

B 8682 no 8; witch 186, Françatte femme Jean Camont de Laygoutte

End of April 1598; informations preparatoires

(1) Magdelaine femme Colas Cointzelin, de Raves, 23

Long reputation. 4 or 5 years earlier had been guarding animals with daughter of accused when she came and rebuked her, saying 'que mal santé luy puisse venir', and even drawing her knife to strike her. This was because animals had strayed and been fined by Colas de Bonipaire; she said that as the eldest witness should have prevented this. 3 or 4 years earlier had married, then became ill after pregnancy; sent for Françatte to visit her, suspecting she was cause, but she pretended she was absent even though she was at home. Still not properly recovered or able to walk well; if she was witch as reputed, in view of her threats, thought she was cause.

(2) Jean Claude Maimbourg, 50

During 20 years she had been in village had various quarrels with her, and she usually threatened him, saying he would repent. Normally followed by death of animals, and in one period of 2 years lost 8 horses, during a winter 4 oxen, so that since she and husband were his neighbours had lost animals to value of over 1000 francs. In view of reputation and threats was sure she had caused most of these. 7 or 8 years earlier his wife had died after illness lasting a fortnight, during which she often asked her daughters and others to persuade Françatte to visit her, since she suspected her of being cause, but she only came to funeral procession. (Section missing here)

(3) Demenge Colas Jacquemin, de Raves, 40

Had served 7 years in house of widow of Jacquat Rolbel, hostess at Layegoutte. During this time mistress was ill, and sent him to consult a woman at Fertrupt on her behalf; left early in morning, and as he left village fell, dislocating his shoulder, which he had to have set by doctor at Ste Marie. On return told mistress about this, and she said Françatte had joined another woman by spring after he left, saying 'que l'hostesse envoyoit son valet au diable, et qu'elle le vouloit encor faire mal porter avec elle'. Nevertheless he did not think she had caused fall, and if she had he forgave her.

(4) Thoussainct Grand Didier, de Raves, 40

More than 20 years ago she and her husband, who had no property, came to live at Raves; after 3 or 4 years wanted to go to Lubine, but villagers would not receive her, saying she was rumoured to be a witch. This was why they went to Layegoutte; always reputed a witch since then. Had quarrel with husband over tithes, which led to lawsuit, after which a horse broke its leg and died, then lost series of other animals over 2 years; unable to keep any calves successfully. If she was a witch as reputed believed she had caused this, in view of quarrel and fact that husband had said in public before church at Bertrimoustier 'que tous ceulx qui se prendroient a luy n'en gaigneroient rien'. Also thought she might have caused illness of his wife, which began on day of quarrel over tithes; since then had been

unable to keep food down without vomiting, and was not cured despite all efforts - had eaten nothing since last Friday.

(5) Andreu Gerardin, de Combrimont, serviteur a la veuve Jacquot Rolbel de Layegoutte

Had heard her reputed witch as long as he had known her. 3 years earlier, when there was a large company in the tavern, had quarrel with her husband, and told him that 'il habitoit et couchoit (chevalchoit crossed out) une sorciere' - no reaction and no reparation sought.

(6) Demenge Jourdain

Start of deposition missing; wife had died from illness she suspected Françatte of causing, after they quarrelled and fought together. Did not visit her during illness; he had avoided her company in view of reputation.

(7) Jean Colin, 54

Had various quarrels with her and her husband, notably some 12 years earlier over a meadow they rented jointly; they had cut hay first and taken more than their share, then he took some of what they had cut and she was very angry, leading to violent quarrel. Had various losses, although could not now remember all the details; one of his children died, and many animals. To find out truth went to Val de Villers, where there was a woman 'qui se mesloit de deviner', and asked her who had caused losses. After some speech between them she said 'que ce faisoit elle de qui il avoit soubcon, et pour confirmation de son dire print ung verre, dans lequel elle mit, comme une pomme ronde, et aiant faict quelque tour luy feist veoir l'effigie d'une femme ressemblante a ladicte Françatte, luy demandant sy s'estoit elle la sur qui il avoit opinion, et l'ayant bien regardé a diverses fois luy respondeit, qu'il lui estoit advis que c'estoit elle'. (Short section missing here) In view of this and reputation suspected she had caused his losses.

(8) Lienard Valentin Napuel, 35

Some 5 years earlier she and his wife had quarrel over reciprocal fines of animals, and insulted one another. After this lost a fine cow and its calf, and in view of her reputation and the quarrel suspected she had been cause. Meeting her afterwards could not help telling her to keep away from him, and that 'il n'avoit trop bonne fiance a elle'; she went off to house, and must have told husband. 3 weeks later the latter told witness 'tu as dit des parolles a ma femme, mais il y viendra ung jour que je te morderay'; no obvious consequences, but some time later trouble he already had with one hand spread to other, and could still not use it properly. If she was a witch as reputed, she might have caused this.

(9) Claudel Colas la Voivre, 50

Dispute when children went to take apples from his tree which had fallen on neighbouring field owned by husband of accused. One child became ill with fever same day, another 6 weeks later; both eventually recovered some 6 months later. Was not sure if she was cause, but had long reputation.

(10) Jean Claude Epurat, 40

Reputation 15 years (residence). 6 or 7 years earlier had brought back 2 pigs she had found in her garden, saying 'que mal proffict en puisse il faire et qu'ainsy en adviendroit il'. Pigs then became ill and unable to walk, so after 2 weeks his wife obtained some bread from children of accused, by means of a servant, and they recovered after eating this. Frightened they might still be bewitched, so sold them at Ste Marie; convinced she had been responsible. Had later heard she had got to know about use of bread, been very angry, and forbidden children to give any in future. Also had a sow which became ill; this time was unable to obtain anything to give it, and it died. Over last 2 years had lost 14 animals, including horses and cows, and was sure this had been her witchcraft.

(11) Didier Valentin Napuel, 40

Long reputation. Some years earlier his wife had found one of her sons stealing turnips in their garden; later she and husband quarrelled with them, complaining that they had talked of this at Laveline although it was not true, 'mais qu'ilz en auroient leur raison'. 2 or 3 weeks later his wife became ill, and remained so for similar period - if she was witch she might well have caused this. Had heard her husband quarrelling with late Jacquot Rolbel, and telling him that he had not been in village long, and would not be there for 7 years - he died about 2 years later, but did not know if they were cause of this.

(12) Claude Renolbay

Long reputation. Last year had asked him, with others, to help fetch stones for new house, but he excused himself - heard she was angry and said he would repent. Later lost 4 fine cows, worth 30 écus, and a bull, followed by some young calves; in view of reputation and her remarks, was not sure she had not caused this.

(13) Demenge Jean Gerardin, de Combrimont, 45

Some 15 years earlier (living at Bonipaire) he had frequented her husband, and one day she spoke to his late wife, asking how they could separate their husbands, who got together to drink. 5 or 6 weeks later was at husband's forge with some miners, and they sent for a pot of wine. She drank some from a glass, then handed rest to witness, who drank it, but was soon afflicted by 'une maladie froide' through whole body, lost use of limbs, and after 3 months had to take to his bed. Sent his friend Olry Jeandel (now dead) to consult a doctor on his behalf, who said that he had taken illness by eating a salad, and drinking from a glass given him by a woman at same time. To obtain cure he should bathe himself for 9 days, and 3 or 6 days later the woman who had made him ill would come and visit him, asking where he had sent to the devin, at which he should strike her with his fist. Followed this advice, and on third day she appeared, asked him about devin, and also demanded repayment of 4 or 5 gros he owed her. Was too weak to punch her, but within a few days started to feel rather better, so took courage and went on horse to visit 'medecin' at Naterodes. Told him what had happened, to which he replied 'qu'elle ne l'avoit encor du tout guery, mais que moyennant la grace de dieu il le guariroit du tout, et faisoit en sorte telle, qu'on cognoistroit au visage d'elle detenue qu'elle estoit cause de tout ce mal'. On return his sister, who lived at Layegoutte, told him her face was all black, as if she had been beaten; took trouble to go and see

for himself, and soon made complete recovery - could only think she had bewitched him.

(14)

Had heard from Jean Colin how he had been to devin after loss of a cow, and been shown an effigy he recognized as that of Françatte.

(15) Claudette femme Lienard Valentin Napuel, 40

Long reputation; gave fuller details of quarrel over straying animals, some 3 years earlier. She had returned straying animals immediately, but when one of hers strayed 2 weeks later they insisted on payment before returning it. Reproached accused with this, saying she did not treat her as she had done when situation was reversed; this led to quarrel, during which she said she had lied 'comme une truie et une genaxe', and Françatte went off cursing. Next week a fine young cow which was in calf died, and thought this had been her doing.

(16) Catherine fille Colas Beurlin

Losses of various animals, then her father died after illness which lasted only 8 or 9 days, mother after lingering for 2 years. Suspected her over this; had also heard her brother Jean say he did not expect to live long after testifying against her at Wisembach, and he died same year after being ill only 3 days.

(17) Jennon femme Claude Jean Petit Colin, 33

Some 5 years earlier owed Françatte's husband some money, and when asked for repayment said she could not pay immediately. Accused said 'qu'elle eut le diable au ventre', and shortly after had child which died, with only just time to baptise it at home, but could not be sure if her words had caused this.

(18) Catherine veuve Jacquot Rolbel, 45

Long reputation. Husband had quarrelled with husband of accused, who then passed before house and called out 'Tais toy, tais toy, tu te menne bien mal tu ne seras pas sept ans la dedans.' He was accompanied by one Aulbert and Jean Demenge du Faing; husband went out and called on them to witness threats. She went and took him back inside to prevent worse trouble, but within a year he became ill and died in 8 days. Maintained that he had been given 'le morceau de la mort', and she could not persuade him to think otherwise. 3 or 4 years earlier had been trouble about a hedge which he had planted infringing her property, then she became ill. Sent a servant to a woman at Ste Marie who practiced healing, and obtained drink which helped her, although still not wholly cured. Then story as told by servant of how he had fallen and dislocated shoulder. Neighbour had told her how Françatte had remarked about sending servant to devil. Also told of death of Daniel Cointzelin, who had married her daughter; quarrelled with Jean Casman shortly before marriage, became ill 11 weeks after, and died in a week. Had bought a knife at Casman's forge, and during illness said constantly 'ha le mal cousteau, pourquoi l'ay je achepté.' Believed that if she was a witch she might have caused all this.

(1 May 1598)

(19) Margueritte femme Didier Tixerand, de Grand Rux, 34

Told how first husband Demenge Aubert (before marriage) had been asked to help her with enclosing field; said he was too busy, but she kept pressing him to go, and he finally agreed. In evening, when it was late and too dark to see properly, she gave him some tripes, and there was a piece he could not chew. Since she was sitting next to him and he was afraid of her he swallowed it rather than spit it out, after which he had pain in stomach and became very swollen, feeling he had an animal inside him. After a year was rather better and able to work, then married witness; well for 6 weeks, then illness returned. Said he had an animal inside him which was eating his heart, and asked her to listen to it crying, especially when weather was changing - did sometimes think she heard it cry. Finally died in Easter Week, having often said 'qu'il s'estoit bien deffendu d'aller ché ladite Françatte detenue que touttefois s'estoit il encor mal deffendu, et que la dedans il avoit prins le morceau de la mort'. Had sent to someone (damage here) to ask about illness, and they said Françatte was responsible. Also gave her some dried herbs, saying that when these were boiled in a new earthenware pot the woman who had made him ill would appear; when this was done Françatte appeared, sat by him (he was in bed by fire), and asked how he was.

(6 May 1598)

(20) Claudette femme Gerard Ancel, de Remomeix, 30

Was native of Layegoutte, which she had left on death of parents some 15 years earlier. Demenge Aubert (see above) was her brother; same story about animal in his body which cried when weather changed.

interrogation

Said she was native of village named Baignon, near Vezou in Burgundy; father's name was Jean, had never known her mother. Father was 'cousturier', who also begged his living, and had one other child; had been to see relative at Kayserberg when they all caught plague. Others died, she was ill and taken to hospital, which she left 3 weeks later. Went around begging with others until she was employed by lieutenant at Bruyeres to keep animals, which she did for 5 years. Had another 7 years and a half in service with 5 masters, starting in Ban de Corcieux and ending up at Wisembach. When she was about 20 married her husband, who was a blacksmith from France, and had been married some 30 years - thought she was about 54.

Had had 8 children, of whom 6 were alive. 2 were in Allemaigne, others at home learning trade of smith. Agreed that previous year had quarrel with wife of Jean Epural, because their daughter did not help daughter of accused as she should have done with the herd of pigs. Epural's wife called her 'schelm' on this occasion, but that was all. Had not been to visit Jean Claude Maimbourg's wife because she was 'une mauvaise voisine, et une mauvaise femme'.

Asked about Andreu Gerardin's claim in tavern that her husband slept with a witch, said husband had retorted by saying he lied like a witch, and had obtained informal reparation before 'gens de bien'. As for late wife of Demenge Jourdain, she had been 'une bien bonne femme et voisine'; did go and see her sometimes during

illness, but not as often as she would have wished because she had to help husband with forge. Claimed that Demenge Gerardin had made her reparation for words he had spoken against her.

Generally denied most suggestions of quarrels, and said 'que les faulx tesmoings ne la scauroient faire meschante, que tant plus il en y a, tant pis, qu'il vaudroit bien mieux qu'ilz fussent tous bruslez.'

19 May 1598; Change de Nancy asks that she be confronted with witnesses

Confrontations

Denied all charges. No real reproaches, although she made numerous general remarks that they were liars, bore false witness, were children of witches, and so forth.

1 June 1598; Rémy asks for torture

Interrogation under torture

Racked severely, but would confess nothing, insisting she was a good Christian.

Either later same day or subsequently was tortured again; racked 'fort estroitement', and finally asked to be released, saying she had been seduced by Persin previous year. When sat down by fire, said seduction had been 10 years earlier; had been very angry with her son Jacquot, who had returned from 'Allemaigne', then refused to guard animals, so that she beat him. Usual seduction scene; gave her purse, offering her a bigger one which he showed her. (Section missing here). Went to sabat once, but only identified one of those who were dancing, Dedielle femme Michiel Claudel of Ginfosse.

Had tried out powder on own cat, which died. Then killed series of animals, in revenge for minor offences in most cases. Had made servant of Jacquot Rolbel's widow lame - sprinkled powder on foot after he stole some of her oats at the mill - then felt sorry for him and healed him. Had also made Demenge Jean Gerardin ill, by putting powder in glass when he shared wine with her, then finally felt sorry for him and did same with yellow powder to heal him. Angry because he encouraged husband to go drinking, and there was not enough money for their food. Also seems to have killed a beggar-woman who asked importunately for bread when she was kneading dough and had none cooked.

Said she had paid rent of a chicken to be let off regular attendance at sabat, but then said she had been more times than she could remember. Usual activities to damage crops. Added to those she had seen Gregoire Mathis and his daughter, of Bertrimoutier, both executed, the late Dion Bouray of Raves, Dedielle (already named), Jennon la doyenne de Wisembach, and Laurence femme Colas Mandray of Wisembach.

11 June 1598; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions. Asked if she had taken any of her children to sabat, insisted she had not.

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Rémy then asked for execution; on 15 June Change de Nancy approved this, subject to reiteration of confessions without any threat of torture. Added comment that reiteration of torture had been 'directement contre le droict et la pratique'.

27 June 1598; interrogation

Now said she was not a witch; had only confessed this because of torture, but was content for them to put her to death nevertheless. On suggestion that Persin must have visited her in prison to persuade her to say this, she then agreed that confessions had been true.

29 June 1598; seems to have discharged those she had accused, although text damaged here.

7 July 1598; sentence carried out