

Witch 280: B8715 no 3, Claudatte femme Lambert Claudel Ferry de Vicq

12 June 1615; informations préparatoires against Claudatte wife of Lambert Claudel Ferry of Vicq, in Ban le Duc, made at request of substitut for PG de Lorraine.

(1) Simon Colas Simon de Clemmecy, c. 60

Reputation as long as he could remember; mother had also been reputed a witch before her death. About 8 years earlier he had bought some hay, and arranged with Mengel de la Hault of Sachemont to cart it. They had to pass over a 'meix' which she and her husband had made on the road leading to the barn; when she saw this she came out and said angrily 'qu'ils faisoient mal, qu'ils s'en repentiroient, et que mal chance puissent ils avoir'. They replied that if any harm befell them they would have her taken as a witch. 3 or 4 days later he passed Claudatte and gave her good day, but she made no reply, and immediately afterwards his horse reared up in fright so that he fell and dislocated leg; believed she had caused this and had been trying to kill him.

(2) Jean des Rechey, de Vicq, c. 60

Long reputation. Believed that she had caused death of a bull which her son had been guarding with others; when it was skinned its flesh was all 'meurtrie' as if it had been beaten, and she asked him some 5 weeks later what had happened to it. He replied that it was 'une fortune' which had come to him, and he was not thinking any more about it; she replied that the children of his sister had beaten it. He knew this was untrue since they were in town, and suspected her of trying to cover up something she had done herself. Previous year had lost a pig which died of a violent illness; heard that same day Claudatte had thrown a pear to it, which it had eaten. Believed her to be a witch on account of remarks made by her and her husband, 'qu'il y en avoit de ceulx qui avaient heu de grande commodité, qui n'en avoient plus, et qu'il y en avoit encore d'autres au village qui en seroient de mesme, de sorte qu'il est arrivé plusieurs accidens et fortunes, tant à luy deposant qu'à autres dudit Vic'. Some two years earlier he had been driving beasts to pasture when she looked angrily at them; fine cow then lost milk for 3 days, never returned to previous condition, and next year broke a leg, then died. Had heard from her son Mengel that when he and his wife had been taking some horses to sell in Allemagne they had left their child with grandmother; had been angry when they found him ill on their return, saying that if he died it would be her fault, and they would not ask her to the burial.

(3) Zabillon femme de Bresson Jeannel de Vicq, c. 40

Long reputation. Told of son and daughter-in-law's suspicion over child's illness. 3 years before had come and talked to witness as she was milking cows; one then started to lose milk, with an inflamed udder, so that they sold it and the calf it could no longer feed properly. Previous year had called Claudatte to help her clean out under animals; had repented of this afterwards, when one of her three fine calves became ill. Went to ask her for a remedy, but she only said that her own often became ill, then recovered - she often gave them 'semences d'anny'. Witness tried this, but calf died same day. Believed it to have been doing of accused, 'sy toutesfois elle luy faict tort que Dieu la veuille pardonner, mais tient pour certain s'elle est sorciere, qu'elle en sera esté la cause'.

(4) Marie femme de Jean Derechee, de Vicq, c. 30

Wife of second witness, supported his deposition, claiming that their losses amounted to more than 200 francs.

(5) Jean Ferry alias Bruyeres, de Vicq, c. 36

Reputation all 12 years since he had married and come to Vicq. Some 5 years before her son Lambert had been in his service for a year, but had left without any warning or explanation 3 weeks before his term was up at Christmas, leaving witness in great difficulties (his wife had a bad leg); he therefore put it about that he would not pay him his wages. A week after Christmas his little troop of goats (2 males, 10 females) became ill, unable to stand, and after death of 3 he sold the rest as best he could. Soon after similar troubles began to affect his cows (although none seem to have died), and those summoned to see them (including maire Anthoine Ferry, to whom they belonged) said it was witchcraft. Used a remedy he was given, and they recovered, but suspected Claudatte of having made them ill.

(6) Claudon fils au Grand Colas de Vicq, c. 22

Reputation as long as he could remember. Some 3 years before a cow belonging to his father, le Grand Colas, had several times strayed into her 'meix', and she had driven it out with imprecations, wishing that they should make no profit of it. Later the cow became ill, lying down all the time, and died after languishing through winter. His father believed her to have caused this, and the loss of a two-year old foal.

(7) Bresson Jeannel de Vicq, c. 40

Reputation more than 12 years. Believed she had caused him various losses to animals, but also that she had caused illness of 2-year-old son some 15 days earlier. Made as if to caress him as he sat on mother's lap outside house; same day child became ill, and could no longer stand. Had been told by one Anthoinette that during child's illness Claudatte had been to see her and asked after it, and about what they were saying. Anthoinette told her they suspected witchcraft, and that he was making investigations, so that anyone who had given the sickness would be wise to take it off. Afterwards she had come to his house and asked to buy some pigs, and then child began to recover. He reckoned that she had done something to help child, knowing very well that he suspected her, and was seeking redress. She greatly feared being taken as a witch, and had arranged for her son to take her by night to stay with a daughter in the val d'Orbey, where she had been some 4 days. They had tried to guard themselves against her ill-will by often calling her to help around the house. Also told of suspicions by son and daughter-in-law over their child, saying that son had remarked while laughing that his mother was a witch, 'et qu'il avoit encore de l'estrain pour l'ayder a brusler'.

(8) Fleurant Blaise de Hernafain, c. 29

Some 10 or 12 years earlier he had been in service of Plaison Grand Colas of La Pelliere, and when guarding beasts had quarrel with Claudatte over a small tree he was cutting down. Saw her looking at him afterwards, and he was suddenly struck

in face by a gust of warm and stinking air. Felt weak, and had pain in throat, but took animals up to mountain; there he managed to remove a small object from his throat, then vomited out something strange, after which he felt quite recovered. If Claudatte was a witch she must have caused this.

(9) Mengeon fils a Bresson Jeannel, du Dracoucel, c. 18

Told how a year before, when in a barn with Claudatte's son Mengel, latter had told him of child's illness, and how he had called his mother witch and threatened to have her arrested. Long reputation.

(26 June 1615)

(10) Didier Mengel Didier, alias Rampat, de Sachemont, c. 40

Reputed witch since her marriage, as her mother had already been earlier. Some 10 years before, when he was tenant of maire Anthoine Ferry, his master's wife had told him to take 10 goats which they had entrusted to Claudatte, and keep them through winter. She was displeased when he went to collect them, and told him that he might have no profit of them; they all died during winter, although 4 of his own survived perfectly well.

20 June 1645; interrogation

Said she was more than 55, daughter of Colas Claude Anthoine of Clemmecy, married to Lambert Claudel Ferry of the small village of le Vicq au Ban le Duc, below Sachemont. Had 5 children, 3 were now in Allemagne (one married), two at home. Knew she had been accused of witchcraft, but protested innocence.

Said that Mengel de la Hault had taken cart across field with hay, but had done no harm since there was nothing in field at the time, and she had made no threats. Generally denied all charges. Was shocked by suggestion that her son thought her a witch, and claimed that child had already been ill for 7 weeks when it was entrusted to her. Agreed that another son had left service of Jean Ferry; he had done so from fear of plague which was then in Vicq, although she had tried to persuade him to return. Subsequent death of goats had been from a sickness which affected many animals that year; this was also true of the cows that had fallen sick. Also suggested that weakness of animals might have been result of Ferry's feeding them all winter on 'estrain' and economising on hay. Over illness of Bresson Jeannel's child, said that Anthoinette was her good friend, but she had not made enquiries alleged; she had given Bresson's wife some white bread in exchange for black when she brought the child to her house and explained that it could only eat white, but this was only what one would normally do.

Continued to deny everything; said she feared a long stay in prison, and asked that her trial should take place quickly.

25 June 1615; confrontations

Zabillon wife of Bresson Jeannel added to her deposition. She had not wanted to go and live at Vicq for fear of Claudatte, and when they arrived her husband put it about that she ought to be arrested. Then told full story of child's illness, and how she had been to get white bread from Claudatte's house. Had then been told she should make offering to Beau Bernard at village of La Croix, whose power was

against witchcraft, send wine, bread and salt to be blessed, observe a 'neuvaine', and then give them to child. Had done so, and he then began to recover.

Claudatte constantly denied all charges, not admitting any threats, and saying that her accusers lied 'comme meschants gens'.

4 July 1615; procureur général de Lorraine (C.M. Remy) asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire; approved by Change de Nancy

8 July 1615; interrogation under torture

Despite numerous periods of thumbscrews, rack, and tortillons, remained quite steadfast and confessed nothing. Said she would rather die than endure torments, but would not damn her soul by false confession that she was a witch.

14 July 1615; PG suggests that she be renvoyée jusqu'à rappel. Change de Nancy approves this.

17 July 1615; note that she has been released, and exhorted to live peaceably with her neighbours in the future.