

B 8667 No 6 Witch 144, Zabel du Sambois

12 June 1592; informations préparatoires contre Zabel de Sambois, du village de Mouriviller.

(1) Pairson Grand Jean de Mouriviller, c. 60

Had quarrelled with Zabel some two years before, when her daughters had caused damage picking apples; same evening one of his horses became ill and shortly died. Commonly reputed a witch, and her neighbours 'se gardent de choser et querelle contre elle'.

(2) Le maire Jean Lyenard de Mouriviller, c. 55

Although he was native of village, had no suspicion on own account. Had heard that her neighbours attributed deaths of horses etc. to her.

(3) Le maire Dieudonne Galand de Mouriviller, c. 53

In September, just under three years before, had been arguing with one of Zabel's neighbours, who had reproached him with having said 'qu'elle ladite detenu gardoit son proces en ung coffre à sa maison' - he didn't like this, as she was standing near and could hear it, and he was afraid of quarrelling with her. However he admitted having said it, and she got up and went into her house as if annoyed. Two or three days later he fell out of a fruit tree (pear) and landed on his head - thought a branch had broken, but couldn't see one. Suspected her, both because of reputation and because she had been denounced by some other accused. A little later, around the next St. Luke, she asked him if he was going to form a 'craigne' [evening circle] for the winter, as was local custom, and if she could join it. He replied 'qu'il ne scavoit ce qu'il vouloit faire, parce que son plus proche voisin, n'y vouloit venir s'elle y estoit, veu la mauvaise renommée qu'elle at, et la crainte que l'on avoit d'elle, et que s'il en faisoit une, pour garder paix, il ny laisseroit venir ny sondict voisin ny elle, sur ce elle le pria à jointes mains, de l'y laisser aller et qu'il ne la crainds pas de ce qu'on disoit, et qu'elle deviendroit meilleur qu'elle ne fut oncques.' He took opportunity to tell her that his only suspicion was over fall from pear tree; she didn't reply, and had made no denial since, although he had talked to her about it again.

Two years ago at next St. Jean Baptiste, had done two days haymaking for him. Her daughters were ill at time, and asked for pears and cheese, which his daughters refused, although he didn't know about it. Shortly afterwards she met his 'garson' leading horses to pasture; she told him he would be reproached, because he was taking them too early. Shortly afterwards best horse died strangely; he accused her of being cause of this, and of being a witch, threatening to have her arrested. She replied that 'il valloit mieulx qu'il espargnat son bien sans l'employer à l'entour d'elle', and when he still threatened arrest if she 'ne luy crie mercy, elle luy dit, qu'elle le feroit par sa foid, et de bon cuer.' At same time she asked Hidatte wife of Jean Claudon, his 'serorge' [brother-in-law] to try and intervene on her behalf. On Easter Day, in presence of curé, she 'crie mercy et demanda pardon' of him.

(4) Barbey veuve Demenge Masson de Mouriviller, c. 40

Around a year and a half before, her son (who was not yet married) had seen someone trying to get into a garden behind the house of the maire Claudon Chadat. Had given chase and caught Zabel, who was trying to run off - gave her two or three blows and let her go. Next day became ill, and remained so for 3 weeks until she obtained a drink from Zabel, which she gave according to her instructions; he was promptly cured. Had several times called her a witch, and heard others do so, but she had never sought reparation.

(5) Jeannon femme Jean Gerardat de Mouriviller, c. 28

Previous autumn had found Zabel's daughter collecting nuts under one of her nut trees, and 'la tanca'. Same night one of her children developed knee trouble – couldn't support herself on it. A neighbour advised her to take girl where Zabel could see her; she duly asked what was the matter, and advised her how to make an 'estuve' with cheese, saying it was a goutte. Cure worked, and she suspected her of having caused trouble - general reputation.

(6) Jean Vicaire de Mouriviller, jeune fils, c. 30

Around last Ascensiontide, some soldiers had come to village, and the accused had asked his sister Catherine to look after some of her possessions, which she was afraid of having looted - her house, unlike theirs, was not exempt from lodging soldiers. Sister, being afraid of her, refused; was subsequently forced to take to bed with painful leg. He and other relatives made Zabel come to see her; she said she would pray to 'le bon dieu' on her behalf, and went down on knees beside bed. Sais she would also pray for her et the church, and that all the evil would assemble in one place and come out by the foot. Same day (St. Urbain) she stayed behind in church after service, and placed some ends of wax candles on chandelier in church, saying some prayers. During this time his sister slept, and when she woke the evil had collected at her knee; when it was lanced a lot of muck came out, and she was cured. His sister had later reproached accused with causing illness and being a witch, and she had replied that it was a great sin to suspect her - but they did, in view of her reputation.

(7) Demenge Buriat bourgeois à Gerbeviller, c. 30

Three years ago last November, during 'glandée' [acorn harvest] of bois de Cousal near Gerbeviller, he and the son of the maire Curien of St. Hilaire were keeping the latter's pigs. The accused passed with 'une hottée de pommes' she was taking to market at Gerbeviller, and his companion agreed to buy 6 dozen at 2 deniers the dozen. She didn't give him full number, so argument ensued when he took some more himself, and she became angry and threatened him. During this the pigs got away, and it took two hours to round them up. When she passed on her way back from market they called her witch several times, but she took no notice.

(8) Jean Masson d'Auzelievre, c. 20

Repeated mother's story of finding her in maire's garden, striking her, becoming ill, and subsequent cure. Said she was 'communement notée de sorcerie et paillardise'.

(9) Thiebauld Vicaire de Mouriviller, c. 20

His father had lost an eye some 5 or 6 years before, and had suspected Zabel. Had subsequently quarrelled with her and her daughters, and last Easter had become ill on top of head, and died within a few days, leaving the suspicion that Zabel had caused his death. Repeated story of sister's illness, and also said he had suspected her of giving him a bad leg which lasted some 6 weeks.

(10) Colas Curien de Mouriviller, c. 30

Had served in ducal army, and on return with some other discharged soldiers 'il leur enseigna la maison de ladicte detenue, comme celle qui quelquefois nonobstant sa viellesse, secouroit les bons compagnons de ses faveurs et amitiés.' He thought that in anger at this she had caused illness of his 4 year old child, which could not yet walk or speak, although at one stage he had begun to walk. His wife had asked Zabel for a remedy, and she had advised them to make an offering to St. Nicolas, and take a handful of chanvre, and pull hard on bell-ropes. had not yet done this, but hoped to do so, for if she had given the sickness she might be able to remove it. Some two years before his horse had sometimes strayed onto land of accused; she reproached him, and 3 days later horse died.

(11) Georgeatte femme Didier Claude Phle de Mouriviller, c. 30

4 or 5 years before the accused had asked her husband to buy her share in the 'glandée' of the village woods; he had refused, having no need of it. Next day their pig became ill, and after three weeks had to be killed; suspected Zabel, who had long been reputed a witch 'et des qu'elle fut accusée par la precedente executée estre de ses complices, on ne s'a fié à elle, mais l'at on tousjours crainct en estime de sorciere'.

(12) Barbe femme Jean Chadat de Mouriviller, c. 30

Only knew that Zabel was reckoned 'une sorciere et une femme qui ne vaut rien'.

(13) Catherine Vicaire jeune fille de Mouriviller, c. 18

Told story of her leg trouble, of her uncle and brothers threatening to have Zabel burned if she didn't heal her, and of prayers and healing.

(14) Didier Claude Phle de Mouriviller, c. 30

Repeated wife's story about death of pig, and denunciation of Zabel by last witch from village.

(15) Demenge Vicaire de Mouriviller, c. 65

General reputation; story of his niece Catherine's leg.

(16) Idatte femme Jean Claude Phle de Mouriviller, c. 30

Had refused to allow one of the daughters of Zabel to hold her baby; around age of one the child became 'boiteux d'une jambe', and she was so still. Suspected Zabel, particularly on account of long reputation.

(17) Jean Waré de Mouriviller, c. 35

Knew nothing at all of her.

16 June 1592; interrogation

Said she was about 50, native of Mouriviller, daughter of Didier Barbier. Married to Mengin le Parmentier de Sambois, widow for 18 years. Said that during widowhood 'soubz espoir d'estre secourue et aydee en sa pauvreté, elle obeyt au maire Claudon Chadat dudit Mouriviller de tant qu'elle procrea ung enfant de ses oeuvres.' Child was still living.

Asked about quarrels, told story of Catherine Vicaire's leg. This had been preceded by an incident when Claudon Vicaire and one of his sons, while hedging, had trespassed on her land and cut down her hedge. Catherine had later become sick, perhaps from kneeling too much or working too long in vines. Babey, widow of Demenge Masson, had been called in to treat her, but the ointment she gave only made it worse; she then said it was 'mal donné', and suspicion fell on Xabel. In fact she was cured when the maire Galand lanced her knee with a knife. Also said that Galand suspected her over death of a horse, and that these were the causes of her arrest.

Agreed on questioning that she had prayed by bedside of girl, and claimed to have said to her 'que peut estre dieu luy avoit envoyé ce mal, affin de faire avoir souvenance de son pere qui peult estre estoit detenu en quelques peines, et demandoit certaines prières et suffrages, pour estre delivré desdites peines.'

Agreed that she had offered a candle in church, but denied there was anything unusual about this. Also agreed that Catherine had refused to take her goods for safe-keeping, but denied being resentful of this.

Concerning the maire Galand's remark about the 'proces' she kept in a chest at home, she said this was a testimony of the discharge made by 'la pelissonatte', executed at St. Dié, who had accused her of being an accomplice, and then withdrew this charge just before her execution. Agreed that she had not been 'contante' when she overheard his conversation, but she had no power to harm him.

Agreed that conversation about 'craigne' might have taken place, but if she had said she would be better, it had not implied that she had been bad in the past. She had denied causing death of his horse, and had indeed advised him not to waste his property by prosecuting her, since she knew herself to be innocent. Added 'que c'est ung langard auquel il ne fault adjouster beaucoup de foid. Vray est que l'homme d'église dudit Mouriviller l'at aultresfois bien persuadé, d'aller crier mercy audit Maire Galand, ce qu'elle ne voulut oncques faire, Bien qu'elle fut tant sollicitée par ledit homme d'église avec remonstrance que les pauvres doibvent plier pour les riches, qu'elle alla au devant de la maison dudit Maire Galand, et que ledit maire luy cria mercy de tant d'injures et soubcon qu'il avoit declaré avoir contre elle, et elle

luy pardonna et depuis luy demanda aussy pardon s'elle luy avoit fait desplaisir, combien qu'elle en excepta tousjours la cheutte de dessus le poirier et mort dudit cheval, pour lequel elle n'entendoit luy crier mercy, par ce qu'elle n'en estoit nullement cause.'

Denied having asked Hidatte wife of Jean Claudon Philippe to intervene, 'et que ce sont toutes choses qu'on luy impose faulsement et a grand tort, le tout par envie et malveillance et qu'on fait tousjours ainsi contre les pauvres gens, et que sy on scavoit tout le fait dudit maire Galand, qu'on ne tiendroit pas beaucoup plus de compte de luy que l'on faict d'elle.'

Judges told her she was perjuring herself, and that she 'pense abuser les personnes de ses belles parolles'.

She agreed that she had met Jean Masson by garden of Claudon Chadat, but denied that he had struck her; said his mother was 'une grande bourdiere et une grande babillarde' [a great liar and a great talker].

Agreed that she had given remedy to Colas Curien and his wife for their child - had learned it herself from others, and had used it effectively.

Continued to deny all charges. Said the witnesses were liars, and when accusation by 'la Pallesonatte' was brought up, claimed again that she had written proof it had been withdrawn.

25 June 1592; confrontations

Before taking oath said her Benedicite, crossed herself, and called on God, the Virgin, and all the saints. Continued denials, and said she was 'munie du Saint Sacrement de Confirmation, et at ouy dire aux vielles gens Que celles qui sont ainsy confirmées ne peuvent estre sorcieres'; if she said she was a witch she would damn herself.

Did not object to any witnesses, although in some cases she suggested they should make reparation for their accusations. Denied all substantive charges.

Said she had not known of Jean Masson's illness, but his mother Pabey might have learned from her at some other time a remedy which she had learned from a soldier, when her own daughter was 'pleine de jaunisses'. This involved making a drink with 13 leaves of 'saulge croisée', seven parsley roots, some mithridat, white wine, and holy water. This had cured daughter.

As Jehennon wife of Jean Gerardat was leaving, Zabel cried out to her 'Qu'elle garde son ame, et qu'elle ne la charge ainsy à grand tort.'

At end was reproached by judges that she had said nothing against witnesses, and if these 'gens de bien' testified against her in such numbers, it was clear that she was perjuring herself. Also told her that her accomplice Jean Waré had been arrested after her, had confessed his own misdeeds, and declared that they had often been to sabbat together. She continued to maintain her innocence.

28 June 1592; Change de Nancy approves torture 'mediocrement'.

3 July 1592; interrogation under torture

Told judges that they were incurring a 'grande charge' by torturing her wrongly, and they would not gain Paradise as a result. Racked, then pressure increased by a half-turn; asked to be released and she would tell truth, but then continued denials. Racked again, she eventually confessed that she had been seduced by Mre Persin. At first said it was only half a year before, eventually said it was 3 years earlier. Agreed to the various malefices attributed to her, which she had accomplished with powder, or by asking Persin to act on her behalf. Had been to sabbat twice, but said she had seen no-one there; then said she had only seen la Pelissonnatte. Apart from a few vague remarks about hail-making, she offered no details of sabbat. Eventually said she had seen Jean Waré and Babey Masson there. Judges were not happy about the difficulty she made over identifying accomplices, and threatened her with further torture. Objected that Pelissonnatte had been executed 4 years before, so her dates were wrong - could only reply rather pathetically that she had no sure way of counting. Also suggested that she was accusing Babey out of hatred, and that she hadn't reproached her as a witness.

4 July 1592; interrogation

Confirmed earlier confessions. Said Persin had seduced her when she had no bread, and no money with which to buy any. Said she had used powder on child of Colas Curien because it cried at the 'craigne' and disturbed her. Had also killed Claudon Vicaire.

9 July 1592; Change de Nancy approves execution, subject to repetition of confessions

16 July 1592; Zabel confirms confessions, although partly withdrawing charges against Jean Waré and Babey Masson - she saw them going in front of her (? on way to sabbat) but didn't see them do any harm.

22 July 1592; note that execution has taken place.