

B 8945; witch 319, Nicole veuve Mengin Nigal, de Saint Nicolas

Report that on 10 July 1582 she had been publicly accused of witchcraft by a woman of St Nicolas who was going about the streets and gardens 'comme forcenée'. After this Nicole had thrown herself down a well, and had tried to resist attempts by neighbours to rescue her; now held prisoner on orders of Procureur général of duchy.

(No date); interrogation

Said she was about 60, widow of a 'gisseur'. Native of Romey-sur-Meuse, father named Jean de Mallein, but had never known father or mother, had lived at St Nicolas for 50 years. Had been in service in 5 households, for 4 years, 2 years, 18 months, 3 years, and unstated period until first marriage. This had been to chartier named Jean Lescabelle, and had lasted 14 years. Had two children, who had been absent long since; one was in Allemagne, did not know where other was. Second marriage had followed after some 6 months of widowhood.

Said she did not know why she was in prison 'et voudroit estre morte'. Asked reason for despair, said it was on account of false witnesses. Went on to say it was 'une bastarde femme a Jean Recouvreur nomée Mongeatte, laquelle dict qu'elle Mongeatte tomba au Bellihesse, et elle prevenue la releva, et que mesme l'auroit pensé'. Denied she had actually healed her, but admitted that she had attended some women 'usant des graines, que l'on leve d'une herbe, appellée l'herbe St Gegault.

Interrogée pour quelle maladie

A dict que pour le mal de la mere, elle recueille ladite graine quant elle est meure, entre les deux notre dame, puis la met sur un peu de brasier, et de la fumée en forme d'estuve se guarissent les patientes, moyennant qu'elle soit bien estoupée de peur que la fumée ne vienne a la narine, Ce fait elle mesme fait le lict, et les couche bien proprement, et sont guaries dedans vingt quatre heures.'

Denied using any other remedies; asked if patients recovered if another made the bed, said they did, but she knew best how to make it. Said she had not seen Mongeatte for 18 months until she came and called her witch, having two stones in her hands, which she removed. Nicole then dined in company with wife of Nicolas Gergonne, after which she took bed out into the sun. Later went to draw water from well and fell in; during rescue arms were too weak to hold chain, and she fell back twice.

Judges suggested that she perjured herself, and that in view of statement that she wished she were dead she had intended to kill herself. Insisted that she had not, but then as now 'maladieuse qu'elle est, et desja surexigé, ne desire que rendre a Dieu l'ame qu'il luy at preste.'

Asked if she had treated Jean Cordier at his house, 'A dict que non, bien vray qu'un jour elle trouva la femme dudit Cordier devant l'eglise. Laquelle luy demanda s'elle scavoit rien pour guerir son mari qui c'estoit blessé aux allouettes, la prioit, luy en doner, a quoy elle a dict, qu'un jour auroit este blessée, chez Claude le paticier, pour laquelle blessure guerir, elle print de la morvelle, senson camomille, et du fromageon, qu'elle fait cuire avec vin blanc, que de mesme failloit l'en tirer, qu'il se gueriroit sy ce n'estoit que folure.' Two or three days later was passing Cordier's house, when wife begged her to come and see him, which she agreed to do. Had given her a franc, although she had not wanted to take it.

Agreed that she had treated late wife of Michiel Bonniller for 'mal de mere', and she had been completely better for 3 years; had not seen her when she had

relapse, and had not been called to her. Asked if she had not given all her clients the sickness, so that she could get money for healing them, she denied this strongly. Had learned technique from Dame Meline femme au Sr Hanry Go de Neufchastel, 'laquelle trouva cela, sur ung libvre, elle detenue estant jeusne garse pour berser leurs enffans.' Had only been using it for 10 years, since her husband left for the war during the dearth.

'Interrogée, sy se retrouvant seulette delaissée de son marit, pauvre et necessiteuse, ne luy ayant rien laissé elle n'at heu quelques opinions mauvaises, veu mesme, que des adoncq, elle commença a user de telz medicamens, et non plustost.

At dict qu'elle s'est tousjours comportée en femme de bien, et lors que son marit estoit avec elle, il ne luy donnoit loysir de hanter aux autres maisons.'

24 July 1582; informations

(1) Catherine Humbert veuve Jean Humbert de St Nicolas, 60

Said they had lived in same house (in different rooms) for four years. Later she had a child sick, and Nicole refused to visit, saying she no longer gave medicines. Had never seen any cause of reproach in her.

(2) Jean Cordier de St Nicolas, 40

Told how over last year he had had a very painful leg; wife had been told that Nicole gave many remedies, and had obtained 'decoction d'herbes' and later 'graisse de chartier', but only got worse. Stopped coming, and told his wife she had been put out of house where she was living because she had been treating him. Begged to help because he was in great pain, replied 'Je scay bien qu'il a heu beaucoup de mal et qu'il n'a guieres repose'; made difficulty about taking franc, finally said 'allez vous en et passez par certaines rues, et il se portera bien', after which he gradually recovered. Witness thought Mongeatte des Woirelz had given him the sickness; his child had been covered with red spots, and Mongeatte had healed him immediately with herbs.

(3) Catherine femme Jean Cordier, 28

Same story as her husband; had heard from 'la grande barbe' how she had used same remedy. On last encounter it seemed that Nicole tried to give her back a teston she had previously been paid, and witness claimed that she knew words which had passed between her and her husband. When she had been in house witness said to her 'tante Nicole vous avez les mains bien douce', to which she said she had not, but put hand on her skin. Same evening a red spot came up, which she treated with remedy advised by 'la Chadellatte', using an ointment made from milk of black cow and some 'graisse de chartiers'; cured after 8 days. Told how husband's leg had looked normal, but felt hot to touch, and there was a strange lump in thigh. Then story of illness of child, and how Mongeatte des Woirel advised cooking fromageon in water to bathe him. Became all black, then recovered 'de maniere que la maladie de son marit, elle avoit plus de soupçon de Mongeatte des Woirel, que de ladite Nigade, toutesfois ne veult affirmer que ce soit mal donné et plus n'en dict.'

(4) Mongeatte femme Jean Recouvreur de St Nicolas, 24

On day of last fete at Rozieres had been to look for husband at Bellihesse, fearing he might go to Rozieres, when she fell on a perfectly flat piece of road, with her child face down beneath her. Nicole picked her up, but this frightened her because of her reputation as a witch, and she became very chilled. That evening was ill, and arm and thigh so twisted she could hardly walk; next day struggled to her house, where she found her in porch, with a cat in garden behind her. Nicole told her she was 'tenue d'une mauvaise gent', and should obtain honey and wax from a neighbour, bringing them to her that evening. She was spinning on porch, told her to go home and sit on highest place she could find; she would feel overcome by weakness, but as soon as she felt better should go to nearest neighbour and get them to slap her, then put towel round head and run as far she could, jumping over hedges and bushes. Went home and sat on table, trembling so much her feet were rather like pestles, then followed rest of advice. Returned home breathless but already recovering.

Subsequently Nicole had been to see her neighbour, wife of Didier Regnaudin, and asked her what witness had said to the sergent Michiel Bonniller. She said he had asked her how she did, and if her husband had beaten her, to which she had simply replied that he had not. Hearing of this witness went to find her, but when Nicole saw her she made a threatening gesture with her hand, then said to her 'meschante femme, je ne te vis jamais et ne t'a cognu'. Witness could not move, said she knew what she had told her to do, whereupon Nicole rushed at her and beat her; after this witness threw two stones at her. Since fall her small child had legs twisted, which had not been case before. Finally told of episode 15 days before fall when she had sheets drying, and a goose which Nicole was looking after jumped up on them; she put it down gently, but she was angry, and spent long time murmuring to herself. In view of this and means she had used for cure believed she had caused illness.

(5) Marie femme Colin Bourlier de St Nicolas, 38

Had lived in same house 18 years before, and had seen no ill in her; had already been using treatment for 'mal de mere'. Since then had not wished to keep company with her, in view of reputation for witchcraft around town. Her aunt 'la Bourguinatte' had been executed as a witch.

(6) Nicolas Gergonne de St Nicolas, 50

Had lived in same house for last year, and seen no ill in her. Told of how he and his wife had seen her 'couvrechef' by well, and found her at bottom; had told him she was trying to wash herself and fell with the bucket. Also told of hearing her call out loudly in her sleep some 7 weeks earlier.

(7) Jehanne femme Guillaume des Mazieres de St Nicolas, 50

Had never seen any ill in her, although she knew her reputation. Nicole had told her that she had treated Willermin l'Huillier, 'et que l'on luy en vouloit'.

(8) Jehannon femme Nicolas Gergonne, 36

Told same story as husband about finding her in the well. Afterwards had said 'Que l'on l'avoit appellée Genaixe, pourquoy aymoix mieulx estre noyée que bruslée, et qu'elle n'estoit genaixe'. Had heard her called witch by daughter of

Demenge Bourlier after a quarrel. Also told of how she had found her murmuring between her teeth when asleep, and after being woken said she was dreaming.

(9) Jehenne femme Pierre Perrin Warier de St Nicolas, 34

2 years earlier had been very ill, and spent much money at Nancy and elsewhere in vain efforts to obtain cure. Sent for Nicole, who spent a week in their house, even slept there, although she would not undress. Used 'certaines graines en parfum', but when there was no improvement said she must make a 'neufiesme' at St. Maixel in her name, and send offering; after this she was soon cured. Then said that as long as Nicole was in house she felt better, but relapsed when she had sent her away. Had swelling under arm which Nicole treated with 'huile de chamenel', and was cured same day. Also had child aged 3 which had diarrhoea and vomiting; cured overnight after Nicole had ordered something to be eaten. Did not know cause of troubles, but knew her common repute as witch.

(26 July 1582)

(10 and 11) Note that on information that Goery Cordonnier and his wife were ill and had been treated with strange medicines, officers had been to see them, but found them too ill to testify at present.

(12) Villermin l'Huillier de St Nicolas, 56

Had known her some 30 years, and seen no harm in her. About 2 years before had been ill, and a 'medecin' had been in town 'distribuant des eaux pour certaines maladies', some of which he took. When Nicole heard of this she told other women 'que l'on avoit beau a faire de luy donner des medicines, qu'il ne seroit guery s'elle n'y mectoit la main.' Doctor heard of this and quarrelled with her, calling her witch, after which he returned to witness and told him he had 'mal donné'. His wife then begged Nicole to help him, saying 'que l'on la contanteroit bien'. She treated him with 'huile de chamenel', and pain went down into feet, so she told him to walk a lot, especially across thresholds, after which he was finally cured. Later she said to him they had forgotten her now he was cured, to which he replied that she could always have bread and wine if she came to the house. Did not know if she had been discontented, but illness returned for 6 weeks, and when recovering he went to woods. On return Nicole told him he was doing too much and might fall ill again, which he did and was still afflicted. She had been visiting him, although difficult to satisfy - on one occasion asked his wife for a journal of wheat. Had heard her say that she no longer wanted to treat anyone, since she was being called a witch.

(13) Bastienne femme Didier Regnaudin, 36

Said she knew nothing.

(14) Didier de Vilerne boulangier, 40

Knew nothing.

(15) Claudon Voyrien drappier de St Nicolas, 40

Three winters before Nicole had attended veillée in their house, and had seen their daughter Alizon, who was only 6. One day she passed house and asked how girl was; when told she was still in bed she went up and threatened her with her finger. Girl fell very ill within a few days, and apart from own suspicions several said it was 'ung mal donné', so he went to consult her. Said she would make a 'neufiesme', during which child would either get better or die, and did indeed recover. Rather confused passage suggests that he failed to recompense her properly; when she came to ask how child was he was busy negotiating, and failed to offer her any wine. Later gave her 6 deniers, which was all money he had at time, but same day child fell ill once more. Went to ask her to come to see child and have supper, but she said she was having supper at house of Nicolas Jacqueminot, whose wife was in childbed, and 'au reste qu'il estoit venu trop tard l'appeller, que s'il fut venu a temps, elle eut faict un pelerinage, au moyen duquel sa fille fut revenue a elle: qu'il s'en retourne, car le coeur de sa fille monteroit en haute et mourroit la nuict, comme un g poulet'. Did indeed die, and he subsequently called her witch repeatedly.

(16) Marguerite femme Claudon Voirian

Repeated husband's deposition.

(17) Jean Jour le Jeusne, 22

When his wife was ill he was advised to consult accused; she said it was very late to call her in, but offered usual herbal treatment. This was not very successful, so she advised making 'ung cercle de fer' and pilgrimage to St. Quentin of Saplay. Wife was still unwell, and blamed Nicole.

(18) Nicole femme du precedent, 21

Also told of attempts at healing. Nicole had been dissatisfied when she gave her 7 gros, saying that the poorest gave her 30. When she became worse, went to her house with another woman named Urbaine, 'et luy dit absolument, qu'elle avisa la guerir, car elle luy avoit donné le mal, autrement elle s'en resentiroit'. Felt her and said she was 'enflée', suggested that she eat two hard-boiled eggs with vinegar. Witness said she would prefer to make a pilgrimage to some saint, as had also been suggested to her, and Nicole then said she should have 'ung sac de fer' the size of her waist made, and take it to Saint Quentin at Saclay and to St Godgrand. Having done this she recovered.

(19) Jean Coureur de St Nicolas, 30

Told of illness of neighbour Mongeatte femme Jean Recouvreur 3 weeks earlier, and advice given her by accused, then giving of slap, after which she ran through fields. Long reputation.

(20) Claudon femme du precedent, 36

Repeated husband's account of Mongeatte's behaviour; had been better since.

(21) Michiel Bonniller, sergent du mayeur de St Nicolas, 44

When his late wife had been ill a year before, had asked Nicole, who had previously treated her, to do so again. 'Mais elle fait response, ny vouloir venir, pour ce que sy elle y alloit, il Bonniller peult estre feroit comme Pierrat Gorgelat aussy sergent fait de la gastade et qu'il pourroit dire, qu'elle estoit genaixe, et la faire brusler.'

(22) Halbix femme Goery Lymousin bouchier de St Nicolas, 39

Had been ill 5 or 6 years earlier, and Nicole had made her a drink with herbs, after taking which she vomited violently, but felt no better. Said to accused 'que c'estoit elle qui entretenoit son mal'; she then massaged her with 'l'huile des graines', and this made her feel better when Nicole did it, but not otherwise. Was therefore suspicious, and threatened her. Finally told her to lie wrong way round on bed and call out three names loudly three times - Goery, Halby, Jehennon, names of husband, herself, and maid - saying that she would be spinning in her own house and would hear the three names. After this she recovered, and paid her well, giving her all she asked.

27 July 1582; interrogation

Warned to think of her conscience and not perjure herself by concealing her sins, 'ce que toutesfois vient et apparoit quoy que tard a la cognoissance des hommes par le moyen des secretz de dieu, qui ne veult la verite estre cachée'.

Now admitted that after Mongeatte had called her witch, 'dequoy seroit este tellement troublée, que la fascherie ayant pris lieu en sa pensée, entendu qu'elle n'avoit personne qui peult la defendre et se ressentir de telle injure, faschée, ceda au desespoir' - then threw herself in well. Knelt and said prayer - quite complex, calls on father, son, and holy ghost, also on Virgin Mary, to save her soul - then stood in bucket and went down well. Remained standing in bucket at bottom, hardly got wet.

Agreed that she had been called witch by Claudon Voyrian and by doctor treating Willermin l'Huillier. Voyrian blamed her for daughter's illness, but stepmother had only fed child on 'choux a l'huile'. Was disagreement over timing of pilgrimages and alleged temporary recovery of child. Said doctor had been using 'estuves' on Willermin, and she had said these were worthless and what was needed was a pilgrimage to St Quentin de Saplay. Judges pointed out that doctor had used distilled waters, to which she replied that she did not know, 'tant y a qu'elle estime mieux les pelerinages'. Said oil with which she treated Willermin had been obtained by his wife from lamp before St Quentin.

'Interrogée sy elle auroit poinct frequenté quelques femmes abusées de sortilege et delaquelles ait en retenu quelque traict et adresse.

A dict que non et qu'elle est femme de bien.

Interrogée pour quoy doncq, a tous les patiens et malades qu'elle at sollicité, sont tousjours esté renduz tourmentz de maladies presques incognues et finalement tous ont heu cest estime d'elle qu'elle est genoxe et partant leur avoir donné le mal, par se retrouver les ungs, pasle, foible, sans repos, les autres, avoir le corps, les piedz bras et jambes tortz, autres, sans qu'il y ait aulcun apparence exteriere, semblent estre tenuz de rage.

A dict et respondu, qu'elle ne scait d'ou cela provient sinon, que telle soit la volonté de dieu, et souvent il nous envoye de ses afflictions.

Said that she had suggested putting an egg in the 'boulies' given to Pierre Perin's child, which had stomach trouble.

Said that 'sy l'on veut adjouster foidz aux faulx tesmoings qui deposent contre elle de choses que ne furent jamais elle ayme tout aultant moyrir'. Then asked about state of Goery le Cordonnier and his wife, said she did not know what could be done, and while she was treating them 'ils ne vouloient se garder'. Had not threatened them, although they had insulted her. Was told that they had become better or worse according to whether she was present or not, this had caused them to tell her she was cause of sickness, and she had left saying 'qu'il fut sept ans de Caresmes ils s'en repentiroient'.

28 July 1582; confrontations

In case of Jean Chartier, pointed out that she had been called in after he injured himself in 'chasse aux allouettes'. His wife alleged that Nicole had reproached her with telling maire and mairesse that she was treating him, after which Pierrat Georgelat had evicted her from her room - Nicole denied this, but did agree to frequent visits and treatment. Substantial discussions over many allegations, in which she usually agreed to having treated witnesses, while often denying that she had prescribed specific treatments they alleged.

8 August 1582; interrogation

Judges pressed her hard, alleging that she must have been using healing as a cover for witchcraft. She still denied, saying they wronged her by listening to false witnesses, 'estant qu'elle est pauvre seulette et destituée d'avis pour se justifier'. Made one small new confession, that she had obtained 'graisse d'Allemagne' with which she had treated Jean Cordier.

'Interrogée sy elle n'auroit heu quelques illusions, au moyen de laquelle elle eut heu quelque opinion, pensant et estimant estre transportée en l'air brasser quelque nuée, et troublement de temps, ou bien effectivement se retrouver en mauvaise compagnie de magiciennes sorcieres ou xenoixes.'

10 August 1582; procureur general de Lorraine (Maimbourg) asks for question extraordinaire

12 August 1582; Change de Nancy agrees

22 August 1582; interrogation under torture

Said she only used her 'grainettes' for 'le mal de mere'. For those who were advised to make pilgrimages 'comme detenuz et vexez des saintz', had them use oil from lamps before those saints on affected parts. When racked severely she did admit she was a witch, but immediately retracted; racked again, she varied between confessing and denying.

24 August 1582; interrogation

Sergent had brought news that she was now ready to confess. Said that two years before on last day of la Magdellaine, when she had been sitting with other women, the German doctor had accused her of being a witch. Later that day went to gather wood by fontaine de Saulcy, and thinking of wrong done her was muttering 'Le larron, le poltron, le grand Diable le puisse confondre, il m'appelle genaixe, et ne le suis point, continuant ainsy ses maudissons et propos de Diable'. Man in black

then appeared, with a circle around his hat, and asked why she was angry. Offered her some powder, which would kill if thrown on someone, or make ill if they merely passed over it. Objected that doctor was now far away, but he said she could use it on others who insulted or harmed her. Asked him how to give healing from powder, he told her to put it in warm ashes, when it would cure, but she should arrange pilgrimages to cover her actions. Also told her to meet him and some other women eight days later. She did so; were 4 women she did not know, but thought were from Lenoncourt and La Neufville. Danced rondeau around large oak to tune of 'Amour, amour my moine'. Gave her money and said she should return to another place next week; heard others call him maitre Persin.

When she got home found money was oak leaves, and thought of ways devil was said to deceive 'des simples gens et femellettes'; renounced him and washed face with holy water. Had used powder six times to make people ill, twice to kill children. Had used it on Jehenne femme Pierrat Verrier, whom she had been called to treat, because she was 'fascheuse et superbe', called her witch and threatened to have her burned. Later cured her with same powder. Had also made Viel Jean ill after dispute over some firewood she bought from him, and later cured him. Another victim was wife of Nicolas Lambo, who had not let her go first at well on a very cold day; made her believe it was 'mal de mere' when she healed her. Had made Willermin l'Huillier ill and cured him; not responsible for first illness nor the one that he had presently. Asked what could be done for him now, said he should take five branches of 'fouchieres' and place then 'en croisée dans le trans du lict', then go himself in pilgrimage to St Quentin, have mass said, and rub himself with oil from lamp. Had killed son of Jean de Biche after dispute with wife, and daughter of Claudon Voyriat who 'la tancoit tousjours et grouilloit contre elle'. Nicole wife of Jean Jeusne had become ill because she went out into the street too soon after giving birth; accused was healing her, but was ill herself, when she came and called her witch. Then used powder on her to make her ill, before curing her.

Meeting Mengeatte femme Jean Recouvreur, remembered she had spoken ill of her, and incident with goose. Had no powder, so threw cone of paper it had been in on road, where she fell and became ill. Remedy had been on grounds 'que tout ainsy que le papier voltige convient courir pour la guarison'.

25 August 1582; interrogations

Confirmed earlier confessions. Asked about throwing of powder, and 'Interrogée comment cela se pouvoit faire, sans interesser beaucoup de personnes, gectant de telle poudre en lieu ou beaucoup de gens pouvoient passer.

A dict qu'en ce faict, suffisoit sa volonté, c'est a dire que nul ne pouvoit s'en trouver mal (ors que mil eussent passez dessus) fors ceulx a qui elle vouloit mal et au nom de qui elle avoit semé la poudre.'

Asked about accomplices, said she knew none.

27 August 1582; additional depositions

New witnesses to maléfices which she had confessed outside those from first set of depositions.

(1) Jean Mathieu dit le viel Jean, 50

Had often been ill, and she had been around his house, but had not quarrelled with her or suspected her.



(2) Barbon femme au precedent, 36

Repeated husband's evidence. Had been several times ill herself, treated by accused, and did not know where else illness had come from.

(3) Anne femme Nicolas Lambo, 30

Agreed to incident at well, and subsequent illness when she had been tended. Had also had a child very ill, and accused told them it was 'tenu de mauvais gens'. Advised witness that her husband should take off his shirt and wrap child in it, then they should offer two eggs to a saint she could not remember; after this child recovered.

(4) Jean de Biche, 26

Some 3 years before she had been discontented because not invited to a baptism; had given her a 'blanc' and food, and she touched child in cradle. Later seemed to be asleep for 3 days, and when she was called in said it would not die yet, but they should have called her in earlier before doing anything else. Child died after languishing for 4 or 5 weeks.

(5) Nicole femme du precedent, 20

Repeated husband's story; added that she had found strange substances in bath after washing child.

Interrogation

Said she knew nothing of items found in child's bath; otherwise confirmed confessions

31 August 1582; PG asks for death sentence, but preceded by further torture to extract complete confession, with names of accomplices.

4 September 1582; Change de Nancy approves death sentence if she confirms earlier confessions; no mention of further torture.

Death sentence passed by court at St Nicolas (no date) carried out on 12 September 1582