

# William Hunter - Martyr March 26, 1555

- I. From: The Tudor Society (<https://www.tudorsociety.com/william-hunter-nineteen-year-old-martyr/>).

## William Hunter, a nineteen-year-old martyr Claire Ridgway

The burning of William Hunter Martyr.



On 26th/27th March\* 1555, nineteen-year-old William Hunter, a silk-weaver's apprentice, was burned at the stake in Brentwood, Essex, for heresy.

His story is told in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and you can read the chapter on Hunter online at <http://www.exclassics.com/foxe/foxe275.htm>, but here is brief overview...

William Hunter was an apprentice to silk-weaver Thomas Taylor in London when Mary I came to the throne. After refusing to attend mass and receive communion at Easter 1554, he was threatened with being hauled before the Bishop of London. It was at this point that his master, Taylor, dismissed him "lest that he should come in danger because of him, if he continued in his house." Hunter returned to his home in Brentwood, Essex, but got into trouble when Father Atwell, of Brentwood Chapel, found Hunter in the chapel reading the Bible to himself. An argument between the priest and Hunter then ensued. The priest reported Hunter to Justice Anthony Browne, who called Hunter's father before him and ordered him to find his son and bring him to Browne. Hunter voluntarily came home and was put in the stocks by the local constable before being taken to Browne.

After an argument over communion, and Hunter's refusal to accept the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, believing communion to be solely "in remembrance" of Christ's sacrifice, Hunter was sent to the Bishop of London. Hunter refused to recant his beliefs. He was put in the stocks for two days and nights, but still refused to recant. He was then sent to prison and the bishop "commanded the keeper to lay irons upon him as many as he could bear". Foxe writes that Hunter was kept in prison for 9 months and how he was called before the Bishop of London five times during that time. He still refused to recant. Foxe records that he was condemned with five others in the consistory of St Paul's on 9th February 1555.

After his condemnation, Hunter was sent to Newgate and then to Brentwood. His parents were proud of their son's faith. Foxe records:

"In the meantime William's father and mother came to him, and desired heartily of God that he might continue to the end in that good way which he had begun: and his mother said to him, that she was glad that ever she was so happy to bear such a child, which could find in his heart to lose his life for Christ's name's sake.

Then William said to his mother, 'For my little pain which I shall suffer, which is but a short braid, Christ hath promised me, mother,' said he, 'a crown of joy: may you not be glad of that, mother?' With that his mother kneeled down on her knees, saying, 'I pray God strengthen thee, my son, to the end. Yea, I think thee as well bestowed as any child that ever I bare.'"

Foxe records that just before his burning, Hunter said "Son of God, shine upon me" and "immediately the sun in the element shone out of a dark cloud so full in his face, that he was constrained to look another way: whereat the people mused, because it was so dark a little time afore. Then William took up a faggot of broom, and embraced it in his arms." He went to his death courageously, assuring his brother that he was not afraid of death. Foxe writes: "Then lift he up his hands to heaven, and said, 'Lord, Lord, Lord, receive my spirit;' and, casting down his head again into the smothering smoke, he yielded up his life for the truth, sealing it with his blood to the praise of God."

An elm tree was later planted on the spot and became known as the Martyr's Elm. A plaque at the spot where Hunter was burned reads:

"WILLIAM HUNTER. MARTYR. Committed to the Flames March 26th MDLV."

## Notes and Sources

\*The plaque and Foxe record Hunter's execution as taking place on 26th March whereas others date it to 27th March.

The illustration is a woodcut from the 1570 edition of Book 11 of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.

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- II. From: The Ex-classics website (<https://www.exclassics.com/>), *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, John Day Publisher, 1563.

### 273. WILLIAM HUNTER.

*A notable history of William Hunter, a young man, an apprentice, of nineteen years, pursued to death by Justice Brown, for the gospel's sake; worthy of all young men and parents to be read.*



HE twenty-sixth day of the said month of March, the year aforesaid, followed the martyrdom of William Hunter, a right godly young man, of the age of nineteen years, and born of like godly parents: by whom he was not only instructed in true religion and godliness, but also confirmed by them unto death, after a rare and strange example, worthy to be noted and had in admiration of all parents. Wherein may appear a singular spectacle, not only of a marvellous fortitude in the party so young, but also in his parents, to behold nature in them striving with religion, and overcome of the same: whereby Christian parents may learn what is to be done, not only in their children but also in themselves, if need at any time do require, or godliness should demand the duty of a Christian man against natural affection. Nature is a strong thing, I must needs confess, and almost invincible, and, among all the affections of nature, there is none that is so deeply graved in a father's mind, as the love and tender affection towards his children, that is, as you would say, towards his own bowels. By which affection we see many, yea rather infinite parents, that are overcome; but, of them that overcome it, very few, or rather none. So much the more, therefore, am I moved not to pass over, in this place, such notable and singular godliness of the parents: who, when they saw their son led towards the fire, did not follow him with lamentation, nor laboured, by their words, to draw him from his purpose, neither took pity of his fortune; but, setting aside all private affection of natural love, forgetting nature, and, as it were, forgetting themselves,-- neither yet following that common affection of parents at this day, but the example of that holy mother of the Maccabees,-- encouraged their son, as much as they could; and rejoicing with wonderful gladness, exhorted him to go through valiantly: insomuch, that when he was ready to suffer death, either of them drinking unto him, rejoiced over him, and confirmed him in the Lord. And here, truly, I cannot tell whether I should rather praise the virtue of the son, or of the parents; for he, indeed, died with great constancy, and after he had recited the eighty-fourth Psalm, as he was a dying, doubtless obtained the crown of blessed martyrdom. But no less constancy, as I think, appeared in them, and they are no less to be accounted martyrs, in the martyrdom of their son: for he, offering his body to torments, with great praise, overcame the tormentors, the torments, and the tyrants. And they, with no less praise, overcame their own natures, offering to the Lord a mind no less constant and strong than he did, and, perchance, felt no less torments inwardly, than he did outwardly. He, broiling in the midst of the flame, suffered his life to be taken from him, not without cruel torment; and they, also, with no less torment, suffered their son to be taken

from them. On both sides the strength of the spirit, the fervent heat of godliness, and the love of Christ, overcame all the torments; and, therefore, I thought the praise of the son could not well be recorded, without the commendation of the parents: for as he, dying for the gospel, hath left behind him in the church, a strong and evident testimony, to confirm the doctrine of the gospel; so they, to confirm a gospel-like life, have given an example, worthy to be followed of all men: example whereof, in the sequel of this history, we have here present before our eyes. Which history, as it was faithfully drawn out by Robert Hunter, his own brother, (who, being present with his brother William, and never leaving him till his death, sent the true report unto us,) we have here, with like faithfulness, placed and recorded the same, as followeth.

"William Hunter, being an apprentice in London in the first year of Queen Mary, was commanded at the Easter next following to receive the communion at a mass, by the priest of the parish where he dwelt, called Coleman Street; which because he refused to do, he was very much threatened that he should be therefore brought before the bishop of London. Wherefore William Hunter's master, one Thomas Taylor, a silkweaver, required William Hunter to go and depart from him, lest that he should come in danger because of him, if he continued in his house. For the which causes, William Hunter took leave of his said master, and thence came to Brentwood, where his father dwelt, with whom he afterwards remained about the space of half a quarter of a year.

"After this it happened within five or six weeks, that William going into the chapel of Brentwood, and finding there a Bible lying on a desk, did read therein. In the mean time there came in one Father Atwell, a [summer](#), who hearing William read in the Bible, said to him, 'What! meddlest thou with the Bible? Knowest thou what thou readest, and canst thou expound the Scriptures?'

"To whom William answered and said, 'Father Atwell, I take not upon me to expound the Scriptures, except I were dispensed withal; but I, finding the Bible here when I came, read in it to my comfort.' To whom Father Atwell said, 'It was never merry world, since the Bible came abroad in English.'

"To the which words William answered, saying, 'Father Atwell, say not so, for God's sake: for it is God's book, out of the which every one that hath grace may learn to know both what things please God, and also what displeaseth him.' Then said Father Atwell, 'Could we not tell before this time as well as now, how God was served?' William answered, 'No, Father Atwell, nothing so well as we may now; if that we might have his blessed word amongst us still as we have had.' 'It is true,' said Father Atwell, 'if it be as you say.'

"'Well,' said William Hunter, 'it liketh me very well, and I pray God that we may have the blessed Bible amongst us continually.' To the which words Father Atwell said, 'I perceive your mind well enough: you are one of them that mislike the queen's laws; and therefore you came from London, I hear say. You learned these ways at London: but for all that,' said Father Atwell, 'you must turn another leaf; or else you, and a great sort more heretics, will broil for this [gear](#), I warrant you.' To the which words William said, God give me grace, that I may believe his word, and confess his name, whatsoever come thereof.' 'Confess his name!' quoth old Atwell, 'No, no; ye will go to the devil all of you, and confess his name.' 'What?' said William, 'you say not well, Father Atwell.'

"At the which words he went out of the chapel in a great fury, saving, 'I am not able to reason with thee: but I will fetch one straightway which shall talk with thee, I warrant thee, thou heretic!' And he, leaving William Hunter reading in the Bible, straightways brought one Thomas Wood, who was then vicar of Southwell, who was at an alehouse even over against the said chapel; who, hearing old Atwell say, that William Hunter was reading of the Bible in the chapel, came by and by to him, and finding him reading in the Bible, took the matter very heinously, saying; 'Sirrah, who gave thee leave to read in the Bible, and to expound it?' Then William answered, 'I expound not the Scriptures, sir, but read them for my comfort.'

"What meddlest thou with them at all? said the vicar. 'It becometh not thee, nor any such, to meddle with the Scriptures.' But William answered, 'I will read the Scriptures (God willing while I live; and you ought, Master Vicar, not to discourage any man for that matter, but rather exhort men diligently to read the Scriptures for your discharge and their own.'

"Unto the which the vicar answered, 'It becometh thee well to tell me what I have to do. I see thou art a heretic by thy words.' William said, 'I am no heretic for speaking the truth.' But the vicar said, 'It is a merry world, when such as thou shall teach us what is the truth. Thou art meddling, Father Atwell tells me, with the sixth chapter of John, wherein thou mayest perceive how Christ saith, 'Except that ye eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' William said. 'I read the sixth chapter of John indeed; howbeit, I made no exposition on it.'

"Then said Father Atwell, 'When you read it, I said, that you there might understand how that in the sacrament of the altar is Christ's very natural body and blood: unto the which you answered, how that you would take the Scriptures as they are, and that you would meddle with no great exposition, except that ye were dispensed withal.'

"Ah,' said the vicar, 'what say you to the blessed sacrament of the altar? Believest thou not in it, and that the bread and wine is transubstantiated into the very body and blood of Christ?' William answered, 'I learn no such thing in the sixth of John as you speak of.' 'Why,' said the vicar, 'dost thou not believe in the sacrament of the altar?' 'I believe,' said William Hunter, 'all that God's word teacheth.' 'Why,' said the vicar, 'thou mayest learn this which I say plainly in the sixth of John.'

"Then said William, 'You understand Christ's words much like the carnal [Capernaites](#), which thought, that Christ would have given them his flesh to feed upon: which opinion our Saviour Christ corrected, when he said, The words which I speak to you, are spirit and life.'

"Now,' quoth the vicar, 'I have found you out: now I see that thou art a heretic indeed, and that thou dost not believe in the sacrament of the altar.' Then said William Hunter, 'Whereas you doubt my belief, I would it were tried, whether that you or I would stand faster in our faith.' 'Yea, thou heretic,' said the vicar, 'wouldst thou have it so tried?' William Hunter answered, 'That which you call heresy, I serve my Lord God withal.'

"Then said the vicar, 'Canst thou serve God with heresy?' But William answered, 'I would that you and I were even now fast tied to a stake, to prove whether that I or you would stand strongest to our faith.' But the vicar answered, 'It shall not be so tried.' 'No,' quoth William, 'I think so; for if I might, I think I know who

would soonest recant: for I durst set my foot against yours, even to the death.' 'That we shall see,' quoth the vicar; and so they departed, the vicar threatening William much, how that he would complain of him; with much other communication which they had together.

"Immediately after, this vicar of the Wield told Master Brown of the communication which William Hunter and he had together; which when Master Brown understood, immediately he sent for William's father and the constable, one Robert Salmon. For immediately after William Hunter and the vicar had reasoned together, he took his leave of his father and fled; because Wood the vicar threatened him. Now when the constable and William's father were come, and were before Master Brown, he asked where William Hunter was. His father answered, saying, 'If it please you, sir, I know not where he is become.' 'No!' quoth Master Brown: 'I will make thee tell where he is, and fetch him forth also, ere I have done with thee.' 'Sir,' said William's father, 'I know not where he is become, nor where to seek for him.'

"Then said Master Brown, 'Why didst thou not bring him, when thou hadst him? I promise thee, if thou wilt not fetch him, I will send thee to prison, till I shall get him. Wherefore see that thou promise me to fetch him; or else it is not best to look me in the face any more, nor yet to rest in Brentwood.' 'Well,' quoth Master Brown to William's father, 'see that thou seek him forth, and bring him to me.'

"William's father answered, 'Sir, would you have me seek out my son to be burned?' 'If thou bring him to me,' quoth Master Brown, 'I will deal well enough for that matter; thou shalt not need to care for the matter. Fetch him, and thou shalt see what I will do for him. Moreover, if thou lackest money,' quoth he, 'thou shalt have some and bade the constable, Master Salmon, to give him a crown: but William's father took none of him. Howbeit Master Brown would never rest, till William's father had promised him to seek out his son. And thus Master Brown sent the constable home again, and William's father; commanding him to seek out William Hunter, and then to come again and bring him to him.

After that old father Hunter had ridden two or three days' journey to satisfy Master Brown's expectation, it happened that William met with his father in the highway as he travelled; and first he, seeing his father, came to him, and spake to him, and told him how that he thought that he sought for him. And then his father, confessing it, wept sore, and said, that Master Brown charged him to seek him, and bring him to him. 'Howbeit,' said he, 'I will return home again, and say I cannot find you.' But William said, 'Father, I will go home with you, and save you harmless, whatsoever cometh of it.'

"And thus they came home together; but William, as soon as he was come home, was taken by the said constable, and laid in the stocks till the next day, when Master Brown (hearing that William Hunter was come home) sent for him to the constable; who brought him immediately to Master Brown.

"Now when William was come, Master Brown said to him, 'Ah, sirrah! are ye come?' and then by and by he commanded the Bible to be brought and opened it, and then began to reason with William on this manner, saying: 'I hear say you are a Scripture man, you; and can reason much of the sixth of John, and expound as pleaseth you:' and turned the Bible to the sixth of St. John. And then he laid to his

charge what an exposition he made, when the vicar and he talked together. And William said, 'He urged me to say so much as I did.'

"Well,' quoth Master Brown, 'because you can expound that place so well; how say you to another place?' (turning to the twenty-second of St. Luke.) And Master Brown said, 'Look here,' quoth he, for Christ saith, that the bread is his body.'-- To the which William answered, 'The text saith, how Christ took bread; but not that he changed it into another substance, but gave that which he took, and brake that which he gave; which was bread, as is evident by the text: for else he should have had two bodies, which to affirm I see no reason,' said William. At the which answer Master Brown was very angry, and took up the Bible and turned the leaves, and then flung it down again in such a fury, that William could not well find the place again whereof they reasoned.

"Then Master Brown said, 'Thou naughty boy! wilt thou not take things as they are, but expound them as thou wilt? Doth not Christ call the bread his body plainly? and thou wilt not believe, that the bread is his body after the consecration. Thou goest about to make Christ a liar!' But William Hunter answered, 'I mean not so, sir; but rather more earnestly to search what the mind of Christ is in that holy institution, wherein he commendeth unto us the remembrance of his death, passion, resurrection, and coming again; saying, 'This do, in the remembrance of me.' And also, though Christ call the bread his body, as he doth also say that he is a vine, a door, &c., yet is not his body turned into bread, no more than he is turned into a door or vine. Wherefore Christ called the bread his body by a figure.'

"At that word Master Brown said, 'Thou art a villain indeed. Wilt thou make Christ a liar yet still?' and was in such a fury with William, and so raged, that William could not speak a word but he crossed him, and scoffed at every word. Wherefore William, seeing him in such a fury, desired him that he would either hear him quietly, and suffer him to answer for himself; or else send him away. To the which Master Brown answered, 'Indeed I will send thee to-morrow to my Lord of London, and he shall have thee under examination:' and thus left off the talk, and made a letter immediately; and sent William Hunter with the constable to Bonner, bishop of London, who received William.

"After that he had read the letter, and the constable returned home again, the bishop caused William to be brought into a chamber, where he began to reason with him in this manner: 'I understand, William Hunter,' quoth he, 'by Master Brown's letter, how that you have had certain communication with the vicar of the Wield, about the blessed sacrament of the altar; and how that ye could agree: whereupon Master Brown sent for thee, to bring thee to the catholic faith, from the which he saith that thou art gone. Howbeit if thou wilt be ruled by me, thou shalt have no harm for any thing that thou hast said or done in this matter.' William answered, saying, 'I am not fallen from the catholic faith of Christ, I am sure; but do believe it, and confess it with all my heart.'

"Why,' quoth the bishop, 'how sayest thou to the blessed sacrament of the altar? Wilt thou not recant thy saying, which thou confessedst before Master Brown, how that Christ's body is not in the sacrament of the altar, the same that was born of the Virgin Mary?' To the which William answered, saying, 'My Lord, I understand that

Master Brown hath certified you of the talk which he and I had together, and thereby ye know what I said to him; the which I will not recant, by God's help.'

"Then said the bishop, 'I think thou art ashamed to bear a [faggot](#), and recant openly; but, if thou wilt recant thy sayings, I will promise thee that thou shalt not be put to open shame: but speak the word here now between me and thee, and I will promise thee it shall go no further, and thou shalt go home again without any hurt.' William answered and said, 'My Lord, if you will let me alone, and leave me to my conscience, I will go to my father and dwell with him, or else with my master again; and so, if nobody will disquiet or trouble my conscience, I will keep my conscience to myself.'

"Then said the bishop, 'I am content. so that thou wilt go to the church, and receive, and be shriven; and so continue a good catholic Christian.' No,' quoth William, 'I will not do so for all the good in the world.' 'Then,' quoth the bishop, 'if you will not do so, I will make you sure enough, I warrant you.' 'Well,' quoth William, you can do no more than God will permit you.' 'Well,' quoth the bishop, 'wilt thou not recant indeed by no means?' 'No,' quoth William, 'never while I live, God willing.'

"Then the bishop (this talk ended) commanded his men to put William in the stocks of his gatehouse, where he sat two days and nights, only with a crust of brown bread and a cup of water. At the two days' end the bishop came to him, and finding the cup of water and the crust of bread still by him upon the stocks, said to his men, 'Take him out of the stocks, and let him break his fast with you.' Then they led him forth of the stocks, but would not suffer him to eat with them, but called him heretic. And he said, he was as loth to be in their company, as they were to be in his.

"After the breakfast, the bishop sent for William, and demanded whether he would recant or no. But William made him answer, how that he would never recant that which he had confessed before men, as concerning his faith in Christ. Then the bishop said that he was no Christian; but he denied the faith in which he was baptized. But William answered, 'I was baptized in the faith of the Holy Trinity, the which I will not go from, God assisting me with his grace.'

"Then the bishop sent him to the convict prison, and commanded the keeper to lay irons upon him as many as he could bear: and moreover asked him, how old he was; and William said that he was nineteen years old. 'Well,' said the bishop, 'you will be burned ere you be twenty years old, if you will not yield yourself better than you have done yet.' William answered, 'God strengthen me in his truth.' And then he parted, and the bishop allowing him a halfpenny a day to live on, in bread or drink.

"Thus he continued in prison three quarters of a year. In the which time he had been before the bishop five times, besides the time when he was condemned in the [consistory](#) in Paul's, the ninth day of February: at the which time I his brother, Robert Hunter, was present, when and where I heard the bishop condemn him, and five others.

"And then the bishop calling William, asked him if he would recant; and so read to him his examination and confession, as is above rehearsed: and then rehearsed, how that William confessed that he did believe that he received Christ's body spiritually, when he did receive the communion. Dost thou mean,' quoth the bishop, 'that the bread is Christ's body spiritually?' William answered, 'I mean not so, but rather when I receive the holy communion rightly and worthily, I do feed upon



Christ spiritually, through faith in my soul, and am made partaker of all the benefits which Christ hath brought unto all faithful believers through his precious death, passion, and resurrection: and not, that the bread is his body, either spiritually or [corporally](#).'

"Then said the bishop to William, 'Dost thou not think,' holding up his cap, 'that, for example here of my cap, thou mayest see the squareness and colour of it, and yet that not to be the substance, which thou judgest by the accidents?' William answered, 'If you can separate the accidents from the substance, and show me the substance without the accidents, I could believe.' Then said the bishop, 'Thou wilt not believe that God can do any thing above man's capacity.' 'Yes,' said William, 'I must needs believe that; for daily experience teacheth all men that thing plainly: but our question is not what God can do, but what he will have us to learn in his holy supper.'

"Then the bishop said, 'I always have found thee at this point, and I see no hope in thee to reclaim thee unto the catholic faith, but thou wilt continue a corrupt member:' and then pronounced sentence upon him, how that he should go from that place to Newgate for a time, and so from thence to Brentwood, 'where,' said he, 'thou shalt be burned.'

"Then the bishop called for another, and so when he had condemned them all, he called for William Hunter, and persuaded with him; saying, 'If thou wilt yet recant, I will make thee a freeman in the city, and give thee forty pound in good money to set up thine occupation withal: or I will make thee steward of my house, and set thee in office; for I like thee well. Thou hast wit enough, and I will prefer thee if thou recant: But William answered, 'I thank you for your great offers: notwithstanding, my Lord,' said he, 'if you cannot persuade my conscience with Scriptures, I cannot find in my heart to turn from God for the love of the world; for I count all things worldly but loss and dung, in respect of the love of Christ.'

"Then said the bishop, 'If thou diest in this mind, thou art condemned for ever.' William answered, 'God judgeth righteously, and justifieth them whom man condemneth unjustly.' Thus William and the bishop departed, William and the rest to Newgate, where they remained about a month; who afterward were sent down, William to Brentwood, and the others into [divers](#) places of the country. Now when William was come down to Brentwood, which was the Saturday before the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary that followed on the Monday after, William remained till the Tuesday after, because they would not put him to death then, for the holiness of the day.

"In the mean time William's father and mother came to him, and desired heartily of God that he might continue to the end in that good way which he had begun: and his mother said to him, that she was glad that ever she was so happy to bear such a child, which could find in his heart to lose his life for Christ's name's sake.

"Then William said to his mother, 'For my little pain which I shall suffer, which is but a short braid, Christ hath promised me, mother,' said he, 'a crown of joy: may you not be glad of that, mother?' With that his mother kneeled down on her knees, saying, 'I pray God strengthen thee, my son, to the end. Yea, I think thee as well bestowed as any child that ever I bare.'

"At the which words Master Higbed took her in his arms, saying, 'I rejoyce' (and so said the others) 'to see you in this mind; and you have a good cause to rejoyce.' And

his father and mother both said, that they were never of other mind, but prayed for him, that as he had begun to confess Christ before men, he likewise might so continue to the end. William's father said, I was afraid of nothing but that my son should have been killed in the prison by hunger and cold; the bishop was so hard to him.' But William confessed, after a month, that his father was charged with his board, that he lacked nothing; but had meat and clothing enough, yea even out of the court, both money, meat, clothes, wood and coals, and all things necessary.

"Thus they continued in their inn, being the Swan in Brentwood, in a parlour, whither resorted many people of the country to see those good men which were there. And many of William's acquaintance came to him, and reasoned with him, and he with them, exhorting them to come away from the abomination of popish superstition and idolatry.

"Thus passing away Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, on Monday at night it happened that William had a dream about two o'clock in the morning, which was this: How that he was at the place where the stake was pitched, where he should be burned, which (as he thought in his dream) was at the town's end where the butts stood; which was so indeed. And also he dreamed that he met with his father as he went to the stake, and also that there was a priest at the stake, who went about to have him recant. To whom he said (as he thought in his dream) how that he bade him, 'Away, false prophet!' and how that he exhorted the people to beware of him, and such as he was: which things came to pass indeed. It happened that William made a noise to himself in his dream, which caused Master Higbed and the others to awake him out of his sleep, to know what he lacked. When he awaked he told them his dream in order, as is said.

"Now when it was day, the sheriff, Master Brocket, called on to set forward to the burning of William Hunter. Then came the sheriff's son to William Hunter, and embraced him in his right arm, saying, 'William! be not afraid of these men which are here present with bows, [bills](#), and weapons, ready prepared to bring you to the place where you shall be burned.' To whom William answered, 'I thank God I am not afraid; for I have cast my count what it will cost me already.' Then the sheriff's son could speak no more to him for weeping.

"Then William Hunter plucked up his gown, and stepped over the parlour [groundsel](#), and went forward cheerfully; the sheriff's servant taking him by one arm, and I his brother by another. And thus going in the way, he met with his father according to his dream, and he spake to his son, weeping and saying, 'God be with thee, son William!' And William said, 'God be with you, good father, and be of good comfort; for I hope we shall meet again when we shall be merry.' His father said, 'I hope so, William; and so departed. So William went to the place where the stake stood, even according to his dream, where all things were very unready. Then William took a wet broom-[faggot](#), and kneeled down thereon, and read the fifty-first Psalm, till he came to these words, The sacrifice of God is a contrite spirit; a contrite and a broken heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

"Then said Master Tyrill of the Beaches, (called William Tyrill,) 'Thou liest,' said he, 'thou readest false; for the words are an humble spirit.' But William said, 'The translation saith, a contrite heart.' 'Yea,' quoth Master Tyrill, 'the translation is false: ye translate books as ye [list](#) yourselves, like heretics.' 'Well,' quoth William, there is

no great difference in those words.' Then said the sheriff, 'Here is a letter from the queen. If thou wilt recant thou shalt live; if not, thou shalt be burned.' 'No,' quoth William, 'I will not recant, God willing.' Then William rose and went to the stake, and stood upright to it. Then came one Richard Ponde, a bailiff, and made fast the chain about William.

"Then said Master Brown, 'Here is not wood enough to burn a leg of him.' Then said William, 'Good people! pray for me; and make speed and despatch quickly: and pray for me while you see me alive, good people; and I will pray for you likewise.'

"Now,' quoth Master Brown. 'pray for thee! I will pray no more for thee, than I will pray for a dog.' To whom William answered, 'Master Brown, now you have that which you sought for, and I pray God it be not laid to your charge in the last day: howbeit I forgive you.' Then said Master Brown, 'I ask no forgiveness of thee.' 'Well,' said William, 'if God forgive you, I shall not require my blood at your hands.'

"Then said William, 'Son of God, shine upon me;' and immediately the sun in the element shone out of a dark cloud so full in his face, that he was constrained to look another way: whereat the people mused, because it was so dark a little time afore. Then William took up a [faggot](#) of broom, and embraced it in his arms.

[Illustration -- William Hunter at the Stake](#)

"Then the priest, which William dreamed of, came to his brother Robert with a popish book to carry to William, that he might recant; which book his brother would not meddle withal. Then William, seeing the priest, and perceiving how he would have showed him the book, said, 'Away, thou false prophet! Beware of them, good people, and come away from their abominations, lest that you be partakers of their plagues.' "Then,' quoth the priest, 'look how thou burnest here, so shalt thou burn in hell.' William answered, 'Thou liest, thou false prophet! Away, thou false prophet, away!'

"Then was there a gentleman which said, 'I pray God have mercy upon his soul.' The people said, 'Amen, Amen.' Immediately fire was made.

"Then William cast his psalter right into his brother's hand, who said, 'William! think on the holy passion of Christ, and be not afraid of death.'

"And William answered, 'I am not afraid.' Then lift he up his hands to heaven, and said, "Lord, Lord, Lord, receive my spirit;' and, casting down his head again into the smothering smoke, he yielded up his life for the truth, sealing it with his blood to the praise of God.

"Now, by and by after, Master Brown commanded one old Hunt, to take his brother Robert Hunter, and lay him in the stocks till he returned from the burning of Higbed at Horndon on the Hill, the same day. Which thing rid Hunt did. Then Master Brown (when Robert Hunter came before him) asked if he would do as his brother had done. But Robert Hunter answered, 'If I do as my brother hath done, I shall have as he hath had.' 'Marry,' quoth Master Brown, 'thou mayest be sure of it.'

"Then Master Brown said, 'I marvel that thy brother stood so to his tackling:' and moreover, he asked Robert, if William's master of London were not at his burning. But Robert said, that he was not there; but Master Brown bare him in hand that his master was there, and how that he did see him there: but Robert denied it. Then Master Brown commanded the constable and Robert Hunter to go their ways home, and so had no further talk with them."

[The Jacob Hunter Trust would like to thank and credit J. Wayne Hunter of Marietta, GA for submitting the record of this William Hunter to the Trust. Wayne Hunter is a longtime Hunter family researcher and has provided valuable historical information to the Trust.]