

B 8707 no 5; witch 257, Jennon la Mouratte, femme Bertremin de Laval, de Nompatelize

16 March 1611; informations préparatoires

Preceded by note that she had previously been tried in 1599, and renvoyée (1 July of that year) on advice of Change de Nancy after resisting torture.

(1) Mengeon Claudon Noel, 56

Still feared as witch since her release, and inhabitants of village tried to avoid quarrelling with her. Previous Thursday her husband had asked if he could have keeping of animals, but wanted 17 gros a head, and witness said he would not give 13 or 14. Next day sent animals out in keeping of nephew and servant, and she came up and asked them questions, notably about two cows, which she said were very fine and must be good milkers. Asked nephew if he had 'marchandé' to guard animals, and when he said no commented that in that case he was 'bien gentil guerçon' to keep them. Next day one of the cows, worth at least 8 écus, suddenly died, and he suspected this was her witchcraft, although he had told no-one of this.

(2) Mengeon Jean Regnauldin, 27

6 years earlier her daughter Colatte had been servant to late Jean Regnauldin his father, and after quarrel witness called her 'fille de sorciere'. Mother complained furiously, so his father gave him a good beating, but she left saying there were things which deserved worse, and they would see 'd'autres farces' - heard this from loft where he had hidden in fear of further beating. 2 days later an ox worth more than 10 écus died, and he and his father had always blamed her - believed to be a witch ever since her release.

(3) Girard Toussaint, 50

4 years earlier had quarrel with her husband over spring they both claimed; 2 days later his animals sickened, notably cattle (about 12). Some remained ill for 2 weeks, others for 6, and a bull died; believed this had been her witchcraft, long reputation.

(4) Didier Claudon Noel, 36

3 years ago at next harvest had been collecting tithe, and her husband had left miserably small sheaf in field of rye; went to ask him about it, and he claimed they had all been the same. Accepted it lest he be damaged by her witchcraft, but soon lost a cow and 2 oxen, with 2 more of latter ill. Went to see her, grabbed her by hair, and called her witch, threatening to kill her or have her burned if she did not heal sick animals. She pretended to be astonished, and said 'que c'estoient bien des autres nouvelles, et que se n'avoit doncq pas faict Jean Sagaire qui les avoit faict mourir.' He replied that he had no suspicion against Sagaire, but rather against her, at which point her husband arrived and separated them.

(5) Georgeon Claudon Noel, moictrier à la Grange proche Nompatelize, 40

Occasion when she had asked him for loan of cart to move some wood, but he refused because he needed it himself; next day a cow worth 9 écus died suddenly. Accused her in front of husband of being witch and having caused death of his cow, at which husband said he would take him before Mr d'Etival - but had never done so. She was so feared as a witch 'que personne ne l'ose attacquer pour quelque chose que ce soit'.

(6) Hellaine femme Didier Claudon Noel, 30

Had always borne hatred to her husband since he deposed against her at first trial. Story of argument over tithe, followed by deaths of a cow, 2 oxen, and 2 horses.

(7) Anne femme Jean Regnauldin, 29

6 years earlier her husband had been elected to make monthly levy on inhabitants, and accused protested angrily when husband was assessed at 2 blancs each month, threatening to make witness and husband feel it. Within a few days lost a cow and an ox which died in strange fashion, and they had always blamed this on her witchcraft. Also found on two occasions that baby aged 6 months had fallen out of cradle when she went quickly into garden, although it was not capable of moving cradle much. In view of threats reported by neighbours thought she was trying to smother child, and no longer dared to leave it alone.

(8) Jennon femme Jean Doridant, 30

Reputed witch, but no personal suspicion.

(9) Marguittre femme Nicolas de Cariolle, 26

Previous harvest time had come to say she was going reaping, and asked witness to take in animals when they returned; was angry when she said she could not and was going reaping herself. As she left field that evening she fell and child she was carrying on head fell face downwards, while she called on St Nicolas to preserve it - was laughing when she picked it up, but thought accused had tried to harm them both by witchcraft. Same day a wolf passed through herd and attacked her cow, tearing away a large part of leg, and she thought this too had been her doing; long reputation.

(10) Claudatte femme Symon de Besmont, 26

8 years earlier her husband had refused to lend cart to husband of accused, and then a horse fell ill, dying after 6 weeks - believed this had been her witchcraft. 2 years earlier her daughter Agathe had been in their service, and accused wanted her to make pilgrimage to la Chapelle d'Urtimont, near St Dié, while husband of witness looked after animals - very angry when he refused, and same day a pig sickened, dying next day. Believed this had also been her witchcraft.

(11) Mengeotte femme Girard Toussaint, 45

Same story as husband about dispute and all animals becoming sick.

(12) Jennon femme Jacquot Claudon Noel, 40

4 years earlier daughter of accused had beaten her daughter while they were guarding animals, and later her husband gave the girl a blow on the head. Jennon was very angry, and a few days later they lost a bull; suspected this was her witchcraft, and long reputation.

(13) Jennon femme Jean Mengenot, 50

7 yeras earlier Jean Regnauldin had dispute with her, and when they were in church on Sunday she told witness about this, saying that he would repent. Witness told him about threats, and immediately afterwards he lost an ox. Long reputation.

(14) Jean Mengenot, 46

Had deposed against her 12 years earlier, and had no suspicion since. Had heard Didier Claudon Noel call her witch 2 years earlier, accusing her of making all his animals ill, and threatening to kill her or have her burned. Neither she nor husband sought any reparation for this.

(15) Jean Regnauldin, 36

Same story as wife about monthly levy 7 years earlier; had asked her husband for 2 blancs extra in order to relieve someone else who was overcharged. Then story about cradle being upset. Also lost an ox worth 12 écus. When she was renvoyée 12 years earlier her daughter Collatte was serving his late father, and at Christmas the accused wanted him to renew this. Angry when he said he would not, and followed cart as it went to woods; as soon as she went into house an ox sickened, and died a few days later, 2 cows also died, and he and his father had always suspected her.

14 years earlier, when she was widow, asked him to arrange that she should have Georjeon Claudon Noel as her 'fassens' on 'jour des Brandons', promising 3 cakes of 9 gros each. He promised he would, but when he and companions assembled he persuaded them not to do as she wanted, since she was already reputed witch and he thought Georjeon would be very angry with them. When 'fassenatz' had been given she complained, and others told her what he had done; 2 days later was cutting branches of an oak in woods when a whirlwind made him fall. Foot was caught in a branch, so he was left hanging, while a small black bird tried to peck him. Finally prayed to God for help, at which the bird vanished, and he managed to get himself down, although face was all scratched and bloody. Believed this had been her doing, and had not told about it previously.

(16) Symon de Besmont, 34

Story of refusal to lend cart and loss of horse, as told by wife.

(17) Nicolas Cariolle, tixerant, 30

Some 4 years earlier had asked him to make her some cloth, but left in fury when he said he could not make it as soon as she wanted because he had other orders to fulfil. That evening felt great weight on him in bed, almost as if wall had

fallen, but recovered after making sign of cross with his tongue - was sure this had been her witchcraft.

(18) Jean de Besmont, 50

Had deposed against her before; no additional suspicions.

(19) Anthoine Doridant, 37

Some 5 years earlier had been threshing with her husband, and they had quarrel over some small matter. She heard of it and said in several places that he would repent; 2 or 3 days later wife became strangely ill, and remained so for 14 weeks until she began to recover. Thought this had been her witchcraft.

(20) Jacquot Claudon Noel, 50

7 years before 3 piglets had escaped and passed in front of her house, after which one immediately became black as coal and swollen, then died. He saw her in garden, and accused her of being witch and having killed it, to which she replied by wishing the devil might have his soul and that of his pig. A few days later cut some grass in garden he had near her house, but cow to which he gave it died within minutes; also lost a bull around same time. Believed all these losses had been her witchcraft.

17 March 1611; interrogation and confrontations

Said she was about 48, daughter of late Nicolas Mourel of Nompatelize. Thought she was accused as witch, but claimed she was innocent. Asked about accusations by other condemned witches, said this had been reason for previous trial 12 years earlier. Since they now wanted to start another trial, 'elle est contante qu'on la fasse mourrir, qu'elle nous pardonne sa mort, et ne dira jamais autrement quelz tourmentz que luy deussions faire endurer.'

Asked whether she had killed animals of Didier Claudon Noel after dispute over tithe, she said 'qu'elle n'est de telles gens pour faire mourrir des personnes et des bestiaulx, et que jamais elle ne pardonnera ledit Didier de la charge qu'il luy impose, et que dieu luy pardonnera s'il veult, nous requerant instamment d'escrire sa response sur notre pappier et l'envoyer a Nancy aux eschevins.' Agreed that he had taken her by hair and threatened her, saying this was why she would never pardon him; also agreed to her own remarks about Jean Sagaire, but did not explain them.

Denied all other charges. Refused to renounce devil, saying that God was her master.

Same afternoon was confronted with witnesses; no reproaches, simply continued denials.

18 March 1611; procureur for abbot of Etival asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

23 March 1611; Change de Nancy approves

7 April 1611; interrogation under torture

When given thumbscrews started to ask that for honour of God they put her on rack, as she had been previous time, but would say nothing. When racked was only given a half turn; face became black, but would not say anything, so it was judged that devil was in her and preventing her feeling anything.

Set down by fire, she started to confess. Said that Persin had been in stomach to prevent her feeling anything; had come to prison previous night and promised that she should die when racked, to which she agreed, but God had taken pity on her poor soul, so that she might not lose it. Had been seduced 14 years earlier, when she was widow with 3 small children, and had great difficulty feeding them in dearth then prevailing. Persin promised to find her a rich husband; have her money which proved to be moss, and red powder to kill people and animals.

Tried out powder on her own cow, which died., then regretted what she had done so much that she went to drown herself in ditch, and got to edge before idea that she would be damned stopped her. Then her niece Collatte, fille feu Blaise Fontaine of Biarville, aged 10, came to see her complaining that her late husband (the girl's uncle) had sold and wasted all her property as her guardian. Was angry at this, so put powder on dry pears she cooked in water, and girl died a week later. Had also killed Marion femme Georgeon Colas Noel, who did not pay her properly for hoeing, and her neighbour Nicolas de Boulain, who did not help her when she had soldiers billeted on her.

Had killed Claudon, son of Maurizatte veuve Jean de la Chambre, after quarrel with his mother - had been accused of this at first trial. Had caused Jean Regnauldin to fall from tree, and Persin had been in form of bird, but had no power to do him more harm - intention was to break his neck. Persin was also unable to kill his child, because mother had protected it with sign of the cross. Also admitted killing a few animals, and said this was all she could remember at present.

Asked about accomplices, listed Jean Sagaire and Jennon veuve Colas Ydoulx, of Nompatelize, Jean Mareschal, ermite de Boulain, Ysabel femme Mengeon Jean Dieudonné (tried with her 12 years earlier) and Jean Claude Mathieu, of la Bourgonce, Claudon Mathelon and Marguittre veuve Jean Laurent, of Brehimont, Jennon femme Claudon Girard and Marguittre femme Nicolas Jeandey, of St Rémy, and Esnel femme Demenge Bourrotte of l'Hoste du Bois. All these were living; Jean Sagaire and Claudon Mathelon were 'les plus meschans de tous'. Had seen then at sabats; had been more than 20 times each to place behind la Magdalaine and at Grand Gemel.

Usual description of sabat; ate 'oysillons', danced to sound of 'voleur'. She did not make hail, since she was busy cooking. Had sometimes been more than 60 present, but had only recognized thise she named. Said that Persin had helped her to endure the torture without feeling it last time, but on this occasion had abandoned her in her greatest need - adding that God had then aided her to confess by his grace. Asked to be put to death quickly.

8 April 1611; interrogation

Repeated earlier confessions. Said that those she had named were witches like her, and had killed various persons and animals at her instigation. Said that Persin brought her more powder when she needed it, 'et la sollicitoit tousjours de faire du mal, que c'est moult grand pitié d'une pauvre creature qui delaisse Dieu pour s'addonner au diable, au contraire sont bien heureux qui ont bonne fiance a Dieu et le servent comme il appartient, et sur tout ne fault oblier soir et matin se recommander a Dieu et se munir du signe de la Croix, et fault eviter les tristesse et

melancolie le plus que possible sera, car la tristesse et melancolie sont estez causes de sa tentation . .'

9 April 1611; brought before bourgeois of Etival, to whom her confessions were read out, she confirmed them, begging abbot and bourgeois to have pity on her poor children. Those present then left her to will of the duke, so that she should be executed for her faults.

Procureur then asked for death sentence, which was subsequently approved by Change de Nancy (date missing here).