

B 8941 no 1. Witch 317; Mengotte femme Pierre Gascon de St. Nicolas.

30 July 1577; informations preparatoires

(1) Françoise femme Pieresson Thiebault couvreur, 40

General reputation. Said she had beaten her son Claudon, so that he was now crippled and had to go about on crutches begging; attributed this to her witchcraft.

(2) Claudon fils Françoise Pieresson, 15

Three years ago had been getting alms at St Nicolas when her daughter Mengette took one away from him, and she struck him with plate, saying 'vas tu en as assez pour toute ta vie'. Soon afterwards went home after gleaning and lost proper use of limbs, which he believed to be her witchcraft.

On confrontation she admitted touching him, but not making remark.

(3) Nicolas Rouyer, 30

Some 3 years before his sister Catherine had been to get flour for his child, and as she passed church was interrupted by Mengette, who asked what she was carrying, stirred it, and said it was fine flour. When child was given it became ill, with legs all blackened, and as soon as he heard sister's account he suspected Mengette. Sent for her, and believing she was a witch placed two brooms, one above chimney and other by door. She came, but did not want to look at child, and kept looking around room, then he chased her out with a stick - child died soon afterwards. Believed she was a witch or there were none.

Confrontation - denied making child ill, agreed she had been to house and seen brooms.

(4) Margueritte femme du precedent, 25

Same story; child died after being ill for 3 weeks.

(5) Mengette femme Claude Soucquer marchand, 30

Repeated same story as above, adding that Mengette asked how child was when looking at flour, and was told it was well. Then explained business with brooms - other women in house advised this, and idea was that she would not be able to leave room while they were in position if she was a witch. Did not want to look at child, saying that he was very ill and she did not know what to do - but was unable to leave room until brooms were removed. When Nicolas (brother of witness) wanted to attack accused, witness told him she was on way to fetch something for child to prevent this.

(6) Rose femme Claudin Partye boucher, 27

Told elaborate story about how Mengette had come to buy meat from their stall, then hung around. Husband said to her in German that she should go inside with her child, because he had a bad opinion of accused. Did so, but Mengette still there, and others waiting to buy meat; said that they would know women were

always 'songeuses a faire leur proffict', and she went out again. Mengette touched child's head and said it was 'un bel enfant', but soon afterwards it became ill, not wanting to feed. She was called in to see it, and gave them her chapelet to put round its neck; later sent daughter with a silver cross, but child still died. Said she had not heard before or after that she was a witch, and forgave her.

Confrontations - said she had not touched child, but agreed to having visited it and handed over chapelet.

(7) Anne femme Nicolas Picard orfevre, 25

Told how some 3 years before she had seen Mengette coming directly towards her in hall of town when she was carrying her child; frightened because of her bad reputation, but she touched child, and she took it back home. Immediately became ill and died 3 days later of unidentified illness.

(8) Nicolas Toural marchand, 36

General reputation only.

(9) Pierrot Pouillet sergent, 40

Told of dispute after he had collected a sol for 'rolbes' due to seigneur from her daughter - she seems to have thought she should not pay. He fell ill for three weeks, with leg all swollen, and wife had to threaten her that he might have her put in prison before she would agree to gather herbs to bathe him with. General reputation.

(10) Anne femme Nicolas Recouvreur, 40

Some 3 years earlier Mengette had asked her to take her daughter to teach her sewing; she agreed on condition that she would no longer go around begging with her mother as she had previously done. When this condition was broken she would not take girl back. Some 2 months later her brother and sister fell ill; she believed that Mengette had given sister something to eat, then illness had been transmitted to him. Sister died after a week, then Mengette came to say she had heard of this, and visited brother who was ill in bed. Left alone with him, she touched his face and body, then told her he would recover, and that she should have called her to see sister in time. Gave her a couple of pieces of money. Reputation 30 years.

Confrontation - admitted visiting brother, but denied touching him or doing any harm.

(11) Mre Pierre Warin chirurgien, 45

His wife had dispute with Mengette some 3 years earlier when she did not want to give her money for some wheat. Latter said they were 'meschantes gens et qu'ilz ne vivoient guiere'. Some 18 months later she had a long illness, during which she told him she imagined Mengette was cause. Asked him to send for her, but he would not, saying 'veulx tu que je perde mon bien alentour de telle mauvaise femme Je ne me scauroyt tenir de me prendre a elle.' Wife later died, and in view of long reputation he suspected Mengette.

On confrontation admitted going to ask for grain, but denied any menaces or doing any harm.

(6 August 1577)

(12) Jehan Claude jeune fils, 20

Previous March had been one of those repairing roof of hall when someone threw down a piece of debris which just missed Mengette. Looked up thinking it was him, and called 'Bacquest je te romperay encor l'autre jambe'. Went back to hospital, and was sitting on stool by fire when it collapsed so that he fell into fire and was burned. Believed she had caused this; had later been treated by charity of governor of town.

10 August 1577; interrogation

Said she was native of St Nicolas and had always lived there; had been married there and had 5 children. Had lived respectably, sometimes by spinning, at other times seeking alms from good people on account of her poverty. Her hands were now 'perclus' so that she could not work.

19 July 1577; interrogation

Said she was about 50; husband had left her long ago, and she did not know if he was still alive. Questioned about how her face was blackened and injured, claimed to have inflicted this herself in prison with iron chain; judges thought she was too feeble to have done this. Also suggestion that a pot of grease had been found, which might be that of witches; she said it was for her hands. Agreed that she had been asked to heal Nicolas Rouyer's child, and had been on pilgrimage (with 2 other women) to this effect. Admitted seeing brooms, and had been told this was because of suspicion she was a witch. She had struck Claudon Thiebault with her plate because he took alms away from her daughter, but denied making statement/threat alleged.

Asked why around Whitsun she had gone to sleep in house of Urban Lamoullieur's wife, rather than in her own room; said she had been frightened because the sergent was threatening to put her in prison. Said she had given sergent's wife some dried herbs, after bathing with which he had recovered.

Asked whether she had not fled when Janne la Bourguignotte was arrested, said she had not done so, and had stayed in her room in house of Mengin Drappier. Finally asked about making hail, declared she was innocent of any such act.

24 July 1577; confrontations

Janne veuve Nicolas Vincent, herself in prison, claimed that when they had both been begging she had asked Mengette for a share of alms she had received; was finally given 6d, with remark 'd'aultant qu'elle en avoit voulu avoir qu'elle s'en repentiroit'. Immediately afterwards she became lame, and could only suspect Mongette. On confrontation latter denied giving her money or making threat.

Also confronted with Claudon Thiebault, but not with any other witnesses. Threatened with torture, but continued to deny threatening him or doing him harm.

29 July 1577; procureur général (Maimbourg) asks for formal taking of evidence and confrontations for both Mengeotte la Gaigende and Jeanne veuve Nicolas Vincent.

13 August 1577; Maimbourg now asks for torture of both women. No sign of further evidence here.

14 August 1577; Change de Nancy approves torture for Mengeotte, but in case of Jeanne, 'attendu l'imbecillité de son aage', she is merely to be threatened with torture.

19 August 1577; interrogation under torture

At first denied, but when racked she asked to be put down so that she could confess. 3 years or more ago, when by river at La Chapelle at 6 in morning, was approached by a man in black, whose name was Pensée de femme, and who said she was 'bien faulchee'. She told him why, and he then put his hand to her forehead to remove chrism, saying 'qu'il luy donnoit puissance que tout ceulx qui luy feroient mal et qu'elle auroit quelque haine a eulx en les frappant de sa main qu'elle les feroit mourir et malade comme elle vouleroit et les guarriroit si faire le vouloit et qu'elle n'en eust soulcy et luy donna quelque pouldre pour leur donner si elle vouloit ou bien puissance de les toucher seulement avec sa main'. Claimed to have thrown powder away in fields without using it.

Admitted causing illness of Claudon Thiebault, and to using powder in flour to kill child of Nicolas Rouyer, who had frequently been rude to her as she was begging outside church. Had touched head of child of Claudin Partye with hand she had coated with powder; bore grudge against mother, whose first child it was, because of occasion when she had been rude to her before her marriage. Had also used powder on hand to kill child of Nicolas Picard, after she had several times been refused alms at house.

Admitted making sergent ill (by touching) because of money he had collected from daughter; after his wife returned money she had used herbs to cure him, and had never intended to kill him. Said she had not caused death of sister of Anne Recouvreur, but had healed her brother by touching him, and would have healed sister had she been called in time. Agreed that she had asked her master to cause accident to Jehan Claude, when he had fallen in fire. Denied causing any harm to wife of Pierre Warin.

All these confessions produced in response to questions based on depositions - she was led through the evidence and made suitable responses.

24 August 1577; Mengeotte confirms earlier confessions

18 September 1577; Maimbourg asks for death sentence - burning alive. Also lengthy section about Jeanne, suggesting that she now be tortured.

19 September 1577; Change de Nancy approves

25 September 1577; definitive sentence from court at St Nicolas.