

B 5327 no 1; witch 096, Colas Hardier de Mulcey

Was herdsman of cattle at Mulcey; now imprisoned at Dieuze, after accusation by Petter Blosson, cousturier de Mulcey, who had made himself partie formelle.

2 December 1599; informations préparatoires

(1) Walter Adam, maire de Mulcey, 46

Reputation 7 years; witness had received several complaints from those who had quarrelled with him, and whose animals had either lost their milk or died. Previous summer Estienne Charrier, laboureur, had sold Colas a small vineyard, but had been quarrel when they drank on the deal in the tavern, and Colas found he was expected to pay for all the wine himself. He said 'que quelcun poulroit bien payer les vins qui ne se donneroit de garde', and within 2 days both the witness and Charrier had a horse dead from the same illness. Suspected that since they had made him pay he had caused this; added 'mesmement usoit de telles menaces que personne que ce fut n'osoient louer ny entreprendre de garder le bestail sur ses mains fussent chevaux de laboureur ou aultres pieces de bestailles'.

(2) Lorentz Blosson, vigneron, 60

Had been herdsman for horses previous summer, when Estienne Charrier had taken his sick horse to barn of Colas, and accused him of having made it ill. Witness suggested to Colas that he should avenge himself, but he replied by asking 's'il voulait mectre son bien ou il ne l'avoit gaigné'. 2 years earlier had a cow dead, and by rules of commune the accused was to reimburse him (for half, since he leased it from a butcher of Dieuze); eventually had to take him to court. A week later a young ox died in stable, and after another week Colas came by, told him he was very sorry about his loss, and that he had known it from his bed, having dreamed it. Often called witch without taking any action. Told of occasion 4 years earlier when they were guarding horses together, and decided to have a sleep. Colas went to sleep first, but then witness woke to find horses among the crops, but no sign of his companion. Angry when he returned, claiming he had been looking for horses elsewhere, and said he came from the devil, to which he made no reply.

(3) Estienne Cherrier, laboureur, 38

Explained that 3 months earlier he had owed Colas 80 francs, which he could not afford to pay, so offered to sell him vineyard for 85. Quarrel over 'vin de marché' followed, then death of horse. Before it died had asked Colas to cure it, offering to pay half of cost of wine, but he said he could do nothing and had not caused illness. Lorenz had told him they could do nothing with the horse, which was neither bitten nor wounded, and he replied that he did not blame him, but regarded Colas as responsible. Accused replied 'S'il te semble que s'ayt faict moy, fais moy prendre et je chanteray en prison'. A week later threatened Colas in the tavern that if he did not pay him for the horse he would have evidence taken against him, to which he did not reply.

(4) Pierron Lienard, jeune fils, manouvrier, 18

Had been in his service for 4 months some 7 years earlier, and during that time a cow calved in the fields. Colas threw afterbirth over a bush, saying it would make dinner for his dog the next day. Next day they were behind the mill at Beck and Colas told him to go and fetch the afterbirth, adding that he would probably not find it. After failing to find it, was returning by the 'chaussée' of the lake when a thick mist descended, so that he could hardly see the animals, and they seemed to be dancing. Lifted after 30 minutes; made no reply when master asked him why he had been so long. Had been called witch by Chrestien le Clerc of Mulcey without taking any action.

(3 October 1599)

(5) Mayette femme Viryot Didier de Salm, 22

General reputation. One Chailley had an animal sick in the stable, and went to see it at night; found two cats looking at one another, which caused him to send for Colas, but when he arrived the cow was dead. Since then Chailley had always suspected him since.

(6) Culryo Petit Symon, manouvrier, 23

18 months before had been guarding horses for brother, and two of them almost went into a meadow Colas had bought - wanted to fine him, but he attacked him with his fists and called him witch, in presence of several herd-boys. Had to pay him 4 francs for assault by subsequent accord, but he took no action over accusation. Had been in tavern previous week when Pierre, son-in-law of Curien Champetre, said 'Vela Colas Hardier, l'on dict qu'il est sorcier, il le fauldroit brusler'. Colas replied 'qu'il le monstre', at which Petter Blosson 's'enhardit de soy-mesme' and said he would lay a charge; went to see maire Walter and declared himself partie formelle.

(7) Estienne Blosson, manouvrier, 36

2 years earlier Adam Marchal, hearing that Colas intended to buy his small house and garden which was being sold to meet debt, called out to him that he was a witch, and if he bought it he would burn it with him in it. When witness met Colas later he asked him why he had endured this, and he was 'bien pauvre homme de le souffrir', to which he replied that he had not heard it. Had also heard him say that the herdsman of the lesser animals was having trouble with wolves killing them, but for himself he did not fear if there were as many wolves around his herd as there were leaves on the trees in the village - they would do it no harm. At this witness moved away - suspicions of several villagers.

(8) Chrestien le Clerc, laboureur, 30

2 years earlier one of his cows was left out at night and killed by wolf; sought compensation from Colas, who at first said he should have asked him about it in time. Had to take him before commune, and Colas then appealed to 'kreutzgang' of surrounding communes - finally obliged to pay witness 15 francs. 6 weeks later a horse worth 30 francs suddenly died; suspected Colas, and had told him so, but he denied it.

(9) Colas Phlippe, laboureur, 34

Had heard him called witch several times without taking any action. Previous year his servant had told him of occasion when Colas said that if 2 cows did not come among his herd of horses they would be killed by wolves - as did happen. 18 months before his wife had refused Colas' wife some lard, and within 2 days had a pig dead - suspected him.

(10) Michiel gendre Curien Charpentier, manouvrier, 33

Had heard quarrel in tavern, when Petter Blosson said he would have him burned or be burned himself, but had gone off home.

(11) Lienhard Marchal, laboureur, 40

Colas had been in his barn when Estienne Cherrier came to complain about his horse; had said it was none of his business, and it died - some belonging to the maire Walther died of same sickness.

(12) Pelto Hardier dit Brayotte, 70

Had seen nothing but good in him; Colas had served him for 4 years. Witness had taught him prayer to protect animals.

(13) Adam Peterquin, mulnier au moulin de Back, 30

Had been present at scene in tavern; Petter Blosson had talked of burning witches without specifying names, and Curien Charpentier had told Colas he was the person meant. Still made no response, except to call for a pot of wine for everyone, saying he would pay up to 50 francs for this. Asked if he knew of any damage he had caused, said he did not, but had heard him called witch by several, including himself.

(14) Claudon Mailly, de Bouxieres au Chesne, 40

Had been moictrier of franc gaignment of Mr Champenois for last 4 years, and always heard Colas reputed a witch. In first year had dispute when Colas allowed herd to damage his crops, and 2 weeks later lost a horse worth 50 francs - had always suspected him. In summer more than 2 years earlier had 2 calves escape and join herd of horses; next day Colas told him they were behind his house, without saying they were dead, with no obvious signs of injury. On another occasion a horse which was with herd became ill and died within 3 days. Had to be carried back (with aid of Colas) because it could not walk; his assistant Lorentz Blosson said it was affected by 'quelque meschanté ou schelmerie', and in view of reputation witness suspected Colas.

(15) Jean Messain, hardier de Kierprich, 40

Earlier that year had come to look for cow which had strayed into herd kept by witness, and told him about accusation of witchcraft from Estienne Cherrier. Asked why he did not seek redress, replied 'que quelque jour il en y auroit d'aucuns qui ne s'en riroient.'

7 December 1599; interrogation

Said he was 38, native of Commerey in bishopric of Metz. Had lived at Mulcey since he was young, apart from one year at Marsal and another at St Maiz. Generally worked as herdsman.

Asked how he had learned prayers against wolves, said this was from Le Beau Pegrin, manouvrier of Haracourt. There were 2 prayers against 'toutes mauvaises bestes et mauvaises rencontres'. These were so strong that a thief could not take a horse beyond the bounds, and gave protection against 'toutes sorcellerries ou aultres meschantz gens'. Then gave prayers as in Delcambre no 37.

Next prayer was one for cows, learned from an old woman 9 years earlier - Delcambre no 17. Claimed that since his marriage some 16 or 17 years earlier he had healed more than 100 animals. Asked why he had not taken action when called witch, claimed he had not heard any accusations. Denied threat to Estienne Charier and the maire, or that Charier had accused him over his horse.

(9 December 1599)

Denied series of charges, not admitting any of supposed accusations. Asked how he commended his animals to God in the evening he replied 'qu'il faict chanter une Messe pour les ames des trespassez avec son compagnon y assistans sa femme et celle de son compagnon et vont a l'offrande, ainsy que l'on est accoustume de faire, puis quand ilz vont le soir au champs, le prevenu emporte (avec lui) une piece d'argent de cinq deniers, ou de trois deniers, ou bien ung blan comme il la trouve, laquelle il met dedans ung troux ou une fente d'arbre en disant au nom du pere et du filz et du saint esprit.' Had to be alone when he did this; then left it there for year he had charge of horses, at which time he gave it to the neediest poor person he could find. This year had been Pelto, the previous herdsman.

Gave another prayer for protecting herd - Delcambre 38. Had learned this from 'ung petit vieux homme' aged 30 to 40 who lived at Putegny 7 or 8 years earlier. The added two more prayers - Delcambre 18 and 19 - which it later emerged he had learned from previous herdsman, who said he had had them 35 years earlier from a herdsman of Dolney.

Continued to deny everything else. Said that Claudon Mailly's horse had only been worth 5 or 6 francs, and that such horses commonly died when put to work.

14 December; confrontations

No reproaches to any witnesses, just continued to deny all the charges.

13 January 1600; substitut for PG de Lorraine asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

14 January 1600; Change de Nancy agrees.

17 January 1600; interrogation under torture

Admitted theft of 6 trout from mill, but insisted he was no witch. When tortured asked to be allowed to think it over until morrow, but finally allowed only one hour. Then said he had been seduced when keeping animals, and was then sent back to prison overnight.

(18 January 1600) Some 4 years earlier had woken from sleep to find that his cows had strayed into woods. On way towards them found the complete leg of a cow, still warm, and was frightened that he would have to pay for an animal killed by a wolf. Approached by a man in black on a horse, who told him not to fear, and that he would pay for him. Next day came again, and he agreed to serve him, thinking he was some gentleman; said his name was Joly, and gave him money which turned out to be horse-dung.

Later summoned to a meeting where they danced back-to-back; recognized Mayette femme Hanns d'Obrick of Mulcey, but not the others. His master took him on a fork; touched ground with it 3 times, saying 'saulte mirande apres les aultres, au nom de Joly'.

A few days later found him drinking from spring, and said he was a poor man to drink water instead of wine; offered him 'vin d'absinthe' from a gilded flask, which he refused. Joly then asked him for some water in his hat, poured some into flask and drank it, saying 'voy j'en boy bien et tu craindois d'en mourir'. Then gave him powder to avenge himself on the moictrier, which instead he tried out on his own calf, which died. Two days later Joly visited him again, and struck him 3 times with a stick for disobedience - he tried to strike horse with his 'sarpe', but it evaded blow.

Then gave him white powder, saying 'qu'il avoit une femme fort mauvaise et qu'elle le tourmentoit fort et son enfant', so this would kill her. Threw it away, and was beaten again. On another occasion master offered him a 'pot de vin' because he had kept cows so well, and meal beneath a tree, but he refused.

He and his master had killed horses of Cherrier and the maire, going to stable at night and giving them drink made with 'homeron des pates d'oyes, et du Thuillon broyé, du verju et de la pouldre noire.' Asked about using powder from stillborn child, finally admitted that he and Mayette had dug up stillborn child of his own. Said rest of powder was in earthenware pot buried under gooseberry bush in her garden.

Asked about fog, said he and Mayette had made it by beating the water, on command from their masters - her master was called Hebin - in order to lay waste fields of Mulcey. The two calves of the moictrier had been killed by their masters in the shape of wolves.

Asked about taking communion, said he had always kept host and thrown it away in the cemetery.

19 January 1600; when asked to confirm confessions, started to waver; was placed on rack again, at which he did renew them.

24 January 1600; Rémy asks for death sentence Change de Nancy approves, on condition that he repeats his confessions without any threat of torture.

27 January 1600; interrogation

Now denied he was a witch. It was suggested that his wife had spoken with him privately, and that she might have influenced him. He said 'de perdre son corps et ses biens que ce seroit trop perdre sans avoir faict le pourquoy.'

31 January 1600; Rémy asks that he be tortured again

1 February 1600; Change de Nancy agrees

5 February 1600; interrogation

Asked to be put to death, then agreed he was a witch. Pressed on question of his wife, and whether she had not induced him to withdraw confessions, insisted this was not true. Had been concerned for him and for their children, but had said he should tell truth whatever it was. Asked if she was a witch, said she was not; withdrawal of confession had been his own idea, in hope of being released.

Asked if his master had come to see him when there was a great wind, and the tower of the prison seemed to shake, said he had been asleep then. Master had visited him 3 times in prison, advising him to admit nothing. Confirmed rest of previous confessions.

10 February 1600; Rémy asks for death sentence. Change de Nancy approves.