

B 8717 no 1; witch 284, Jennon femme Claudon Hennemant de La Vacherie (S. Michel-sur-Meurthe)

Copy of denunciation by Catherine femme Jean Demenge Willaume, made in 1609

10 April 1616; depositions taken at request of procureur d'office for M. d'Etival

(1) Jennon femme Demenge Anthoine de la Vacherie, c. 60

Long reputation even before accusation 7 years earlier; had no personal suspicions.

(2) Marguitte femme Didier Thiebault de la Vacherie, 58

Previous year were fattening 6 oxen for Rembault Jean Girard of Ramberviller, which suddenly became ill. Report went round village that Jennon had made them sick, and had been identified by a man from Raon. She came to see witness and asked her if she had been talking, to which she replied that Perrin from Raon had been to see the sick animals, and said that the woman who had bewitched them would come to their house that day without fail. Jennon had been the only visitor, so they suspected her. She replied that Perrin was 'un meschant homme', and that if he came back to the village she would throw stones at him; this she failed to do, although she saw him several times later. Believed she had sought revenge because her husband had been caught stealing grain by Marguitte's husband, and forced to make reparation. Also accused her of causing a cow to lose its milk after she had been refused butter she wanted to buy. Witness's son Mengeon had refused to do some carting for Jennon previous winter, then lost a fine calf. Around same time pig caused some damage to Jennon's meix, then became ill; witness was telling her about it, and she said it would not die, and needed to have its tail cut. After this was done it recovered in a matter of weeks.

(3) Mengeon Claude Gerard, laboureur de Brehimont, 72

Long reputation. One winter dawn some six years earlier, on way to market at Raon, was passing desolate spot when he saw accused behaving as if drunk, falling over and holding on to branches of hedge. Then there was a tremendous smell of sulphur, which was also noticed by Colas Ferry, who came up at that point. Jennon heard them talking about it, although they said nothing to her, and went off 'toutte honteuse et esperdue'. Witness told his son (?) and his brother not to give Jennon work in future, since he was sure she was a witch.

(4) Nicolas Ratonge de la Vacherie

Two years earlier had employed Jennon's daughter as chambriere, but had replaced her by another girl, partly on account of mother's reputation. She had been very angry with him, and immediately afterwards a two-year-old cow of his was killed by a wolf, which did not touch any other animal in common herd.

(5) Hydoulx Grand Didier de La Vacherie, 30

Some 3 years earlier had contracted with George Bastien of La Neufville to cart some wood which latter had bought from Jennon's husband. She had wanted someone else to have job, and 'menaca le deposant, et dit que puis qu'il avoit fait ledit marché, il ne charroyeroit guiere avant sans fortune'. After working for three days one of his horses became ill, refusing to eat for 4 days. Remembering menaces, he went to see Jennon and accused her of bewitching horse, threatening to hit her with an axe he was holding; replied 'qu'il n'avoit guierre de patience, et estoit trop chault'. Horse then made temporary recovery, but finally died; he firmly believed this resulted from her witchcraft.

(6) Catherine femme Nicolas Moullot de la Vacherie, 30

Long reputation; no personal suspicion.

(7) Jacquotte femme Claudon Carriot mulnier, 27

Some four years earlier, after they had been unable to get payment for some flour sold to Jennon, who often came to ask for credit, she had told her husband to refuse her in future. This had angered her; shortly afterwards witness hurt her finger, which was still not cured, despite pilrimages, with the flesh falling off in lumps. Jennon told her that she 'avoit beau a aller en pellerinages, et qu'elle avoit encor peu de mal de par le diable'; after this her baby died before it could be baptised.

Depositions stop here - MS lost or microfilming error?

Interrogation, 10 May 1616

Said she was about 50, daughter of Colas and Margo Choppat of Ayefosse; married to present husband about 30 years, always resident at la Vacherie. Agreed that she had been accused 7 years before, but it had been out of hatred. Agreed to giving advice about sick pig, but had meant no harm.

Further accusations became evident. Alleged to have killed various animals of Jean Jeandey, after they had various disputes, so that he was reduced to great poverty. Admitted she had been caught stealing apples from Jean Collert's house 9 or 10 years earlier; denied she had then killed mare and cow. Also accused of causing 6-year illness of Collat's son Claudon who had eaten cherries from a garden in which she had a share.

Claim that 2 years before she had changed herself nightly into a black cat, and tried to harm Elizabeth femme Jean Colat. When Marguitte femme Jean Colat was taking a horse to pasture she allegedly made various threats, including 'que la malle mort le puisse manger'; it died 2 or 3 days later. Threatened Jean Mareschal of Herbaville at mill 'qu'il ne la vouloit laisser mouldre la premiere mais quelle luy garderoit ung passe', after which the child his wife was carrying died. Accused of killing animals belonging to Jean Demenge Willaume out of hatred, since his wife had accused her of witchcraft at her own execution.

Document carries mark of Nicolas Colin Dentant, maire au ban d'Estival

11 April (mistake for May?) 1616; confrontations

Further witnesses identified; (8) Mengeotte femme Colas Ratonge, (9) Catherine femme Jean Jeandey, (10) Gratien Doridant, (11) Jean Collat, (12) Claudon Hydoulx Grand Didier, (13) Demenge Colas Girard, (14) Demenge Le Clerc, (15) Elizabeth femme Jean Colat, (16) Claudatte femme Demenge le Clerc, (17) Marguitte femme Hydoulx Grend Didier, (18) Jean Mareschal, (19) Jean Demenge Villaume, (20) Didier Thiebault

11 May; procureur d'office asks for question ordinaire

13 May; Change de Nancy agrees

17 May; interrogation under torture, at abbey of Etival

Withstood thumbscrews, but when racked harder started to confess. Seduced by Mre Persin 15 years earlier, when out with cart; promised her riches, and she agreed to serve him 'pour le desir qu'elle avoit d'avoir de l'argent , et par ce moyen subvenir a ses necessitez et pauvretes.' Confessed to a series of maléfices, although she denied some others. Used same powder to harm and to heal. Said 'quand elle soubhastoit quelque desplaisir ou malladie, led Persin son maitre executoit sa volonté, pourveu quelle y ait donne son consentement.'

Claimed she had only been to sabbat once, and had been well beaten by her master and other witches because she had not consented to do evil.

18 May; further interrogation

Said that at time of seduction 'elle estoit fort pauvre et necessiteuse, que son marit s'en alloit le plus souvent yvroger en taverne, et la laissoit avec ses enfans sans avoir ung morceau de pain.' This was why she had given herself so willingly to Persin, 'mais qu'il l'a meschamment trompé, le vilain bot qu'il est'. At sabbat she had seen la Villaume, also Mengeon Grand Didier, now living at Herbaville, and Jennon femme Claudon Cadot of La Vacherie. Asked about making hail, said she had always refused because of her own poverty; had once made sign of cross in response, at which she received a furious kick from Persin and the whole assembly disappeared.

18 May; procureur asks for death sentence

20 May; Change de Nancy approves

31 May 1616; sentence carried out at Saint Dié