieux leurs enffans.' Later reiterated this, saying that she was 'femme de bien et bonne mesnagere, aiant si bien travaillé avec son marit que moyennant la grace de dieu ils ont amassés

plusieurs beaux biens; et pense fermement que cela est la principale cause de ce qu'elle peult estre haye ou mal voulue de quelques habitants de Xennenay.'

9 July 1598; confrontations

Said that she had heard that illness of Nicolas Estienne Boudart's son was 'mal de saint'. Generally made vehement denials of accusations, and did not even admit to any serious quarrels.

23 July 1598; PG des Vosges asks for question extraordinaire

31 July 1598; Change de Nancy approves.

5 August 1598; interrogation under torture

Racked and then given water; persisted in denying guilt.

14 August 1598; Procureur General des Vosges, in long statement, points out that there is much evidence of threats followed by ill effects, and that resistance to torture is probably mere obstinacy. Asks that she should be kept away from the community to which she has become so 'formidable' by sentence of life imprisonment; if her own goods are insufficient to provide for her keep, her husband must do so. Also asks that Prévôt should investigate new charges as indicated in letter from 'la dame secrette de Remyremont'.

16 August 1598; Change de Nancy postpones decision on request from Procureur General until new evidence has been evaluated.

Letter from 'dame secrette' is appended. Stresses that she should not yet be released. During her interrogations she made frequent references to the Devil, and did not call on God, Virgin, and saints. (This is quite true, although she was merely saying that if she were lying she could be given over to Devil, etc.) Said she should be asked about death of her son-in-law 15 years earlier, which was generally blamed on her. Also wrote of daily 'importunités' from people of Xennenay and nearby communities, who talked of leaving their homes if she were released. If Nancy court found evidence insufficient, she should at least be 'chassée'.

1 September 1598; further depositions

(18) Jean Toussaint, geolier des prisons d'Arches, 34

Said that after confrontations she had told him she had expected there to be three other witnesses. He said 'Il faut doncq que vous les avez fait du mal'; she replied that she had not, but they suspected her of it as the others did. Said she was 'forte robuste', and declared herself ready to die rather than confess. Asked if he was not feeding her better than usual (a suggestion made by dame secrette) he denied this, and said her relatives had made no attempt to secure special treatment.

(19) Nicolas Graniere demeurant a La Brenche, finage de St, Estienne. c. 50

Said he had spent two years in Xennenois as near neighbour of Raons. and had often eaten and drunk in their house; had seen no harm in them and didn't think they had done him any. In 12 years he had been in present abode had had a child born dead and unbaptised, but had no suspicion of Jacotte.

(20) Jehan Meullien de Longuey, c. 40

Did not know Jacotte. A year before his unmarried sister-in-law Marguerite had benn living with her brother Demenge Colin Thiebault at Xennenay and 'se mesloit de tixer de la toille'. When she decided to come back and live with him, Jacotte had been angry, saying that she did not want to weave for her, but she would repent. Some 15 days later , on return with her clothes, she was drowned at a place where water was only up to legs. Also said that he had lent her a 'pesan', and when he asked her brother for it back it had to be recovered from Jacotte's house; she only returned it unwillingly, as he had heard. Therefore thought she might been responsible for a strange 3-week illness which afflicted his wife.

(21) Nicolas le Clerc de Moulin, 60

Knew Jacotte well, and had never suffered any harm from her, although he knew her to be feared by her neighbours. As he was escorting her to prison at Arches she said she had feared being taken there for more than 20 years, although she was taken there as 'femme de bien'. Also told of incident 24 years before when he and Arnould Meullien of Xennenay had seen her husband steal two 'crampons d'acier', which had led to his being fined 40 to 50 francs. Jacotte had told Arnould he would repent and he died within the year - if she were indeed a witch witnes believed her to have killed him.

(22) Marguerite femme de Nicolas le Clerc, 50

When Jacotte had stayed in their house after arrest she complained that she had an old 'chemise' on, and that sergent had not allowed her time to change it, but if she went to prison 'que possible seroit elle encor perdue'.

(23) Catherine femme de Bertrand Graniere, de Xennenay, 30

Passing Jacotte's house when she had a child round her neck, and was heavily pregnant, saw Jacotte and one of her daughters on 'fumier'; Jacotte looked at her, she was suddenly afraid, fell, and hurt herself badly.

(24) Claudotte femme de Jean Cordebotte de Xennenay, 30

Repeated husband's story about loss of foal and illness of mare.

(25) Claudon Cordebotte de Xennenay, 27

Two and a half years earlier on Mardi gras Jacotte had called his wife to her house 'pour marender'; on return she had felt ill, and he himself had also become ill. Had no-one to help them or look after their land; after 2 months his wife died, suspecting Jacotte of having made her ill. Asked if they had had any quarrel, said he knew of none.

(26) Nicolas Demengeon Arnould, demeurant a Seuch, 30

Long reputation and fear by neighbours.

(27) Jennon veuve de Colas Jacquel Richard de Seuch, 35

Had heard Jacotte reputed a witch before she left Xennenay to get married 15 years earlier. Two years before at Easter Jacotte had been put out because Jean, serviteur of Demenge de Ranfaing, had paid her attentions (throwing gazons to her from his master's meix), and she wanted him to marry her daughter (as he had now done). On her return was carry two 'tiges de choux' for replanting when she met Jacotte, who took them and looked at them before returning them to her. On return home was bedridden for 12 weeks with bad knee, and even after this had trouble with sight. Finally Jacotte met her in cemetery, and asked about her illness; struck her on shoulder saying she would get better, and she made a complete recovery. Believed she had made her ill out of jealousy.

(28) Marguerite veuve de Demengeon Blaise Olry de Xennenay, 50

Thought that Jacotte had caused her husband's death 9 or 10 years ago, because he had bought some land which she and her husband wanted. A devineresse passing through village had told her husband's brother Claudon that Jacotte had given him poison one Sunday out of resentment over this deal.

(29) Thienon fils de feu Jean Rattel de Xennenay, 24

7 years earlier had quarrel with Nicolas Francois Raon, who wanted to delay payment due to witness for a day's work. Within 2 or 3 days became ill, and was bedridden for 3 weeks. When Jacotte was working with his mother in field of millot, she asked how he was and gave her some bread for him - he promptly recovered.

(30) Jean fils Thienon Boudart de Xennenay, 40

For 4 years had had his sister Magdelaine 'sur les bras' with an illness from which she had finally died last St. George's Day. Had always claimed that Jacotte had made her ill; she had given her some cheese when they had been with other women in house of Demengeon de Ranfaing, and she had promptly developed stomach pains. Only reason he knew of was that when the village youth had organised a collation in same house they had not wanted to invite Jacotte's daughters. Magdellaine had in fact caused them to be invited, but nevertheless Jacotte had been angry with her over affair.

(31) Jacotte fille de feu Jacquel Richard de Seuch, 40

Previous year had been to marriage of Jacotte's daughters at Mailleville, and had sat next to Jacotte, who several times served her with bread and meat. Subsequently had illness which lasted 8 days; her neighbours advised her to go to Xennenay and complain to Jacotte. She did so, and accused told her daughter Epron to make them a soup, which they than drank together, after which she recovered. Didn't wish to claim that Jacotte had made her ill, since they had not quarrelled at all.

16 Seoptember 1598; interrogation

Continued to deny charges; this time did invoke Jesus and St Nicolas, after saying on one occasion 'comment est ce que Jesus ne fait pas ses miracles.'

Confrontations followed.

Said she could hardly have caused illness of Jehan Meullien's wife, even if she were a witch, since it was a quarter of a league from Xennenay to Longuet.

Jennon veuve Colas Jacquel Richard now added that Jacotte, her husband, and her eldest daughter Epron had tried to strangle her son-in-law Demenge; had been prevented by arrival of Martin des Cailles, a mercier who lived with Demenge de Ranfaing. Son-in-law had left, and died soon afterwards. This was all denied absolutely by Jacotte, as were all other accusations. Claudotte widow of Demengeon de Ranfaing added story that when her husband had been collector of taille Jacotte had reproached him with taxing them too highly, 'puis se retira en sa maison, en menacant et grondant entre ses dents'; shortly afterwards he had part of the fingers of one hand cut off. Emerged that accused was aunt to Jacotte fille Jacquel Richard, who deposed against her; latter had not dared to eat a pear she had given her.

11 October 1598; Procureur General des Vosges asks that she be tortured again.

17 October 1598; Change de Nancy orders that she be interrogated once more in presence of instruments of torture, but not actually tortured. If she still won't confess, she is to be banished from duchy, so that people may be relieved of her 'sinistres comportements'.

8 November 1598; Prévôt d'Arches has her taken back into torture chamber; when she still refuses to confess he orders banishment.