

B 3792 no 2; Witch 063, Jean Gerardin de Dompierre

18 November 1615; complaint against Jean Gerardin by Dieudonné veuve Jean Bache of Dompierre, before substitut of Procureur General des Vosges.

Said that previous day he had tried to attack her with a 'fleau', for no reason. She had fled into house, but that evening had decided to go to the poisle where the women were spinning as usual in winter, thinking she would be safe there. Gerardin had burst in, punching her in the face with his fists, then after tearing clothes dragged her into kitchen by hair. Had seized some object to strike her with when the master of the house, Claudon Ozelle, arrived and prevented him going further.

19 November 1615; Substitut noted that he had recently had other complaints that Gerardin's behaviour had rendered him 'redoubtable' and 'quasy insupportable' to many inhabitants of Dompierre; asked Prévôt to investigate and report back.

19 December 1615; informations taken by Prévôt, who had noted suspicions of witchcraft.

(1) Demenge Biernon de Dompierre, c. 50

Had only heard at second hand of assault on Dieudonné. Gerardin was generally suspected of witchcraft; some 10 or 12 years earlier, after threats against himself, witness had warned him that if he suffered any ill he would hold him responsible. 4 or 5 years earlier had refused to sell him a horse, which died within a few days. Also suspected him of causing death of a cow he was fattening.

(2) Demenge Antoine de Dompierre, c. 60

Said that Gerardin was 'homme rude et fascheux'; reported an assault long before on Antoine Toussaint, committed 'en corps de communauté'. Had struck him from behind with handle of a hoe, injuring head so severely that he might have died had others not helped and carried him home, where he remained ill for long time. General reputation as witch.

(3) Nicolas Jean Ferry de Dompierre, c. 40

Reported an occasion when he had attacked Claudon Ozelle with a hoe, on leaving church on day of St. Sacrement. 'Pour le sortilege a dit que les devanciers dudit Gerardin et luy, en ont tousiours este noté et soubconné.'

(4) Nicolas le Maire le vieux alias Petit Homme, de Dompierre, c. 60

Told story of assault on Claudon Ozelle; was on day of St. Sacrement in 1613, and followed some dispute. He had been among those who ran up to prevent further assault; was angry because Ozelle was his son-in-law, and called Gerardin a witch.

(5) Demenge Demengeot cy-devant musnier de Dompierre, c. 60

Some 8 or 9 years earlier his son-in-law Jean Vaulthier had various quarrels with accused, who was his neighbour. His wife also became involved, and after various threats fell ill; remained so for 6 months, constantly claiming that sickness had been given by Gerardin. Even sometimes claimed he was in room, pointing to him, but those present could see nothing. His wife was as suspect as him, and one day went before dawn to village of Vadeville; on return entered his daughter's house (this was before her death), and he asked where she had been. Replied that she thought his daughter had jaundice, and she had been to speak to a woman who cured it; he told her no-one had asked her.

(6) Nicolas Claudon Petit Homme le jeune de Dompierre, c. 30

Had always heard Gerardin reputed a witch. He and his father believed him to have caused loss of a horse after dispute over payment for carting a load of hay.

(7) Nicolas Richier de Dompierre, c. 36

Gerardin had spoken to him after assault on Dieudonné, and admitted that if Claudon Ozelle had not intervened she would have been 'assommée'. He and his 'devanciers' always reputed witches.

(8) Demenge Jean Baulche de Dompierre, c. 30

Had seen first attack on mother, when she fled, but had not been present at poisle, only seen injuries. Had also heard Gerardin talk about it, at mill and elsewhere, as in (7). 8 days before on Wednesday Gerardin and his wife had bargained with witness to buy a pig from four he had for sale, but couldn't agree price. On Friday he took them to market at Epinal, but on the way two became sick; had great difficulty in getting them there at all, and had to accept very low price for them. Believed Gerardin had been responsible, especially as on the Thursday he had been to see pigs again, and he and his wife had passed hands over backs of two which fell ill.

(9) Jean Clanchier de Dompierre, c. 55.

7 or 8 years earlier had quarrelled with Gerardin, who had later (when returning from tavern) stood outside his house calling him 'larron' and 'meschant homme'; threw stones against door, and threatened 'de luy garder un bon plaisir s'il vivoit sept ans'. Shortly afterwards he took some cloth to the tailor to have a camisole made; Gerardin was there, and touched it saying 'voila du bon drap'. When he put on garment next day he became ill; could not move limbs, eat or drink. Remained in this state for 3 months, believing himself to have been bewitched. Reported assaults on Dieudonné and Antoine Toussaint. Believed Gerardin to have caused him several misfortunes. Had chased one of his daughters until she sought refuge in another house; was ill for a year 'sentant quelque chose qui se promenoit parmy son corps', then died. He himself suspected that Gerardin had given him an

illness 9 years before which forced him to go on crutches, and to have given similar illnesses to another son and daughter. Generally suspected of witchcraft.

(11) Claudatte femme de Didier Borion, c. 33

Told of assault on Dieudonné. After her father, Jean Clanchier, had quarrelled with Gerardin, she had fallen into fire and been badly burned. Also told of illness and death of her daughter; from both depositions appears that she became much worse after Gerardin had given her some 'patenées cuites a sec'.

(12) Nicolas Goery de Dompierre, c. 72

Gerardin and his devanciers always suspected of witchcraft. Told of attack on Antoine Toussaint, and said that accused was always 'fort insolent'. 12 years before, meeting his wife returning from Aidoille or Fontenay, he tried to rape her 'que l'ayant a son dire merueilleusement rebroué Il luy fit sur le champ une espece de satisfaction, et du depuis en cria mercy a luy qui parle en presence du feu Sr. leur Curé, et Claudon Ozelle.'

(13) Claudon frere au precedent temoin, de Dompierre, c. 48

Attack on Antoine Toussaint; general repute as witch.

(14) Antoine Masson de Dompierre, now bourgeois de Bruyères, 60

Years before, when resident at Dompierre, had seen accused as youth fighting with son of Georgeon Poirot. Bastien Gerardin, his father, who had also been suspected of witchcraft, had appeared, and been angry at hearing his son called 'fils de sorcier'. Struck other boy on legs with a white stick he was carrying, and he was ill for long time. However his father, who was 'officier au feu Sieur de Lenoncourt', threatened to have him taken prisoner, and boy then recovered.

20 December; Procureur General des Vosges orders arrest of Gerardin.

22 December 1615; further informations

(15) Jannon veuve de Colas Rose, demeurant a Dompierre, c. 30

Some 12 years before, when in service at Bayecourt, had left arm broken and had to return home. To support herself took job guarding village cattle; one day around Whitsun, when she was with them in a wood, Gerardin came and asked her to have intercourse with him. She refused, and tried to run away, but he caught her and raped her; with arm in sling she was unable to resist effectively. He then threatened that if she ever breathed a word of it, 'elle ne mouroit d'autres mains que des siennes'. She did keep quiet for a long time, but admitted what had happened to the late Nicolas de Sercoeur, when ploughing with him, when he pressed her to say where she had been when the cows damaged the corn. Gerardin learned of this, and beat her so badly that she had to spend fortnight in bed. 'Que ce malheur luy en

causa encore une autre pour ce qu'estimant estre deshonoré par un homme qui d'ailleurs estoit soubconné de sortilege, elle espousa feu sondit marit, homme de peu, et qui luy gourmanda si peu de bien qu'elle avoit avant sa mort.'

(23 December)

(16) Claudon Ozelle de Dompierre, 56

Told of occasion when Gerardin had tried to attack him with a hoe 3 years earlier. Attack followed dispute in cemetery 'aiant dit que toutes les filles du village estoient des ribauldes, il luy auroit reparti qu'il n'y avoit a son dire fille ny femme de bien que celles qui se laissoient nicher de luy, qu'il estoit un calomniateur ordinaire, et que sa cruche iroit tant a l'eau qu'elle buqueroit et se romproit.' Also told of stopping attack on Dieudonné.

(2 January 1616)

(17) Jannon femme a Nicolas Goery de Dompierre, c. 44

Some 9 or 10 years earlier, had been to Fontenay, where she met Gerardin. He asked if she were going back soon, and might accompany him; she replied that she would be a while yet, and saw him leave. On way home he appeared from out of hiding, and tried to touch her genitals; she upbraided him furiously, calling him witch and saying she would rather he were burned than that she should suffer 'une telle meschanceté'. When she arrived home she told her husband, and Gerardin 'luy cria mercy' on his knees in presence of curé and Claudon Ozelle.

(18) Claudate femme a Jacquemin Marchal du Memesnil, c. 25

5 years before, shortly before marriage, when she was living with her father Thomas Jean Bergier in Dompierre, Gerardin had tried repeatedly to seduce her. His wife Marguerite had 3 or 4 times tried to get her to go to their house at night, when she was on her way to the poisle commun. Had heard that when Marguerite talked to her sister Mongeote about her husband's bad conduct, latter reproached her with aiding his attempt to debauch Claudate; she replied that her husband compelled her to do it, and might have beaten her to death if she refused. As result of her 'refus de danser en sa main' he called her 'putain' at poisle, and she retorted by calling him witch, since he was reputed one. He had pursued her on another occasion; prevented from raping her by presence of her brother, he had nevertheless put a stone in her mouth and scratched both her and her brother. When he found her washing linen in river, he undid bundles and threw it all in. Once she went to bake bread in his oven, and he pretended that his wife was in the stable, then tried to rape her, but was prevented by presence of numerous people just outside house.

(19) Jean Vaulthier de Dompierre, c. 40

5 years earlier his brother had bought a horse from Gerardin's brother Demenge; Gerardin had been angry that his brother, who was still unmarried, had

acted without consulting him. Came and reproached witness, uttering threats, so that he called him a witch and took a fork with which he threatened to stab him if he did not leave. 6 weeks later his wife sickened and died; had some suspicion of Gerardin, in view of his reputation and their quarrel.

(20) Demenge Antoine Toussaint de Dompierre, c. 40

19 years earlier had been with troops of Messieurs Bauffremonts and de Tremblecourt 'au veage de Bourgogne'. On return with another heard of Gerardin's attack on his father, and set out for vengeance. His carabine misfired when he tried to shoot him (he had loaded it with 4 balls, and it misfired 4 separate times); his saddle slipped under his horse, so that he fell off; when he and his companion attacked him with their swords they found it impossible to touch or wound him.

(21) Jean Demenge Coley de Dompierre, c. 30

His father Demenge Coley had died 7 years earlier; 3 years ago some individuals had told him that Gerardin had threatened him before his death, because he had reproached him for way he was pursuing an unmarried daughter. When he could not have the girl, he defamed her. In view of this report, now believed he might have bewitched his father to death.

28 December 1615; interrogation

Said he was 50, had been in service 'au pays d'Allemaigne' for more than 20 years, and was now involved in labourage. Was married to Marguerite, daughter of widow called La Grande Marye living at Grandviller; one child only, long dead.

On quarrel with Claudon Ozelle, claimed it had been over village affairs, not remarks about local women. As for earlier attack on Antoine Toussaint, it had been because Toussaint had deceived him about prospects of his wife, pretending that she had more property than was the case.

Denied that he had made advances to Jennon wife of Nicolas Goery; she had found him in a hedge, and offered him some beans and peas, which she was carrying. She had been offended when he had said that people would think ill of them if they were seen, and had told her husband. He had begged pardon of husband because 'il le redoubtoit sur ses menasses de le plainder, riche et homme de moyen qu'il estoit'.

Claimed that Jannel, widow of Colas Roze, had been willing partner in their relationship; she had already been with 'quelque seigneur', and even after her marriage she had intercourse with him, once in her own house, once in his.

Confessed that some 12 years before he had an affair with Maxine, the wife of a schoolmaster of Thaon. She had always assured him that her child, now about 10, was result of this, and he had often asked her to send him the boy; since he had no legitimate child, he would provide for his marriage. Similarly, had thought that Jannel's child might be his, and had offered to provide for him if she could tell him for sure, but she had said she could not.

Admitted assault on Dieudonné, claiming that she had insulted him; when he hit her at poisle, she had continued to insult him and struck him in stomach with

the 'quenouille'. Asked about his reputation for witchcraft, said that he was willing to suffer whatever punishment was imposed on him for the adulteries he had confessed, but he was no witch. Reiterated this, saying that he would be prepared to die for his other crimes.

Said that his quarrel with Jean Clanchier had been because Clanchier had told him to go to the Devil, who was his master. Accused Clanchier of having to common knowledge lived with his niece and made her pregnant.

Concerning childhood fight with son of Georgeon Poirat, said his illness had been a rupture, for which he had been 'taillé'.

(2 January 1616)

Asked about evidence of new witnesses. Said that he had pursued Claudate wife of Jacquemin Marchal, and that she had encouraged him, allowing him 'tant d'attouchements impudiques' that it had been no fault of hers 'qu'on n'en vienne a l'effect'. When she had come to his house she had called him and thrown herself down, but his wife had returned. Admitted that he had used his wife to get her to come to house, but wife had not known to what purpose. Asked whether he had not forced his wife under threat to act as his 'maquerelle', 'A fait response en vacillant ne luy avoir donne telle charge mais bien que conoissant son inclination, et qu'il estoit extremement adonné a la paillardise, elle l'en tansoit'.

Claimed that Toussaint's son had no powder or shot, and that he had retreated into his house before being attacked with swords.

9 January 1616; PG des Vosges asks for 'question ordinaire et extraordinaire', 'aultant que ses forces pourront porter'.

12 January 1616; Change de Nancy approves, with usual clause about torture being 'observans . . . la mediocrité requise et convenable a Justice'.

(31 December 1615) Separate deposition, made at home because of illness, by Bastien Lalemant de Dompierre, c. 38. Claimed that some 10 years before had a dispute with Gerardin after damage done by cattle; seemed to be settled, but soon afterwards Gerardin picked up his small son in the village and asked whose son he was; fell ill on return home and died in 8 days.

2 January 1616; confrontations

Said that he had paid fines for assault on Antoine Toussaint, which had been 24 years earlier. Also admitted he was 'ung grand putassier'.

Said that 'a l'esgard du sortilege que plusieurs l'accusent, il a intention a sa mort de les adjourner a comparoir au bout de l'an par devant le grand juge, qui scaura discerner le vray du faulx.'

While continuing to claim that Jannel had been willing partner in affair, he admitted to having once beaten her. She said that once after her marriage his wife had called her to their house, and he had 'fit tant qu'il jouit encore d'elle, par ses importunitéz'.

In case of Claudatte, continued to insist on her general willingness, but admitted to incident when he threw linen in water.

18 January 1616; interrogation under torture

Before torture began, admitted that he had 'niché un peu' Jennon wife of Nicolas Goery.

When thumbscrews were placed on his hands, said he was not a witch, but the 'rigueurs luy feroient bien confesser, et accuser ses pere et mere.' Given thumbscrews on hands and feet, rack, and 'tourtilions'. Cried out, begged them not to tempt him into perjury, and at intervals offered to tell truth if he were released.

Now admitted putting stone in Claudatte's mouth, but only because she and her brother wanted to beat him. While tourtilions were being tightened did say he was a witch, but immediately retracted this. Surgeon said he had been tormented enough, so he was asked if he would tell the truth if he were released. Still denied witchcraft, but said that he had raped Jannel - then modified this to say it was as if by force, half one thing, half another.

When released finally and placed by fire, he insisted that he was not a witch (had earlier said that 's'il est sorcier il ne le scait'). As for Jannel, he had confessed to rape under torture, but truth was that 'apres l'avoir niché, elle passa si avant que de luy prendre le membre viril et puis assis aupres d'un chesne creu, vinrent tellement les volontez que l'act charnel dont est mention s'ensuivit'.

19 January 1616; interrogation

Continued to say he was no witch, but a paillard. Now said that although on first occasion he did not rape Jannel, another time she tried to refuse him and he carried on nevertheless.

Asked about his wife, he replied 'que sadite femme est bien cause de ce qu'il s'est ainsi amusé aux putaines, pour ne luy avoir voulu souvent rendre le devoir de mariage, qu'on luy auroit fait prendre et espouser contre sa volonté, aiant au surplus persisté a ceste confession l'avoir eu employé a appeller quelques particulieres, vray que c'estoit a sujet les conoistre charnellement, mais qu'il n'estime qu'elle le sceut, pour ne luy avoir eu dit.'

22 January 1616; PG des Vosges gives long and shocked list of offences admitted by Gerardin - 'estant ainsy du tout debordé, abandonné et lasché a ses voluptés paillardises et lubricités stupres et adulteres avec plusieurs grands scandalz' - both sexual and of violence. While he could not be convicted of witchcraft, other crimes were sufficient for him to be hung. Property to be confiscated to duke.

26 January 1616; Change de Nancy opts for pillory, whipping, perpetual banishment after being marked on shoulder, and confiscation of goods.

29 January 1616; Prévôt of Bruyeres records that he has called together the 'bons hommes jugeants' of the prévôté, and submitted to them the opinions of the Procureur General and the Nancy court. By a majority (a formal phrase, so they may

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have been unanimous) they sentenced Gerardin to death, and sentence had duly been carried out.

Costs came to 59 francs 1 gros.