

Newes from Scotland (1591)

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<fig 1>

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Newes from Scotland,
Declaring the Damna-
ble life and death of Doctor Fian, a
notable Sorcerer, who was burned at
Edenbrough in Ianuary last.
1591.

Which Doctor was regester to the Diuell
that sundry times preached at North Bar-
rick Kirke, to a number of noto-
rious Witches.

With the true examinations of the saide Doctor
and Witches, as they vttered them in the pre-
sence of the Scottish King.

Discouering how they pretended
to bewitch and drowne his Maiestie in the Sea
comming from Denmarke, with such
other wonderfull matters as the like
hath not been heard of at
any time.

Published according to the Scottish Coppie.

AT LONDON
Printed for William
Wright.

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To the Reader.

THE MANIFOLDE

*vntruthe which is spread
abroade, concerning the
detestable actions and ap-
prehension of those Wit-
ches wherof this Historye
following truely entreateth, hath caused me
to publish the same in print: and the rather
for that sundrie written Copies are lately dis-
persed therof, containing that the said witches
were first discouered, by meanes of a poore
Pedler trauailing to the towne of Trenent,
and that by a wonderfull manner he was in
a moment conuayed at midnight, from Scot-
land to Burdeaux in Fraunce (beeing places of
no small distance between) into a Marchants
Seller there, and after, being sent from Burdeaux
into Scotland by certaine Scottish Marchants
to the Kinges Maiestie, that he discouered
those Witches and was the cause of their ap-
prehension: with a number of matters mira-
culous*

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*lous and incredible: All which in truthe are
moste false. Neuertheles to satisfie a number
of honest mindes, who are desirous to be en-
formed of the veritie and trueth of their con-
fessions, which for certaintie is more stranger
then the common reporte runneth, and yet
with more trueth I haue vndertaken to pub-
lish this short Treatise, which declareth the
the true discourse of all that hath hapned, and
aswell what was pretended by those wicked
and detestable Witches against the Kinges
Maiestie, as also by what meanes they wro-
ught the same.*

*All which examinations (gentle Reader)
I haue heere truelye published, as they were
taken and vttered in the presence of the
Kings Maiestie, praying thee to ac-
cept it for veritie, the same
beeing so true as can-
not be repro-
ued.*

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A true discourse,
Of the apprehension of sundrye
Witches lately taken in Scotland: wherof
some are executed, and some are
yet imprisoned.

With a particular recitall of their examinati-
ons, taken in the presence of the Kinges
Maiestie.

God by his omnipotent pow-
er, hath at al times and daily
doth take such care, and is so
vigillant, for the weale and
preseruation of his owne,
that thereby he disappointeth
the wicked practises and eul
intents of all such as by any
meanes whatsoeuer, seeke indirectly to conspire
any thing contrary to his holy will: yea and by
the same power, he hath lately ouerthrown and
hindered the intentions and wicked dealinges
of a great number of vngodly creatures, no bet-
ter then Diuels: who suffering themselues to
be allured and inticed by the Diuell whom they
serued, and to whome they were priuatelye
sworne: entered into the detestable Art of witch-

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craft, which they studied and practised so long
time, that in the end they had seduced by their
sorcery a number of other to be as bad as them-
selues: dwelling in the boundes of Lowthian,
which is a principall shire or parte of Scotland,
where the Kings Maiestie vseth to make his
cheefest residence or abode: and to the end that
their detestable wickednes which they priuilye
had pretended against the Kings Maiestie, the
Common-weale of that Country, with the No-
bilitie and subiects of the same, should come to
light: God of his vnspeakeable goodnes did re-
ueale and lay it open in very strange sorte, ther-
by to make knowne vnto the worlde, that their
actions were contrarye to the lawe of God, and
the naturall affection which we ought general-
lye to beare one to another: the manner of the
reuealing wherof was as followeth.

Within the towne of Trenent in the King-

dome of Scotland, there dwelleth one Dauid Seaton, who being deputie Bailiffe in the saide Towne, had a maide seruant called Geillis Duncane, who vsed secretly to be absent and to lye foorth of her Maisters house euery other night: this Geillis Duncane took in hand to help all such as were troubled or greeued with any kinde of sicknes or infirmitie: and in short space did perfourme manye matters most miraculous, which thinges forasmuch as she began to doe them vpon a sodaine, hauing neuer doon the like

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before, made her Maister and others to be in great admiracion, and wondred thereat: by meanes wherof the saide Dauid Seaton had his maide in some great suspition, that she did not those things by naturall and lawfull wayes, but rather supposed it to be doone by some extraordynary and vnlawfull meanes.

Whervpon, her Maister began to growe very inquisitiue, and examined her which way and by what meanes she were able to perfourme matters of so great importance: whereat she gaue him no answere, neuerthelesse, her Maister to the intent that he might the better trye and finde out the trueth of the same, did with the helpe of others, torment her with the torture of the Pilliwinckes vpon her fingers, which is a greeuous torture, and binding or wrinching her head with a corde or roape, which is a most cruel torment also, yet would she not confesse any thing, whereupon they suspecting that she had beene marked by the Diuell (as commonly witches are) made diligent search about her, and found the enemies marke to be in her fore crag or foreparte of her throate: which being found, she confessed that all her dooings was doone by the wicked allurements and inticements of the Diuell, and that she did them by witchcraft.

After this her confession, she was committed to prison, wheee she continued for a season,

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where immediatly she accused these persons following to be notorious witches, and caused them foorthwith to be apprehended one after an

<fig 2>

other, vidz. Agnis Sampson the eldest Witch of them al, dwelling in Haddington, Agnes Tompson of Edenbrough, Doctor Fian, alias Iohn Cunningham, maister of the Schoole at Salt-

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pans in Lowthian, of whose life and strange actes, you shall heare more largely in the ende of this discourse: these were by the saide Geillis Duncane accused, as also George Motts wife dwelling in Saltpans, Robert Griersonn skipper, and Iennit Bandilandis, with the Porters wife of Seaton, the Smith at the brigge Hallis with innumerable others in that partes, and dwelling in those bounds aforesaide: of whom some are alreadye executed, the rest remaine in prison, to receiue the doome of Iudgement at the Kings maiesties will and pleasure.

The said Geillis Duncane also caused Ewphame Meealrean to be apprehended, who conspired and perfourmed the death of her Godfather, and who vsed her art vpon a gentleman being one of the Lords and Iustices of the Session, for bearing good will to her Daughter: she also cau- sed to be apprehended one Barbara Naper, for bewitching to death Archibalde, last Earle of Angus, who languished to death by witchcraft and yet the same was not suspected, but that he died of so strange a disease, as the Phisition knew not how to cure or remedy the same: but of all other the saide witches, these two last before recited, were reputed for as ciuill honest women as any that dwelled within the Citie of Edenbrough, before they were apprehended. Many other besides were taken dwelling in

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Lieth, who are detayned in prison, vntill his Maiesties further will and pleasure be known: of whose wicked dooings you shall particularly heare, which were as followeth.

This aforesaide Agnis Sampson which was the elder Witch, was taken and brought to Haliuid house before the Kings Maiestie and sun-

dry other of the nobility of Scotland, where she was straitly examined, but all the perswasions which the Kings maiestie vsed to her with the rest of his counsell, might not prouoke or induce her to confesse any thing, but stood stiffly in the deniall of all that was laide to her charge: wherupon they caused her to be conueied awaye to prison, there to receiue such torture as hath been lately prouided for witches in that country: and forasmuch as by due examination of witchcraft and witches in Scotland, it hath lately beene found that the Deuill dooth generallye marke them with a priuie marke, by reason the Witches haue confessed themselues, that the Diuell dooth lick them with his tung in some priuy part of their bodie, before hee dooth receiue them to be his seruants, which marke commonly is giuen them vnder the haire in some part of their bodye, wherby it may not easily be found out or seene, although they be searched: and generally so long as the marke is not seene to those which search them, so long the parties that hath the

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marke will neuer confesse any thing. Therfore by special commaundement this Agnis Sampson had all her haire shauen of, in eache parte of her bodie, and her head throwen with a rope according to the custome of that Countrye, beeing a paine most greeuous, which she continued almost an hower, during which time she would not confesse any thing vntill the Diuels marke was found vpon her priuities, then she immediatlye confessed whatsoeuer was demaunded of her, and iustifying those persons aforesaid to be notorious witches.

Item, the saide Agnis Tompson was after brought againe before the Kings Maiestie and his Counsell, and being examined of the mee-tings and detestable dealings of those witches, she confessed that vpon the night of Allhollon Euen last, she was accompanied aswell with the persons aforesaide, as also with a great many other witches, to the number of two hundred: and that all they together went by Sea each one in a Riddle or Ciue, and went in the same very substantially with Flaggons of wine making merrie and drinking by the waye in the

same Riddles or Ciues, to the Kerke of North Barrick in Lowthian, and that after they had landed, tooke handes on the land and daunced this reill or short daunce, singing all with one voice.

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*Commer goe ye before, commer goe ye,
Gif ye will not goe before, commer let me.*

At which time she confessed, that this Geilles Duncane did goe before them playing this reill or daunce vpon a small Trump, called a lewes Trump, vntill they entred into the Kerk of north Barrick.

These confessions made the King in a woderful admiration, and sent for the said Geillis Duncane, who vpon the like Trump did playe the said daunce before the Kings Maiestie, who in respect of the strangenes of these matters, tooke great delight to bee present at their examinacions.

Item, the said Agnis Tompson confessed that the Diuell being then at North Barrick Kerke attending their comming in the habit or likenes of a man, and seeing that they tarried ouer-long, he at their comming enioyned them all to a penance, which was, that they should kisse his Buttockes, in signe of duetye to him: which being put ouer the Pulpit barre, euerye one did as he had enioyned them: and hauing made his vngodly exhortations, wherein he did greatlye enveighe against the King of Scotlond, he receiued their oathes for their good and true seruice towards him, and departed: which doone, they returned to Sea, and so home againe.

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At which time the witches demaunded of the Diuel why he did beare such hatred to the King, who answered, by reason the King is the greatest enemy he hath in the worlde: all which their onfessions and depositions are still extant vpon record.

Item, the saide Agnis Sampson confessed before the Kings Maiestie sundrye thinges which were so miraculous and strange, as that his

Maiestie saide they were all extreame lyars, wherat she answered, she would not wishe his Maiestie to suppose her woords to be false, but rather to beleue them, in that she would discouer such matter vnto him as his maiestie should not any way doubt off.

And therupon taking his Maiestie a little aside, she declared vnto him the verye woordes which passed betweene the Kings Maiestie and his Queene at Vpslo in Norway the first night of their mariage, with their answere eache to other: whereat the Kinges Maiestie wondered greatlye, and swore by the liuing God, that he beleueed that all the Diuels in hell could not haue discouered the same: acknowledging her woords to be most true, and therefore gaue the more credit to the rest which is before declared.

Touching this Agnis Tompson, she is the onlye woman, who, by the Diuels perswasion should haue intended and put in execution the

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Kings Maiesties death in this manner.

She confessed that she tooke a blacke Toade, and did hang the same vp by the heeles, three daies, and collected and gathered the venome as it dropped and fell from it in an Oister shell, and kept the same venome close couered, vntill she should obtaine any parte or peece of foule linnen cloth, that had appertained to the Kings Maiestie, as shirt, handkercher, napkin or any other thing which she practised to obtaine by meanes of one Iohn Kers, who being attendant in his Maiesties Chamber, desired him for olde acquaintance betweene them, to helpe her to one or a peece of such a cloth as is aforesaide, which thing the said Iohn Kers denyed to helpe her too, saying he could not help her too it.

And the said Agnis Tompson by her depositions since her apprehension saith, that if she had obtained any one peece of linnen cloth which the King had worne and fouled, she had bewitched him to death, and put him to such extraordinary paines, as if he had beene lying vpon sharp thorunes and endes of Needles.

Moreouer she confessed that at the time when his Maiestie was in Denmarke, she being accompanied with the parties before specially na-

med, tooke a Cat and christened it, and afterward bound to each parte of that Cat, the cheefest partes of a dead man, and seuerall ioynts of

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his bodie, and that in the night following the saide Cat was conueied into the midst of the sea by all these witches sayling in their riddles or Ciues as is aforesaide, and so left the saide Cat right before the Towne of Lieth in Scotland: this doone, there did arise such a tempest in the Sea, as a greater hath not beene seene: which tempest was the cause of the perrishing of a Boate or vessell comming ouer from the towne of Brunt lland to the towne of Lieth, wherein was sundrye lewelles and and riche giftes, which should haue been presented to the now Queen of Scotland, at her Maiesties comming to Lieth.

Againe it is confessed, that the said christened Cat was the cause that the Kinges Maiesties Ship at his comming foorth of Denmarke, had a contrary winde to the rest of his Ships, then being in his companye, which thing was most strange and true, as the Kings Maiestie acknowledgeth, for when the rest of the Shippes had a faire and good winde, then was the winde contrarye and altogether against his Maiestie: and further the saide witche declared, that his Maiestie had neuer come safelye from the Sea, if his faith had not preuailed aboue their enten- tions.

Moreouer the said Witches being demaun-

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ded how the Diuell would vse them when he was in their company, they confessed that when the Diuell did receiue them for his seruants, and that they had vowed themselues vnto him, then he would Carnallye vse them, albeit to their little pleasure, in respect of his colde nature: and would doo the like at sundry other times.

As touching the aforesaide Doctor Fian, alias Iohn Cunningham, the examination of his actes since his apprehension, declareth the great subtiltye of the diuell, and therfore maketh thinges

to appeere the more miraculous: for being apprehended by the accusation of the saide Geillis Duncane aforesaide, who confessed he was their Regester, and that there was not one man suffered to come to the Diuels readinges but onlye he: the saide Doctor was taken and imprisoned, and vsed with the accustomed paine, prouided for those offences, inflicted vpon the rest as is aforesaide.

First by throwing of his head with a roape, wherat he would confesse nothing.

Secondly, he was perswaded by faire means to confesse his follies, but that would preuaile as little.

Lastly he was put to the most seuere and cruel paine in the world, called the bootes, who af-

C2r

ter he had receiued three strokes, being enquired if he would confesse his damnable acts and wicked life, his tung would not serue him to speak, in respect wherof the rest of the witches willed to search his tung, vnder which was found two pinnes thrust vp into the head, whereupon the VVitches did saye, Now is the Charme stinted, and shewed that those charmed Pinnes were the cause he could not confesse any thing: then was he immediatly released of the bootes, brought before the King, his confession was taken, and his owne hand willingly set ther-vnto, which contained as followeth.

First, that at the general meetinges of those witches, hee was alwayes preasent: that he was Clarke to all those that were in subiection to the Diuel's seruice, bearing the name of witche, that alwaye he did take their othes for their true seruice to the Diuell, and that he wrot for them such matters as the Diuell still pleased to commaund him.

Item, he confessed that by his witchcrafte he did bewitch a Gentleman dwelling neere to the Saltpans, where the said Doctor kept Schoole, onely for being enamoured of a Gentlewoman whome he loued himselfe: by meanes of which

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his Sorcerye, witchcraft and diuelish practises,
he caused the said Gentleman that once in xxiiij.
howres he fell into a lunacie and madnes, and so

<fig 3>

cotinued one whole hower together, and for the
veritie of the same, he caused the Gentleman to
be brought before the Kinges Maiestie, which
was vpon the xxiiij. day of December last, and
being

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in his Maiesties Chamber, suddenly he gaue a
great scritch and fell into a madnes, sometime
bending himselfe, and sometime capring so di-
rectly vp, that his head did touch the seeling of the
Chamber, to the great admiration of his Maie-
stie and others then present: so that all the Gen-
tlemen in the Chamber were not able to holde
him, vntill they called in more helpe, who toge-
ther bound him hand and foot: and suffering the
said gentleman to lye still vntill his furye were
past, he within an hower came againe to him-
selfe, when being demaunded of the Kings Ma-
iestie what he saw or did all that while, answe-
red that he had been in a sound sleepe.

Item the said Doctor did also confesse that he
had vsed means sundry times to obtain his pur-
pose and wicked intent of the same Gentlewo-
man, and seeing himselfe disapointed of his in-
tention, he determined by all waies he might to
obtaine the same, trusting by coniuring, witch-
craft and Sorcery to obtaine it in this manner.

It happened this gentlewoman being vnma-
ried, had a brother who went to schoole with the
said Doctor, and calling his Scholler to him,
demaunded if he did lye with his sister, who an-
swered he did, by meanes wherof he thought to
obtaine his purpose, and therefore secretlye pro-
mised to teach him without stripes, so he would ob-
tain for him three haires of his sisters priuities.

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at such time as he should spye best occasion for
it: which the youth promised faithfullye to per-

fourme, and vowed speedily to put it in practise, taking a peece of coniured paper of his maister to lappe them in when he had gotten them: and therevpon the boye practised nightlye to obtaine his maisters purpose, especially when his sister was a sleepe.

But God who knoweth the secrets of all harts, and reuealeth all wicked and vngodlye practises, would not suffer the intents of this diuile Doctor to come to that purpose which he supposed it would, and therefore to declare that he was heauilye offended with his wicked entent, did so woorke by the Gentlewomans owne meanes, that in the ende the same was discouered and brought to light: for she being one night a sleepe, and her brother in bed with her, suddenly cryed out to her mother, declaring that her Brother would not suffer her to sleepe, wherevpon her mother hauing a quick capacitie, did vehemently suspect Doctor Fians entention, by reason she was a witche of her selfe, and therefore presently arose, and was very inquisitiue of the boy to vnderstand his intent, and the better to know the same, did beat him with sundry stripes, wherby he discouered the trueth vnto her.

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The Mother therefore being well practised in witchcrafte, did thinke it most conuenient to meeete with the Doctor in his owne Arte, and therevpon tooke the paper from the boy, wherein hee should haue put the same haire, and went to a young Heyfer which neuer had borne Calfe nor gone to the Bull, and with a paire of sheeres, clipped off three haires from the vdder of the Cow, and wrapt them in the same paper, which she againe deliuered to the boy, then willing him to giue the same to his saide Maister, which he immediatly did.

The Schoolemaister so soone as he had receiued them, thinking them indeede to bee the Maides haires, went straight and wrought his arte vpon them: But the Doctor had no sooner doone his intent to them, but' presentlye the Hayfer or Cow whose haires they were indeed, came vnto the doore of the Church wherein

the Schoolemaister was, into the which the Hayfer went, and made towards the Schoolemaister, leaping and dauncing vpon him, and following him foorth of the church and to what place so euer he went, to the great admiration of all the townes men of Saltpans, and many others who did beholde the same.

The reporte whereof made all men imagine

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that hee did woorke it by the Diuell, without whom it could neuer haue beene so sufficiellie effected: and therupon, the name of the said Doctor Fien (who was but a very yong man) began to grow so common anong the people of Scotland, that he was secretlye nominated for a notable Cuniurer.

<fig 4>

D1r

All which although in the beginning he denied, and would not confesse, yet hauing felt the pain of the bootes (and the charme stinted, as aforesayd) he confessed all the aforesaid to be most true, without producing anie witnesses to iustifie the same, and therupon before the kings maiesty he subscribed the sayd confessions with his owne hande, which for truth remaineth vpon record in Scotland.

After that the depositions and examinations of the sayd doctor Fian Alias Cuningham was taken, as alreadie is declared, with his owne hand willingly set therewith, hee was by the master of the prison committed to ward, and appointed to a chamber by himselfe, where forsaking his wicked wayes, acknowledging his most vngodly lyfe, shewing that he had too much folowed the allurements and entisements of sathan, and fondly practised his conclusions by coniuring, witchcraft, enchantment, sorcerie, and such like, hee renounced the deuill and all his wicked workes, vowed to leade the life of a christian, and seemed newly conuerted towards God.

The morrow after vpon conference had with him, he granted that the deuill had appeared unto him in the night before, appareled all in blacke, with a white wand in his hande, and that the de-

uill demaunded of him if hee would continue his
faithfull seruice, according to his first oath and
promise made to that effect. Whome (as hee then

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sayd) he vtterly renounced to his face, and sayde
vnto him in this manner, Auoide Satan, auoide,
for I haue listned too much vnto thee, and by the
same thou hast vndone mee, in respect whereof I
vtterly forsake thee. To whome the deuill answe-
red, That once ere thou die thou shalt bee mine. And
with that (as he sayde) the deuill brake the white
wande, and immediatly vanished foorth of his
sight.

Thus all the daie this Doctor Fian continu-
ed verie solitarie, and seemed to haue care of his
owne soule, and would call vpon God, shewing
himselfe penitent for his wicked life, neuerthelesse
the same night hee founde such meanes, that hee
stole the key of the prison doore and chamber in
the which he was, which in the night hee opened
and fled awaie to the Salt pans, where hee was
alwayes resident, and first apprehended. Of
whose sodaine departure when the Kings maie-
stie had intelligence, hee presently commanded di-
lignant inquirie to bee made for his apprehension,
and for the better effecting thereof, hee sent pub-
like proclamations into all partes of his lande
to the same effect. By meanes of whose hot and
harde pursuite, he was agayn taken and brought
to prison, and then being called before the kings
highnes, hee was reexamined as well touching
his departure, as also touching all that had before
happened.

D2r

But this Doctor, notwithstanding that his
owne confession appeareth remaining in recorde
vnder his owne hande writing, and the same
therenvnto fixed in the presence of the Kings ma-
iestie and sundrie of his Councell, yet did hee vt-
terly denie the same.

Wherupon the kinges maiestie perceiving
his stubbourne wilfulness, conceiued and imagi-
ned that in the time of his absence hee had entered
into newe conference and league with the deuill
his master, and that hee had beene agayne new-

ly marked, for the which hee was narrowly searched, but it coulde not in anie wise bee founde, yet for more tryall of him to make him confesse, hee was commaunded to haue a most straunge torment which was done in this mauner following.

His nailes vpon all his fingers were riuen and pulled off with an instrument called in Scottish a Turkas, which in England wee call a payre of pincers, and vnder euerie nayle there was thrust in two needels ouer euen vp to the heads. At all which tormentes notwithstanding the Doctor neuer shronke anie whit, neither woulde he then confesse it the sooner for all the tortures inflicted vpon him.

Then was hee with all conuenient speed, by commandement, conuaied againe to the torment

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of the bootes, wherein hee continued a long time, and did abide so many blowes in them, that his legges were crushte and beaten togeather as small as might bee, and the bones and flesh so brused, that the bloud and marrowe spouted forth in great abundance, whereby they were made vnserviceable for euer. And notwithstanding al these grieuous paines and cruell tormentes hee would not confesse anie thing, so deepeley had the deuill entered into his heart, that hee vtterly denied all that which he had before auouched, and woulde saie nothing therevnto but this, that what hee had done and sayde before, was onely done and sayde for feare of paynes which he had endured.

Vpon great consideration therefore taken by the Kings maiestie and his Councell, as well for the due execution of iustice vpon such detestable malefactors, as also for example sake, to remayne a terroure to all others heereafter, that shall attempt to deale in the lyke wicked and vngodlye actions, as witchcraft, sorcery, cuniuration, and such lyke, the sayde Doctor Fian was soone after araigned, condemned, and adiudged by the law to die, and then to bee burned according to the lawe of that lande, prouided in that behalfe. Wherupon hee was put into a carte, and beeing first strangled, hee was immediatly put into a great fire, being readie prouided for that purpose, and there

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burned in the Castle hill of Edenbrough on a sa-
terdaie in the ende of Ianuarie last past. 1591.

The rest of the witches which are not yet ex-
ecuted, remayne in prison till farther triall, and
knowledge of his maiesties pleasure.

*This strange discourse before recited, may perhaps
giue some occasion of doubt to such as shall happen to
reade the same, and thereby conjecture that the Kings
maiestie would not hazarde himselfe in the presence
of such notorious witches, least therby might haue in-
sued great danger to his person and the generall state
of the land, which thing in truth might wel haue bene
feared. But to answer generally to such, let this suffice:
that first it is well knownen that the King is the child and
seruant of God, and they but seruants to the deuile, hee
is the Lords annointed, and they but vesselles of Gods
wrath: he is a true Christian, and trusteth in God, they
worse than Infidels, for they onely trust in the deuill,
who daily serue them, till he haue brought them to vt-
ter destruction. But heereby it seemeth that his High-
nesse caried a magnanimious and vndanted mind, not
feared with their enchantmentes, but resolute in this,
that so long as God is with him, hee feareth not who
is against him. And trulie the whole scope of this trea-
tise dooth so plainly laie open the wonderfull pro-
uidence of the Almighty, that if he had not bene de-
fended by his omnipotence and power, his Highnes
had neuer returned aliuie in his voyage from Denmarke,
so that there is no doubt but God woulde as well de-
fend him on the land as on the sea, where they preten-
ded their damnable practise.*

FINIS.

D3v

<fig 5>

D4r

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D4v

<blank>



<fig 1>



<fig 2>



<fig 3>



<fig 4>



<fig 5>