

B 8947; witch 320, Mengeatte des Woirelz, veuve Regnaud Tixerand de St Nicolas

12 July 1584; court at St Nicolas asks for evidence against accused (long reputed a witch), for which maire had verbal instructions from procureur general de Lorraine. Reported that various individuals had strange illnesses, and in particular was a case where she had appeared in a garden (see first witness).

(1) Nicole femme Lienard Remuald marchand de St Nicolas, 40

General repute. Recently had been on way to garden when she met Mongeatte begging, and gave to her according to her 'petit moyen'. After shutting gate and entering garden was surprised by 'ung tourbillon et estourdissement'; after some 15 minutes started to recover, and saw an apparition in form of accused standing by an apple tree. Subsequently made sign of cross whenever she went by her or her house, and about 3 weeks later she saw her and asked if she had seen the devil, to which she replied yes, when she saw her. Reply was to ask if she wanted holy bread or water, to which she said no, because she had a good master; Mongeatte responded that her master was the same. Then she openly called her witch, and told her daughter, who was present, about incident in garden.

(2) Cathnion femme Jean Cordier, de St Nicolas, 31

Long reputation. A long time before her child had fallen ill with strange illness, body all red up to chest. Showed neighbours, and asked Mongeatte to suggest remedy; touching witness on shoulder she replied 'avoir juré de ne plus penser personne, toutesfois luy enseigneroit pour ce coup quelque chose'. Said she should use fromageon and other herbs to make 'estuve' and bathe child, and at mother's request prepared this herself. Child became all black, but pain ceased, and child recovered for time being, only to die 3 months later. Later her husband also fell ill with strange malady, during which Mongeatte came and sat outside their house spinning, to astonishment of witness, who thought she must be intending to offer some cure for husband. Asked her in and demanded 'assez rigoreusement' that she should heal husband as she had child, but she replied that just because she had healed the one she was not obliged to do the same for the other. 'Mais voulant la contraindre, commença icelle à crier, qui fut la cause, qu'elle la laissa aller et croit que sy doucement elle l'eut requis et prié de ce faire, et donné à boire, qu'elle eut fait de voir de soulager ledit son marit' - in fact he was healed by la Nigade, since executed.

(3) Catherine veuve Nicolas d'Acraigne, bouchier de St Nicolas, 55

Long reputation, but she had taken no notice until a few days before, when she had gone to visit relatives in country, leaving her daughter Nicole in charge of house. Passing Mongeatte in street by barrier, Nicole said 'qu'elle vouloit faire un sault pour l'amour de c'il que plus elle aymoît a quoy Mongeatte feît response, mais mord un chardon aux dents'; she promptly fell and hurt her arm. When she got home and found it was still painful she was advised to ask Mongeatte for cure, which she did with success. Her late husband, when on his deathbed, insisted that she had bewitched him to death. He had been unloading wood in barn of Mongenat Boulengier next to her house, and had prevented her from taking some small pieces; soon after went out to fetch animals, and became so ill he had to be brought back on a cart.

(4) Nicole fille Nicolas d'Acraigne, 24

Repeated story of her fall a week earlier; had intended to go to surgeon, but neighbours persuaded her to ask Mongeatte. She taught her to make mixture of vinegar, urine, and beeswax, boil it up, and apply to arm, after which she was cured. Did show arm to barber, and Mongeatte insisted several times 'ne debvoir le monstrier aux chirurgiens, car aultrement ilz luy gasteroient le bras'. Also told of father's suspicions.

(5) Jean Faillon Rouyer de St Nicolas, 40

Told of occasion when his small son Symon had been throwing stones near her house, and she had told him off, to which he replied rudely, and she said 'Va va tu t'en sortiras'. Next day child fell ill, and witness found her in street, accused her of causing this, and then beat her, threatening to do so again if child was not soon cured. Next day la Nigade came uninvited to house and cured him. Long reputation.

(6) Anne fille Claudon Hosel boulangier de St Nicolas, 18

A year before last Lent she had been ill, losing use of limbs, and her parents suspected Mengeotte. Under pretext of hiring a horse her mother spoke to Mengeotte, whom she found sewing up her 'cotillon', and said she would give her an old 'garderobe' if she came to house, adding that husband was away in woods. When she did so looked at witness lying ill, felt her leg, and said she would soon be cured, advising them to make 'creme lexine' with fromageon. Recovered in 2 or 3 days; did not know if it had been 'mal donné'. Long reputation.

(7) Vaultrin Bigel tailleur de St Nicolas, 33

Common repute. Not long ago his wife had sent their son Bastien, aged 11 or 12, to fetch sheets from an upper room. There he met a 'fantosme', with face covered by a white sheet, which tried to drag him up chimney, but let him go and vanished when he called on God. Suspected Mengeotte and went to her house, but her daughter said she had been out all morning. Shortly before Bastien and his sister had met her on way back from garden with fruit; she had asked for some, and said they were 'bien ingratz' when they refused, saying their father had forbidden them to give any.

(8) Babon femme du precedent, 40

Repeated husband's testimony; said that at first boy thought the apparition was his father come to beat him. Child was covered with soot from chimney, and remained unwell afterwards. She sought bread and salt from house of 'l'Esmouilleur' of St. Nicolas (another reputed witch); sent a poor girl with some meat, so that she dined with her, and secretly put bread and salt in pocket. Child recovered after eating these. Mengeotte generally suspected.

(9) Jehannon veuve Francois Rozieres de St Nicolas, 50, mere du precedent

Had long kept company with her, and lived in same house for 3 years, without seeing any harm in her. Repeated essentials of previous deposition, and made it plain that she suspected the other woman, the 'femme de l'Esmouleur'; she had been responsible for ruse to obtain bread and salt.

(10) Francoyse fille Vaultrin Bigel tailleur, 18

Told story of meeting her and refusing to give her fruit.

(11) Bastienne femme Didier Regnaudin drappier de St Nicolas, 40

General repute. Around 'dimanche gros' previous year had come begging to their door, and her daughter Jehannon, who was frightened of her, went into house to seek bread, which she sent out with her brother because she did not dare to go herself. When she went back to sit by door became ill, kept swelling up for 3 hours until she vomited something like poison and recovered. Had heard from Mongeatte femme Jean Ripaille that accused had told other women 'n'auser aller demander chez Didier Regnaudin devant Quasimodo pour cause de sa fille, mais sy elle pouvoit l'attraper qu'elle le garderoit de trop manger du pain'. Later her son wanted to beat her, and witness herself ran up to accuse her of trying to kill her daughter, to which she replied 'que lors elle avoit trop mangé, et qu'il la failloit vuider'.

(12) Jehennon fille Didier Regnaudin, 16

Told same story as mother; suspected Mongeatte of causing illness.

(13) Jean Vallois courdier de St Nicolas, 40

Repeated essential of wife's deposition, although he suggested she had come to house voluntarily.

(14) Catherine femme Claudin Thomas dit Badel, 30

As neighbour had seen nothing wrong in her, despite common repute. Around St Jean previous year had been a damaging storm, and next day witness and her husband, Barbe femme Michel Manouvrier, and accused were sitting in street. Barbe said to her 'Tante Mongeatte, l'on ne dira pas que fussiez hier en la nuée, car je vous vis hier par tout le jour', but her husband added 'Peult estre qu'elle n'y a pas este appellée; ce qu'esmeut tellement ladite Mengeatte que maugreant et despitée, s'en alla en sa maison'. Soon after had a child ill, in constant pain with neck twisted. Next week confrerie of St Eloy sent for her husband, but there was no-one in house. Her neighbour Barbe told her they had come asking for them, and witness told her it had been the mayor's servant asking for child to be brought to him, but she did not want to comply, hoping he would soon be cured. Said this 'pour intimider' Mengeotte, who was told of visit by Barbe, and took to her bed, pretending to be so ill that she confessed and communicated; did not come out for 2 days until child was cured. This added to her suspicions, 'aussy dit elle mesme a icelle Mongeatte de se bien garder de meffaire a aulcung des siens aultrement elle l'estrangeroit de ses deux mains'.

(15) Mongeacte femme Jehan Micquecte recouvreur de St Nicolas, 27

Knew that rumour around town was that she was a witch, 'ce qu'elle ne peut croire'. Said that Didier Regnauldin's wife had 'mal entendu' what she had told her; Mengeotte had actually said, speaking of daughter, 'ceste petite friande ne ma point voulu donner d'aumosnes, ores que sa mere luy ait ordonné plusieurs fois, mais une aultre fois j'en auray bien'. (Stuck to this despite remonstrances).

(6 July 1584)

(16) Jeanne femme Claudon Housel boulangier de St Nicolas, 48

Repeated essentials of daughter's story. Added that daughter had accidentally knocked plate which Mongeatte was holding while begging in church out of her hands, and because she was frightened of her ran off home rather than help her pick it up. Had told her husband was out, and normally he did not like anyone coming into house, so she should take opportunity to come immediately. Asked her to help daughter, saying that 'les vieilles gens comme elle ont coustumierement cognoissance de plusieurs choses'. After touching girl she said 'quand on veult enseigner quelque chose aux gens, l'on en at mauvaise opinion', but she had cured her husband and would tell her how. Said she had promised Mongeatte some reward beyond the old coat, but she had never come to ask, rather avoiding her.

9 July 1584; interrogation

Mongeatte had been in prison since July 2. She said she was about 50 (later suggested she looked more like 70), native of Burthecourt near Sallonne, daughter of Estienne and Claudey; did not know father's surname, since she had been orphan at age of 5. Had then lived with an uncle until she grew old enough to tend children for le petit Thomas at Chambrey (2 years), then in service with miller at Lebecourt near Chateau Salins (18 months), the barber Jean Conrard at Vic (5 years), messire Barthelemin pretre, brother of maire of Besanges, at Arracourt (2 years), and Barbelin Chacton at Varangeville (2 years). When there was plague in village she married Symon le Masson, fossier, and they moved to St Nicolas; were together 11 years, had 7 children who all died. Remarried with Regnaud Tixerand, who died after 18 years; one surviving daughter, Agnes. Widow for 11 years, living by begging now she was 'vieille et caducque'. Asked if she had not committed some thefts or other crimes while in service with so many masters, said she had never done such things or been accused. Had lived with two poor but honest husbands; her 'necessité et indigence' was known to everyone. Said she did not know why she had been arrested, then admitted that it was on a 'mauvais bruiet' that she was a witch.

'Interrogée, d'ou peut provenir ce bruiet, veu que peu souvent pareille n'est semé, que tost apres les apparence ne s'en ensuyve.

A dit, que l'on luy fait grandissime tort, et que pour estre laide, vieille et decrepitée, les personnes semblent la craindre, et luy imposer une charge d'injure sy ignominieuse.

Interrogée, sy elle scait bien, que c'est d'une genaixe.

A dit et affirme que non, sinon, qu'elle a entendu ce mot et gens qui en tiennent estre punissables, mesme a veu pugnir de celles que l'on disoit estre tels.'

Said these were Mongeatte Gatade and, recently, Nicole Nigade. Said she had only kept company with them when begging in the town or the church. Asked if la Nigade had not taught her ointments, fumigations, and other remedies, denied

this. Agreed that she had suggested remedy for Jehan Courdier's child, and found herbs; denied any witchcraft. She had not offered to heal him, not knowing what was wrong with him, and spinning outside door implied no intention to heal. He had actually been tended by la Nigade. Denied suggestion that she had colluded with la Nigade to have her called in where she was suspected. Agreed to account of advice about healing daughter of Claudon Hosel, and to conversation with wife about knowledge of old, and bad opinions which might follow. Remembered occasion when her plate had been knocked in church, but had had no idea who had done it. Had suggested ointment to Nicolas d'Acraigne's daughter, but it had not included beeswax, and she had never said anything about surgeons.

Urged to tell truth, and told that she could not be released from prison until judges were 'bien instruits de ses malversations'. Was also told that she had feigned illness. She admitted conversation about storm, although adding that she had said she would rather die on spot than be one of such people. Agreed that she had been told by Jehanne la Sarpe (widow) of illness of Didier Regnauldin's daughter, and that she was suspected; had replied that 'peult estre avoit elle trop mangé le dimanche gras et falloit qu'elle se vidasse'.

Said that 6 or 7 years before Jehan Faillon had accused her of making his child ill, and had beaten her; she had complained to maire, the late Claude Regnauld, but matter had gone no further. Said this was 'pour n'avoir aulcung moyen, non pas seulement pour manger a demy son saoul, tant s'en fault pour poursuyvre en proces, seroit este contraincte le tout en la misericorde dieu, en supportant par contraincte patiemment le tort qu'en cela luy at este fait.'

As for apparitions, said she had never been in garden of Remualds over last two years. Agreed there had been dispute with his wife about a month before when she had called her daughter 'fille d'une sorciere'.

#### Additional witnesses

(17) Claudin Thomas huillier de St Nicolas, 40

Long reputation. Repeated story of conversation about storm, and sickness of child.

(18) Barbe femme Pierrat Manouvrier de St Nicolas, 52

Told of how when Claudin Thomas's child was ill she had informed Mongeatte of suspicions, and she had taken to bed although she was not really ill. When his wife asked her to obtain bread, salt and ashes she could not get bread from house of accused because she had none, so she substituted some from daughter of la Saracquée.

#### Recollement des temoins (no date)

Anne fille Claudon Hosel added motive, that her father had killed some pigs and distributed meat among poor, but when Mongeatte came to house she was alone, and had to tell her there was none left.

Jehannon veuve Francoys Rozieres said that when her son was ill she had been advised by Pierrat Gorgelat's wife to seek bread, salt, and ashes from house of person she suspected - this had been 'la moulerasse'.

Mongeatte femme Jean Recouvreur was found so 'variable et incertaine' that she was renvoyée - she was the one favourable witness.

11 July 1584; confrontations

Generally offered no reproaches, but challenged versions of events where they clashed with her earlier testimony. In case of Nicole fille Nicolas d'Acraigne, said girl had told her that her barber, Cesar Dieudonné, was ill, to which Mongeatte replied 'qu'elle avoit bien loisir d'aller au barbier pour sy peu de chose'. Nicole claimed that before father's fatal illness accused had asked her how he was, and when she said he was well replied 'Aye par dieu, il n'a garde de se bien porter'. In case of daughter of the Hosel family, said remedy she advised was one previously suggested for her husband by Didier de Rome.

22 July 1584; PG de Lorraine (Maimbourg) asks for question extraordinaire

23 July 1584; Change de Nancy agrees

24 July 1584; interrogation under torture

When she protested innocence, was told 'que tout le monde la charge de sorcellerie desia des long temps, et que jamais l'on ne voit de la fumée, que le feu ne soit proche'.

Asked about apprentice of Colin Bourlier, whom she had allegedly made ill after refusing bread he brought her from wedding feast of master's daughter, denied knowledge of sickness or cure, said she had taken the bread.

Was then tortured, with thumbscrews and rack. Latter applied four times, over period of more than an hour, and up to three turns, but she obstinately refused to confess. When she had become very weak and was hardly able to speak was taken down and sent back to prison.

24 July 1584; voluntary confession

At midday court was called to prison on news that she was now prepared to confess. She said she had not called them, but admitted saying that she had been abused by the devil. Said that after being beaten by Jean Faillon, and unable to get justice, was returning from begging in villages of Girardcourt, Fleville, and Manoncourt, when near fontaine de paille maille she met a tall dark man in black, who knew about her misfortunes, promised to aid her if she believed in him, and gave her some money. This had turned into coal when she looked at it. He called himself Persin; also gave her two boxes, one containing powder and the other grease, telling her to throw powder on Jean Faillon to avenge herself. Later came to house and beat her because she had not done so.

Admitted she had used powder on three occasions. Had killed Nicolas d'Acraigne because he would not let her pick up loose wood, made Claudon Housel's daughter ill after incident with begging bowl, and also made Claudin Badel's son ill after dispute over storm. Denied having done anything to heal him.

Asked about sabbat, said she had three times found herself by the fountain with a large company of men and women, unknown to her, who were eating and drinking. Did not know how she had got there, but devil was exhorting them to do ill and kill people. He had appeared to her previous night in prison, told her off for not doing his will, and hit her twice.

Despite pressure from judges, would confess to nothing more, and was sent back to prison.

28 July 1584; interrogation

Pressed to make a more adequate confession, merely confirmed earlier admissions. On hearing record read out, said she had never claimed to have seen la Nigade at the sabbat - judges claimed she had, but no trace in earlier confession. Now said she had thrown powder away on discovering first deception, and judges objected that this was impossible if she had used it on her three victims.

At this point she retracted her previous confession, saying she was completely innocent, and she had only confessed in fear she would be tortured again.

1 August 1584; interrogation

Again stubbornly denied she was a witch, insisting that her confession had been in fear of torture. Said she had made it up on basis of what she had been told by a woman of Creny about trial of some women there.

6 August 1584; Change de Nancy approves further torture, with moderation appropriate to her age.

8 August 1584; interrogation under torture

Said of Nicolas d'Acraigne that everyone knew he was suffering from a catarrh, and that he had been old and poor.

Asked why she had made voluntary confession, replied 'qu'ennuyée de la prison, et des tourmens de la question, joinct l'apprehension de meschant bruict, que faulcement on luy donne par ville, choisit plustost mourir, que vivre en telle angoisse, dont estimat qu'en declairant cela qu'elle nous at heu dict, secondant la confession d'une executée a Creny, et puis le soupcon qu'avoient de luy les aucungs des tesmoings, employés contre elle, aurions assez d'occasion pour la condampner a mort.' When they objected that this amounted to 'homicide d'elle mesme', replied 'que le desir de la mort l'avoit induit a ce'.

Finally was racked, but persisted in claiming she was innocent; only recorded as being given two half turns, but later part of record is rather summary.

16 August 1584; Maimbourg asks that she be banished from St Nicolas and from ducal territories for four leagues around.

22 August 1584; Change de Nancy recommends that she be renvoyée jusqu'a rappel

25 August 1584; court at St Nicolas passes sentence that she be renvoyée, but that she should leave town on pain of corporal punishment.