

B 5344 no 2; witch 099, Mayette femme Dietrich Gaste de Wirming

Didier Grand of Wirming had made himself partie formelle, claiming he had suffered much misfortune through her agency. On 19 August 1608 the substitut for the PG of Lorraine at Dieuze, J. Kieckler asked local court to allow her arrest; her accuser was either to be arrested as well, or to provide good and sufficient security.

22 August 1608; informations preparatoires

(1) Margueritte femme Cornelius Marchal, 50

16 years earlier they had both been sowing in fields, when Mayette went off home to fetch some water. Later found house had been burgled, with sheets and plates taken. Asked daughter aged 10 or 12 who had been in house, and she said only Mayette, who lived in a barn close by. Husband then went there with a hatchet in his hand, calling her witch and demanding that she return stolen goods, or he would have her and her mother burned. She made strong denial, and threatened the girl, saying 'que sy cela devoit demeurer (ou durer) dix ans, qu'il faudroit qu'icelle fille meure de ses mains'. 2 years later the girl fell ill and died in 3 days, all yellow; believed this had been Mayette's doing, in view of threats. She had also stolen some linen yarn belonging to Karst Weber from the church, then sold it to servant of curé of Grostenquin. Suspected by several people as a witch.

(2) Mengette femme Christman (at wars in Low Countries), sister-in-law of accused, 44

14 years before they had been living together in house of Mayette's father, when they quarrelled because witness claimed she was stealing her eggs and other things. Mayette beat her and drove her out, although she was pregnant, at which she called her witch; replied 'que jamais elle ne mourroit d'aultres mains que des siennes'. Later Mayette had asked her for loan of a bichet of oats - this was when husband had already left for war, where he had been 6 years - which she refused. Later did lend her two 'volettes', after which she gave witness a piece of soft cheese, telling her to eat it. Immediately went out of her mind, haring a voice telling her to drown herself in a well in front of their house, or to take a knife and kill her brother-in-law's child. On Mengette's advice they made three separate visits to Wargaville together, but illness lasted 3 years. Believed accused had given her this, as well as killing 2 children, a horse, and a calf. Also thought she had given husband a bad leg, then cured him.

(3) Ysambart Vieulx Maire, de Birmingen, 60

Over last 20 years she had been called witch, and had only taken action once; this was against sister-in-law, and after a while she asked for case to be dropped, paying the costs herself. Only did this after going before chatelain of Dieuze, who condemned her to pay; witness told her that she had cost him at least 100 thalers, since if she had been burned as she deserved he would not have suffered the misfortunes he had. Took no action over this. About 2 years before she had asked his son and valet to bring back some flour from mill when they were fetching some of their own, but they did not do this. Same night a horse aged 5 became ill, sweating heavily, and died within 2 days - when it was cut up its flesh was

blackened as if burned, so that butcher said it had been given a drink by some evil persons. Suspected her; long reputation.

(4) Jean le Jeune, laboureur, 50

After quarrel with sister-in-law had heard Mayette say to someone 'qu'il defende bien, que quant a elle que c'estoit peu de cas d'elle et qu'il estoit temps' - then moved away quickly when they saw witness. 6 years before her brother had taken some cherries from his tree and damaged it, after which she had said that if they had to pay 2 deniers it would cost the witness 100. Since had had 5 cattle dead, over which he suspected her.

(5) Thomas de la Haye, manouvrier, 50

15 years before he and his first wife were in bed around midnight when 2 women appeared, standing at foot of bed with blue candle; he was unable to speak, and could not wake his wife. A week later he told his father-in-law, who asked her what she had been doing there. She came to reproach him, at which he accused her of being a witch and said he would like to have her burned; she replied he should be quiet - she had done them no harm, and would never do any as long as she lived. 4 years later he and his present wife were living in same house with her, and was a dispute when his wife milked her goat in mistake for her own - she wished her to the devil, and next day their goat died. Suspected her; long reputation.

(6) Hanns Fritsch, laboureur, 36

About a year before had dispute when he claimed her pigs were eating his hens; after this 2 of his goats ate some of her cabbages, at which she wished him to the devil, regretting he had come to live there. He told her she was a witch, and challenged her to take him to court, but she would not.

(7) Konne, laboureur, 22

2 years earlier one of her pigs got into house of his mother, who struck it and broke bone in its back. She was angry, and said 'qu'elle prioit dieu, que ceulx qui avoient ainsy battu son couchon en puissent avoir aultant'. Within 3 days his mother's legs became swollen, then this spread, until she died 9 weeks later. 2 days before death told him Mayette was cause of this; long reputation.

(26 August 1608)

(8) Cornelius Marchal, 52

Repeated wife's testimony about death of daughter.

(9) Philibert François, tonnelier, 35

She was his sister-in-law; had heard several say she was a witch. Some 8 years before had gone home from work on winter day and went to bed, then saw two women, of whom she was one, in his room. Called out 'Jesus', and his wife (who was spinning in kitchen) came in with candle, to find they had vanished. had lost several animals, but did not know who was responsible. Asked if he had any

dispute with her, said only that she had complained he lived in her father's house while she had no share, to which he replied that he had bought it 'bien cher'.

(10) Jean Mulnier, du neuf moulin de Hingsange, 40

5 or 6 years before had come to mill, but he was so busy he told her he could not grind her corn until next day. Went off, but returned later with 'corbeille' of corn; his son aged 6 was getting beans ready to cook outside. Was told by poor man living with him (now dead - house had burned down) that he saw her strike the boy so hard on side of head that he fell to the ground. Was in great pain afterwards, and died 2 weeks later, saying his ear hurt him, and Mayette had done it. His wife had often called her witch without any action following.

(11) Marguitte femme du precedent, 30

Told same story as husband about death of child; ear was always red after the blow, and before death so much blood came from nostril that sheet was all bloody. Next time she came to the mill witness told her to go away and not come again, saying she had been responsible for death of her child and she would never forget it - did not come again for 4 years.

(12) Mongeatte femme Lampert, 40

10 or 12 years before had heard her called witch several times without seeking redress, especially by relatives. Her brother-in-law (witness 9) had driven her out of house; witness asked her why she did not take action, she replied that she might waste her money and that of her relatives. Her first husband had fallen from a tree, breaking leg and back, and Mayette said as they were carrying him to house that it was a pity he had not broken his neck in two, which made her suspect she was cause.

5 September 1608; C.M. Remy asks for interrogation

9 September 1608; interrogation

Said she was about 46, native of Virming; late parents were Khune and la petite Sinelle. After deaths had been in service at Riche (2 years), Racrange (1), Bermering (1), at mill called Tenscher Müll, then at Bermering, finally at Conthil (18 months) until marriage to Didier Gast, some 24 years before.

Knew she had been accused as witch, but denied she was such. Denied all charges, but said she had offered to make sister-in-law some soup when she was ill, which she refused. After injury to her pig had wished that person who had done it might walk as it did - but had not made her neighbour ill, although she often visited her during sickness. Admitted she had struck the miller's child a light blow, because he was taking grain from basket, and this might have been on his ear.

11 September 1608; confrontations

Continued to deny charges. Agreed that she had accompanied her sister-in-law Mengette on pilgrimages to Wargaville, and that when husband's leg was bad she had suggested use of herbal remedy (agrimoine) to cure it. Said she had paid expenses of abortive case because her husband would not defend her.

Thomas de la Haye added that 18 years earlier a woman had been executed as a witch at Hingsange who said that the mother of the accused and three of her older daughters were her accomplices - accused was eldest daughter. She said she knew nothing of it and had been in service at time, he said she had been married for 24 years.

Admitted she had threatened daughter of Cornelius Marchal, but denied having made her ill. No reproaches to any witnesses, but denied being called witch on various occasions, or having done any harm.

16 September 1608; PG asks for question ordinaire et extraordinaire

17 September 1608; Change de Nancy approves

20 September 1608; interrogation under torture

Denied at first, but when lifted once or twice said they should put her down and she would tell the truth. Said she and her husband had various difficulties between them, because they lacked means to feed themselves; he criticized and beat her. Evil spirit appeared to her behind house and promised to make her rich, and at the second occasion she yielded. Usual seduction scene; name was Persin, gave her money which proved to be horsedung.

Had been taken to miller's garden to meet accomplices and spoil crops, but were prevented by ringing of bells. Had sticks, and called on name of devil to be carried over hedges and bushes. Gave her small pot containing powder from stillborn child, which was hidden at foot of oak tree in garden.

2 years later, after beating her, her master took her to house of Petter Wolfen Hanns at Altorff, and they went out to kill a horse with a drink. Others present were la femme du Grand Schaness, Enchine la Jacquessen of Berg, and Engel femme Kuntz Engel.

Another banquet held on Kipberg in autumn, but 'ne vint a perfection'. 30 or 40 present, but only knew Kilch Elss, Engel femme Hanns, Dess la Beurine, Mayette femme Adam Wirth, and Nelich femme du Marchal. Others were from Berg, Bermering, Leyningen, and Altorff. Met in house of Grand Schan by night 'non point en leurs personnes, mais comme esprits et quelque fois comme chattes'.

Asked about being in stable of vieux maire Ysambert, agreed she had been, with la Scheckersen of Lening, femme Hanns Schrempen, one from Berg, la Fromeck of Lening, and one from Altorff. Asked who captain was, said it was Bier Nickel of Altorff, to whom they paid 3 gros as tribute each year. Also named Engel femme Kuness Hanns and Keth femme Petter Grewen, of Berg.

Confessed to series of crimes as imputed by witnesses, in response to modest prompting by judges. Also said they had used body of stillborn child to make powder, using bones as 'allumettes'.

Agreed she had been with accomplices in bedchambers trying to harm Thomas and her brother-in-law, but been unable to accomplish this. In latter case left through windows in form of cats, and were always accompanied by the demons who were their masters.

Held meetings on Altdorffer Karberg, in numbers up to 50. Also present were a Frenchman named Welsch Lorentz of Altorff, and a girl named Ursulle whose uncle wanted to give her in marriage to young man named Belzebock. Also a musician named Gellfogel from Altorff. Held council, but had to break this up unfinished as day approached. Also met on Cottenberg.

Since she was 'variable' in her confessions, was given torture again. Confessed to killing 2 or 3 horses in addition to those already named. Added names of wife of Schelapffel of Obricken, and Barbe of Brucken, femme Nickelsche, to list of accomplices. Confessed she and accomplices had killed mother of Contz after incident with pig. Asked about host at communion, said she had taken it out of church and hidden it.

Finally said she was 'bien joyeuse que ledit Maling estoit allé arrier d'elle et qu'elle vouloit mourir comme une bonne Chrestienne'.

25 September; PG asks for death sentence. Change de Nancy approves, subject to repetition of confessions without torture.

27 September; execution at Dieuze