

B 3317 no 1; Witch 023, Didie veuve Demenge Pourlatte, de Blamont

10 May 1599; Procureur Fiscal of comté de Blamont states that previous day he had heard that a young man was vomiting various strange substances after a quarrel with a woman living in same house. Had been to visit him, and had heard that the woman, Didie veuve Demenge Pourlatte, had blasphemously said that she was 'aussy femme de bien que la Vierge Marye'. Asked that she should be imprisoned and information taken about the blasphemy, possible witchcraft, and statement apparently made by her daughter aged 17 that she wished to be rebaptised.

11 May 1599; deposition taken from Philippe son of the late Demenge Tisserand of Réchicourt le Chasteau, aged about 19, currently in service of Claudon Mengin cordonnier of Blamont. Asked if he had quarrelled with any person suspected of witchcraft. Said that some 3 weeks before Didie, who lived in a room in same house, had offered a small area of vines for sale, and he had agreed to buy it for 45 francs, to be paid in two instalments. When she spoke to others they told her he didn't have the money to pay, and she decided to withdraw from the deal; told him that 'par la mort diable' he should not have the land, although he protested that he had already given her 'le denier dieu'. Went off to have supper, and immediately became ill; completely lethargic and 'frenetique' for 9 days. Then recovered his senses after Didie had come and sat by his bed in the kitchen; next morning began to vomit up strange things such as little knots of hair, stones, buttons of glass. Suspected this was witchcraft by Didie, although he had not previously heard her suspected. On previous Friday his master had said to Didie that if she did not remove the illness she had given to his servant, he would cut her throat. She offered him her throat saying 'tien coupe', but he took her distaff and beat her across the shoulders while calling her witch. She said she would complain, but he did not think she had done so. Also believed a strange cat had been in room on second night of his illness.

12 May 1599; informations préparatoires

(1) Jean de Nomeny, bourgeois de Blamont, 34

Previous Sunday evening had passed house where Didie was in company with several persons, including her son and her brother from Hallouille. Heard her make claim about being as good as Virgin Mary, to which brother said 'que sy elle estoit femme de bien qu'elle maintienne son poinct, mais que sy elle estoit autre il vouldroit qu'elle fut desja bien loing'.

(2) Didon la Sorette le jeune, boulanger bourgeois de Blamont, 24

Similar deposition to previous one.

(3) Jean Ranarre pelletier bourgeois de Blamont, c. 40

Also testified to having overheard what sounds like family quarrel heard by first 2 witnesses. Previous day had heard Claudon Mongin threaten to have her burned as a witch, to which she had replied 'qu'elle n'en craindoit dieu ny le monde', followed by comparison with Virgin.

(4) Jean du Prey le viel charpentier bourgeois de Blamont, c. 50

Witness to same dispute - she had evidently been firmly shut up by others

- (5) Jean du Prey le jeune, fils du precedent, c. 32

Supported other depositions.

- (6) Francois Pelletier le jeune, bourgeois de Blamont, c. 36

Similar deposition.

- (7) Jean Menusier, bourgeois de Blamont, 40

Told how on Sunday when her brother and son had come to see her, they had heard a noise in the house and withdrawn, asking if it was 'la justice'; were told it was the governor visiting the sick man. Then Didie came out, holding her chapelet in her hand, and said to the crowd 'me voicy'. Saw her brother and son, and asked them if they were not going to take vengeance for the charges that were being made against her; argument followed.

- (8) Gaitte femme au sieur Nicolas Gellée, lieutenant du prévôt, 55

Had employed accused to work for her while she lived at Hallouille, and since she had remarried and come to Blamont. Had never seen ill in her, but other women had reported incident when she had been frightened, and had said she had been much less fearful in country than she was in Blamont.

- (9) Barbelline veuve Remy Boulengier, de Blamont, c. 32

When working with Didie in house of previous witness, had heard her tell of an occasion when her first husband had beaten her severely, and as she tried to leave house there was a noise of horses outside. Also told of two occasions when as they were working Didie had been very disturbed and fearful over sudden noises. Suggested that her late husband Demenge Pourlat had become ill after eating some veal; had also heard from mother-in-law Bernarde (veuve Jean Coustellier) of incident when he had thrown pan in which she was cooking fish across the room, making remark about the veal. Also said that Bernarde had accompanied him when he went to fetch Didie from Hallouille, and had been surprised when she said no farewells to neighbours; replied to suggestion that she should by saying that it was not far, and she would be returning soon. Also heard things about her in village which made her unwilling to accompany her back.

- (10) Claudine femme Jean Cunelier, bourgeois de Blamont, c. 46

Had often been to Hallouille, of which her husband was native, but had heard no evil of Didie, although her mother had been strongly suspected of witchcraft. Since she came to Blamont had heard that her husband say she would rather give him poison than a good soup, and that some reheated veal had given him 'ung mauvais bouqual'. Told of sickness of Philippe, and of how he had asked her for 'denier dieu' back in sign of cancellation of contract, while accusing her of bewitching him. Had heard Didie say to Claudon Mengin 'qu'elle estoit plus femme de bien au pertuix de son cul que ledit Mongin n'estoit au plus beau de son visage.'

Two women had obtained from Didie a knife, some bread, salt, and yeast, which they had placed under Philippe's 'chevet', and his condition had immediately improved. Said that various people had claimed to be able to identify things he vomited up.

(11) Marion femme Claudon Valleton, de Blamont, c. 30

Had heard nothing against her since she came to Blamont, except in connexion with Philippe's illness.

(13 May 1599)

(12) Claudatte femme Didier Mengin, c. 44

Told of mother's reputation, of husband's belief that she had given him sickness in the veal, and of Philippe's illness. Said that previous day Barbelline, servant to the widow of Claudon Cuguin, who had come to visit Philippe, told how accused had asked her if witches who died without being burned were damned - she replied she had no idea. She had feared Didie as a witch, and always refused offers of bread etc.

(13) Magdelaine femme Ambroise Caba, de Blamont, c. 32

Told how when Demenge Pourlat had been ill he asked her to make him some soup; she asked why his wife didn't do so, to which he replied 'que c'estoit une diable de femme, qu'elle luy donroit plustost la damnation que la salvation'. Said she had heard from Jeanne la Menchotte of Repas, whose daughter had married Didie's son, that the girl had frequent quarrels with her mother-in-law, so that she was frightened that she would cause her some harm.

(14) Claudon Mongin cordonnier, bourgeois de Blamont, c. 40

Repeated suspicions of Didie's husband, and then told story of Philippe's sickness, and of threats he had made to her - tallies almost exactly with account by former.

(15) Jeanne femme Claudon Mengin, 40

Added nothing of substance to husband's deposition.

(16) Barbe femme Jean Duprey le jeune, 33

Told of occasion when her husband was already sick and she had expressed anger against him. Then told of Philippe's illness, and how she had remembered a case at Lunéville some 14 years earlier when objects taken from suspect had been placed in bed (suspect burned soon after), and advised similar action. They obtained them from Didie without antagonising her by saying that they needed to come from a widow - she replied that she would willingly do what she could.

(17) Jean Duprey charpentier, bourgeois de Blamont, c. 34 (same as 5?)

Suspicions of mother, and by her husband.

(18) Mre. René le Cerf, chirurgien bourgeois de Blamont, 25

Told how about a year before her husband had come and asked him to alleviate his sickness; prescribed a purgation, but Didie refused to allow him to take it, even when witness went to house to plead with her - said there was no cure, and that he had already tried many.

(19) Sabillon femme Didier de Dompierre, de Blamont, c. 46

No substantial point in addition to general suspicions.

(20) Jean Ranarre pelletier, c. 40 (no 3)

No additional material.

(21) Bernarde veuve Jean Coustellier, c. 50

Told of her visit to Hallouille, and of hearing that people there were very glad to see her go. Very few present at wedding. On return the owner of the house in which they all lived, Mre. Nicolle, curé d'Amenoncourt (resident at monastery of Domevre) told her that Pourlat must leave, because he had heard nothing good of his wife. Added vague story about a brother who had died after he failed to mend a window for her. Claimed also to have suggested remedy of obtaining knife, which she had learned when serving chaplain of Baccarat (suspect later executed there too).

(22) Sebille Cloutier veuve Colas Bourdaine, c. 42

Story of Didie being frightened at work again.

(23) Barbelline femme Jean Bouchat, bourgeois de Blamont, c. 33

Only account of stories going around at time of arrest.

(24) Jean Mongenat portier de la portemba de Blamont, c. 78

Had been told after her marriage that inhabitants of Hallouille were glad to see back of her, believing her to be a witch.

(25) Dieudonnée Nicolas Thiebault, servante a Richard Poirat de Blamont, c. 35

Told how previous year she had seen accused planting beans on wet ground; had seemed able to keep feet in a bowl and move where she pleased - but witness had thought no ill of this.

(26) Didier de Dompierre drappier bourgeois de Blamont, c. 50

Evidence about husband's complaints.

(15 May 1599)

(27) Marie femme Francois Rouyer, de Blamont, c. 32

Told how both Didie and her husband had consulted her about their discords; implication at one point that he was something of a drunkard, who spent the whole day in the tavern, then fell into bed in a stupor.

(28) Claudatte femme Jean Pinadel, portier a Blamont, c. 40

Repeated general suspicions about husband and Philippe

(29) Sebille veuve Jean Mercier, de Mongetin, residant a Froumouville, c. 60

Had known Didie during first marriage - had seen no ill in her then. Story of Philippe's illness.

Didie's daughter Clemence then interrogated about reported statement that she wished to be rebaptised. Said that Claudon Mengin had said he didn't want her to stay in his house unless she was rebaptised, so she declared herself willing. Had seen no harm in her mother, who had advised her to pray to God and not to leave the house without washing hands and crossing herself night and morning.

19 May 1599; procureur fiscal of comté de Blamont asks for interrogation and confrontations.

24 May 1599; confrontations

No additional material.

9 June 1599; interrogation

Said she was about 60. Was daughter of Mengin Chanoine and his wife Jehenne, of Hallouille; married Demenge le Lorrain when she was 18, and lived with him for 23 years, then 10 years as widow. Remarried with Demenge Pourlat, but this only lasted 20 months before his death. Contradicted herself slightly, saying that her first husband had not beaten her, then admitting telling story of occasion when he found no meal awaiting him and did beat her. Denied various accusations about second husband, saying he had been ill when they were married. Also said that she might have been given a mistaken reputation as a witch because of her sister-in-law, also called Didie, who was indeed much suspected. Also agreed that her second husband had once thrown pot of soup on ground; this was during quarrel because she suspected that he went to tavern when he was supposed to be working on vines. Agreed to most of circumstantial detail about Philippe's sickness, giving quite rational account of various episodes.

31 May 1599; procureur fiscal asks for question extraordinaire.

2 June 1599; Change de Nancy orders that she should only be threatened with torture at this stage.

9 June 1599; interrogation

Began to confess before even seeing instruments of torture. Named as accomplices the widow of Didier Virtemberg of Blamont and a man from Blamont with a 'pied fort'. Said she had been seduced a year before, when angry about damage to vines by hail; had been taken to sabat, but whole thing disappeared soon after her arrival. Made no further admissions, and then said that her confession had been induced by promise from sergeant that she would then be released, and she was 'femme de bien'. Immediately pressed on this, she again admitted to being a witch, and now said she had given Philippe illness with black powder given by her master.

Under further interrogation, said she had been seduced in lifetime of first husband, and confessed to some maléfices committed at Hallouille. Asked if she would not revoke this confession as she had previous one, said that it had all been false, made out of fear of torture, and that she was not a witch at all. Then finally confirmed first confession of seduction a year earlier.

11 June 1599; procureur fiscal asks for torture again

Same day; Change de Nancy agrees

14 June; interrogation under torture

Started by saying that she had been seduced 15 years earlier, when upset because one of her children had fallen in the fire and been badly burned. It appeared, however, that she had merely been given some white ointment which cured child over 5 or 6 weeks, and for which she had paid 2 deniers. Then confirmed seduction previous year, and maléfice on Philippe - but then said she had killed various animals as in previous confession. When inconsistency of time was pointed out to her, went back to 15 year old seduction. Told of several attendances at sabbat, where they had made fogs to spoil crops. Identified three accomplices; Jennon femme au Gros Didier, Didie de Counay, wife of her brother Demenge Chanoine, and the widow of Didier Virtemberg. Then listed various maléfices in revenge for small wrongs.

15 June 1599; procureur fiscal asks for death sentence.

16 June 1599; Change de Nancy agrees.

18 June 1599; formal sentence by echevins of Blamont.

14 July 1599; sentence carried out

Land at Hallouille was bought by her brother Demenge Chanoine for 100 francs, and her son, Didier Saulnier, for 15 francs. Personal property realised 38 Fr.