

early Virginia  
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# Robert Hunt Memorial

18<sup>th</sup> Richmond, 1906



COMMITTEE ON THE ROBERT HUNT MEMORIAL  
FUND.

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FROM THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHERN VIRGINIA:

Right Reverend A. M. Randolph, D.D., LL.D.,  
Rev. C. B. Bryan, D.D.,  
Rev. Joseph B. Dunn,  
Rev. W. A. R. Goodwin,  
William W. Old,  
A. F. Robertson,  
H. S. Bird.

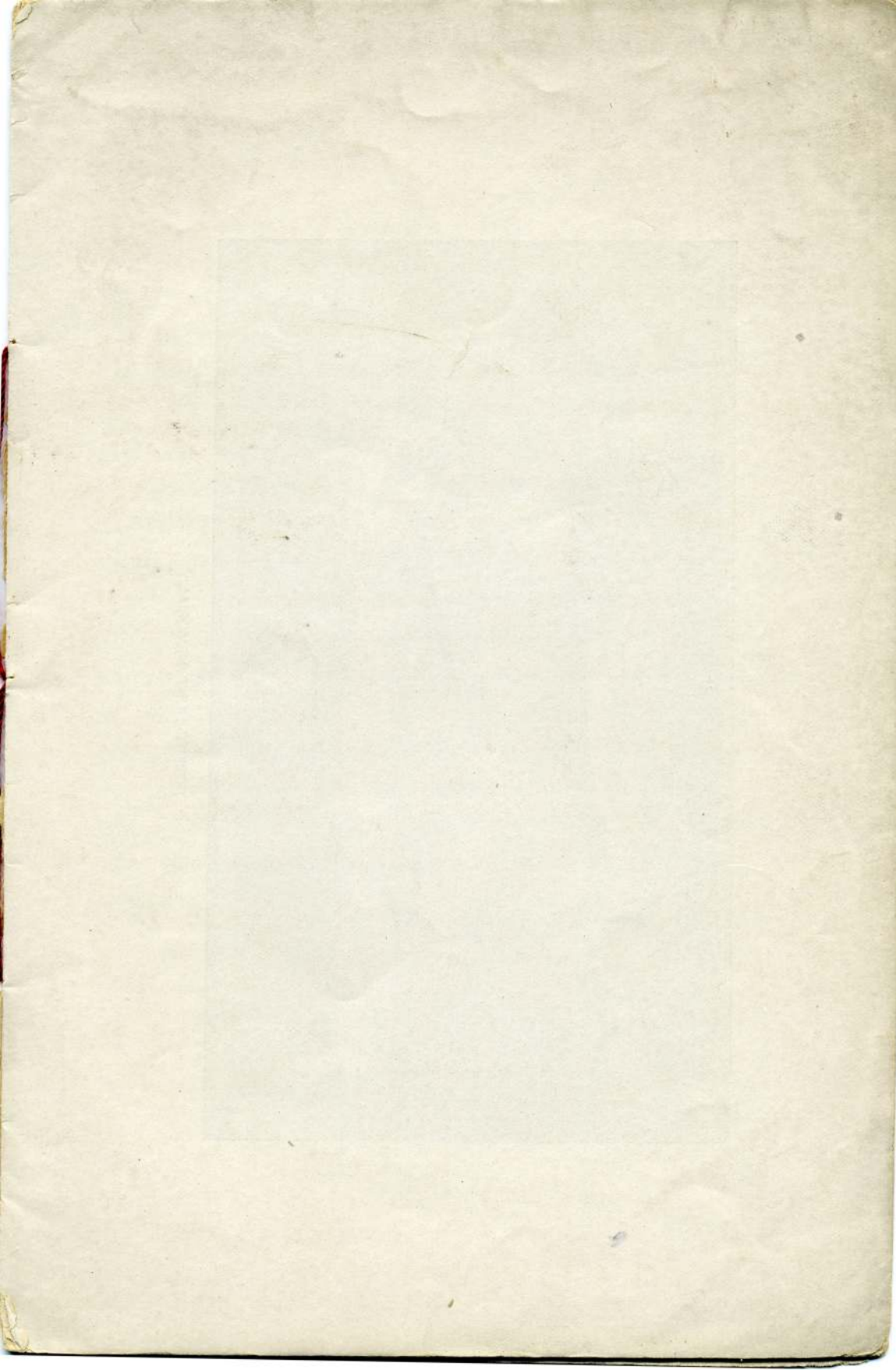
FROM THE DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA:

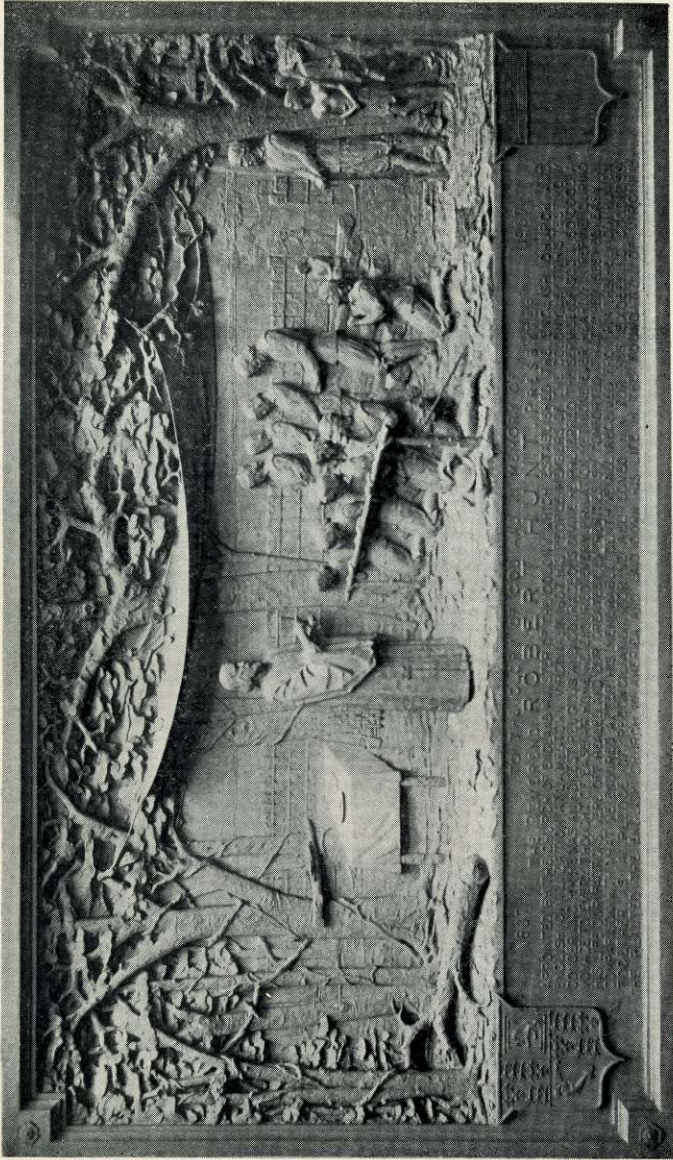
Right Reverend Robert A. Gibson, D.D.,  
Rev. Landon R. Mason,  
Rev. William M. Clarke,  
Rev. W. B. Lee,  
Joseph Bryan.  
Rosewell Page,  
F. W. Christian,

FROM THE DIOCESE OF WEST VIRGINIA:

Right Reverend George W. Peterkin, D.D.,  
Rev. John S. Alfriend,  
Rev. John S. Gibson,  
William P. Craighill,  
W. B. Colston.







ROBERT HUNT MEMORIAL

## PREFACE.

**T**HIS appeal, with a sketch of the life and character of the Reverend Robert Hunt, is issued under the authority of the Committees of the Dioceses of Southern Virginia, Virginia and West Virginia, and they hope it will be read with both pleasure and interest.

Each contribution will be promptly acknowledged and credited to the diocese, association or individual sending it, in any manner which may be desired by the contributor.

Of course, the publication and distribution of this appeal will add to the expense incurred by the committees, and for that reason the price of twenty-five cents per copy has been placed upon it, but the whole proceeds of sale, less this expense, will be appropriated and credited to the fund, and in that way many persons, by the purchase of one or more copies of this appeal, can contribute to the fund. All other contributions should be sent to me at Norfolk, Virginia.

WILLIAM W. OLD,  
Treasurer.





I N the Council of the Diocese of Southern Virginia, held in May, 1905, a resolution, presented by Mr. William W. Old, of Norfolk, Virginia, was passed looking to the erection of a memorial to the Rev. Robert Hunt, the first minister of the Church in America. By the terms of this resolution a joint committee of the three Dioceses of Southern Virginia, Virginia and West Virginia was called to take this matter in hand and to invite the co-operation of the Church in America in this praiseworthy undertaking.

The Dioceses of Virginia and West Virginia cordially accepted the invitation, and a general committee of the three Dioceses was appointed in the summer of 1906. The time was so short that immediate action had to be taken, if the memorial was to be erected on the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Church in our land. After careful consideration, it was deemed fit that the memorial itself should take the form of a bronze tablet, commemorating, in pictured form, some historic incident in the life of the Church during those eventful first days.

By unanimous consent, the choice of subject was the portrayal of the first Communion of those stout adventurers who won England's title to America. The description of that scene, when the sons of the Church knelt in *forma pauperis* to God, upon the bare soil of Virginia, has been preserved. The artist has caught the spirit of this high moment of worship; and a bronze tablet in bas-relief is now being cast by Gorham & Co. This memorial will be in every way consonant with the beauty and dignity of the event commemorated. The cost of this tablet will be \$2,000, and \$500 besides will be required to defray the expense of mounting and safeguarding it. It will be erected at Jamestown in May, 1907. The General Committee has assumed, under warrant of the three Councils, responsibility for the cost of the memorial; but the sense and purpose of the original reso-

lution was that this memorial should be the gift of the Church in the United States of America, and not merely the expression of the reverential love of the descendants of the first settlers in Virginia. The committee cherishes the hope (surely a most reasonable one) that every diocese in the United States will feel that it has some part and lot in this matter. It is hoped that those who desire to participate in the erection of this tablet will see that their gift be sent either through diocesan channels or as from members of the different diocesan organizations throughout the United States. The committee desires that this memorial be the expression of the loving esteem of the Corporate Church in our land. Subscriptions should be sent to Mr. William W. Old, Norfolk, Virginia, who has been appointed treasurer of this fund.

It is hoped that these subscriptions be sent as soon as possible, as the contract with the designers obligates the committee to pay the cost of the memorial upon its delivery at Jamestown, May 1, 1907.

The inscription upon the tablet is as follows :

**REV. ROBERT HUNT, PRESBYTER.**

Appointed by the Church of England Minister of the Colony which established the English Church and English civilization at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. His people, members of the Colony, left this testimony concerning him :

“He was an honest, religious and courageous divine. He preferred the service of God in so good a voyage to every thought of ease at home. He endured every privation, yet none ever heard him repine. During his life our factions were oft healed and our greatest extremities so comforted that they seemed easy in comparison with what we endured after his memorable death. We all received from him the Holy Communion as a pledge of reconcili-

ation, for we all loved him for his exceeding goodness."

He planted the English Church in America and laid down his life in the foundation of Virginia.

The committee has thought that a brief sketch of the life and services of this godly man would prove of interest to all the members of the Church, and that some knowledge of this pioneer of righteousness in America would furnish a healthy inspiration to those who are building on those foundations which he laid in our land.

#### ROBERT HUNT.

In 1602 Bartholomew Gosnold, who had already taken part in one or more of Raleigh's attempts to found a colony in Virginia, obtained a commission, from the Earl of Southampton, to plant a colony in America. The mariners' notion, that a wind blowing from the coast made the direct course to Virginia impossible, had forced all previous voyagers to take the southern route by the Canaries and West Indies. These voyages were generally disastrous as well as tedious. Gosnold sailed directly across the Atlantic and landed with thirty-one men on the coast of New England, where they remained two months, when the scarcity of provisions drove them back to England. On his return to England, Gosnold labored earnestly to organize an expedition to effect a settlement in the New World. But though the spirit of adventure was high in England, the stoutest and bravest of English youth were scouring the seas in search of Spanish ships, and the life of a privateersman was too absorbing to allow any to listen to his scheme of colonization. The peace with Spain in 1605 filled England with soldiers and sailors who were restless amid the scenes of peace. Gosnold's opportunity had come at last. He won the ear of Edward Maria Wingfield, a soldier, who had seen service in the Low Coun-

tries and in Ireland, and of Captain John Smith, a daring soldier of fortune. One of those who heard Gosnold's story of the New World was Robert Hunt, Master of Arts and Vicar of Reculver, in the County of Kent, from 1594 to 1602. In the quiet of his village home this young English preacher had dreamed dreams and seen visions of a larger world of life and action. Men talked ever of strange lands and savage peoples, and he yearned to go forth and claim these lands for the Christ. The words of the first charter to the Virginia Company show that others shared his ideals, for the desire is there expressed that "this noble work may tend to the glory of His Divine Majesty in propagating of Christian religion to such people as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God, and may in time bring the infidels and savages, living in those parts, to human civility and to a settled and quiet government." Wingfield, whose established reputation as a soldier gave prominence to his zeal, busied himself in getting together men for the venture. In his "Discourse of Virginia," he writes: "For my first worke (which was to make right choice of a spirituall pastor) I appele to the remembrance of my Lo. of Caunt. his grace, who gave me very gracious audience in my request. And the world knoweth whom I took with me, truly a man in my opinion not any waie to be touched with the rebellious humour of a papist spirit, nor blemished with the least suspicion of a factious schismatic."

One of Hunt's shipmates tells the story of that memorable voyage across the Atlantic:

"On the nineteenth of December, 1606, we set sail from Blackwall, but by unprosperous winds were kept six weeks in the sight of England; all which time Mr. Hunt, our preacher, was so weak and sicke that few expected his recovery, yet although he were but twenty myles from his

habitation (the time we were in the Downes) and notwithstanding the stormy weather nor the scandalous imputations (of some few, little better than atheists, of the greatest ranke amongst us) suggested against him, all this could never force from him so much as a seeming desire to leave the business, but preferred the service of God in so good a voyage, before any affection to contest with his godless foes whose disastrous designs (could they have prevailed) had even then overthrown the business, so many discontents did then arise, had he not with the water of patience and his godly exhortations (but chiefly by his true devoted examples) quenched those flames of envie and dissension."

A fatal element of weakness in the enterprise was the fact that most of the adventurers, who were about to inhabit a little world of their own, were strangers to one another till they came aboard ship. The company was overweighted with high-spirited young gentlemen, impatient of any control. A commission, written on paper, was small warrant of authority under such conditions. The strongest will and the stoutest arm must eventually be the qualifications of leadership. These quickly showed themselves in the person of Captain John Smith. Had he been of noble birth he might have won place and power and left but little bitterness behind; but pride of lineage beat with a man's blood in those days, and the knights and gentlemen resented the ascendancy of one whom they deemed but a "mean fellow." The ugly feelings engendered during the tedious voyage broke out anew as soon as land was reached. In this crisis Robert Hunt alone was again master of the situation, standing sponsor for Smith's integrity and struggling to bring the men to a sane mood. And so it is recorded of him:

"Now was the time for that godly man, Master Hunt,

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to do his part in healing our strifes, and he went from one to the other with words of counsel, how that we should love and forgive our enemies; nay, he used more worldly arguments, pointing out that the welfare of our little band depended chiefly upon our union, for that we were in an unknown land, exposed to the attacks of hostile natives, and we needed, therefore, all the ties of brotherly love." . . . "Many were the mischiefs that daily sprung from their ignorant, yet ambitious spirits, but the good doctrine and exhortation of our Preacher, Mr. Hunt, reconciled them and caused Captain Smith to be admitted to the Council."

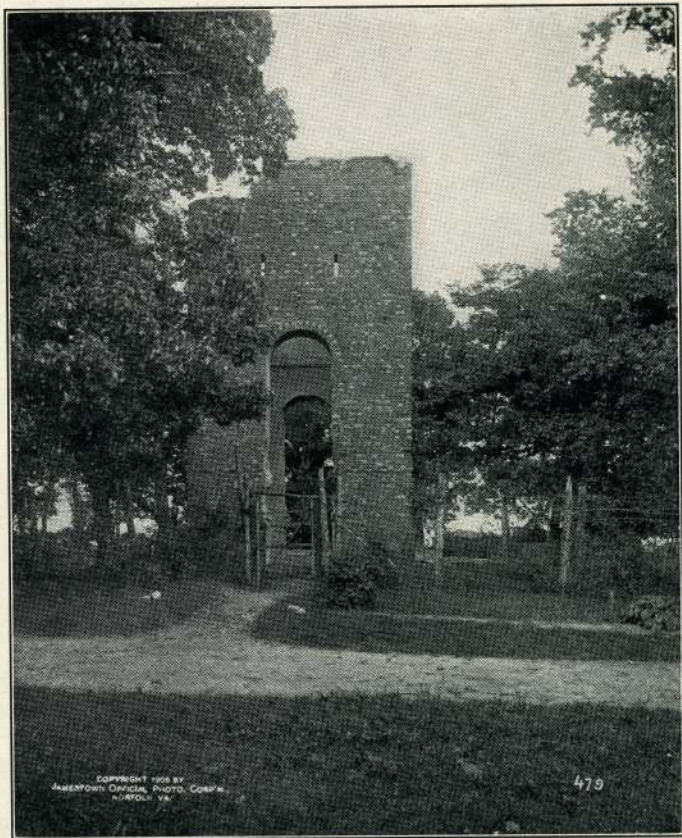
On the next day, Sunday, June 21, 1607 (O. S.),\* the whole company, under the guidance of Mr. Hunt, met in a solemn service of worship, and "we all received the Holy Communion together as an outward and visible pledge of reconciliation."

This first celebration of the highest office of the Church must have stirred the hidden depths of many a heart that day. The scene was still vivid to one of the number twenty years later, for Smith wrote:

"I well remember wee did hang an awning (which is an old saile) to three or four trees to shadow us from the sunne; our walls were rales of wood; our seats unhewed trees; our pulpit a bar of wood nailed to two neighboring trees."

The young minister who preached from that rude pulpit, that June morning, deserves to be remembered among the great ones of earth, for his was the only spirit able to con-

\* Dr. Hawks in his Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of the United States, p. 20, and Mr. Caswall in his work upon America and the American Church, and also Bishop Wilberforce in his History of the American Church, p. 22, fix this date as the 14th of May; Smith in his History, Vol. 1, p. 153, Ed. 1819, mentions it as the 14th of June; but the best authority fixes it as the 21st of June. See Anderson's History of the Church of England in the Colonies, 2nd London Edition, Vol. 1, pp. 174-176, and notes. See also Neill's Virginia Company of London, p. 17, and Doyle's English Colonies in America (Virginia, Maryland and the Carolinas), p. 118.

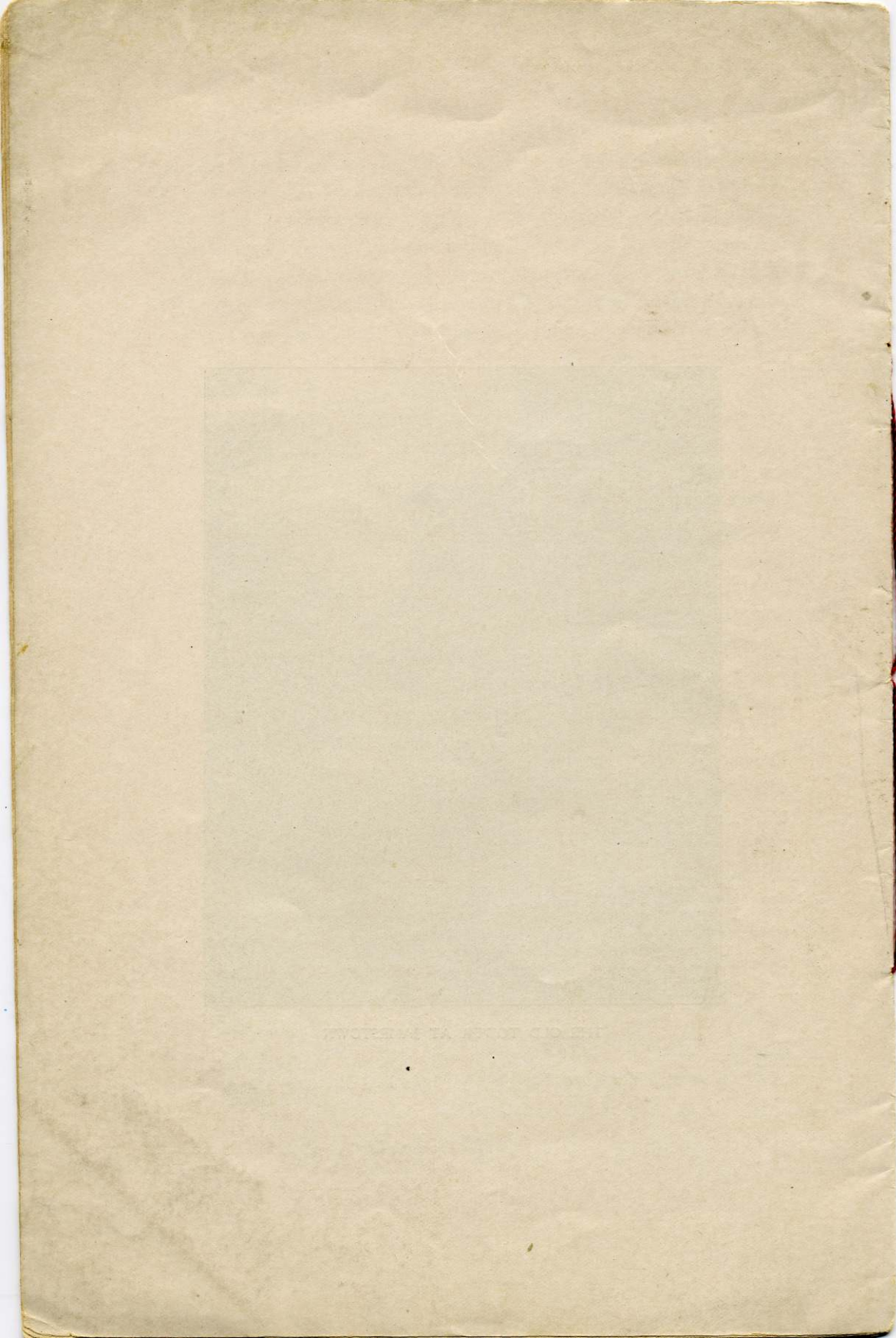


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THE OLD TOWER AT JAMESTOWN





trol that turbulent company that had in its keeping the future of English honor and English power in America. Not only as their faithful preacher and spiritual guide did he measure up to the fulness of his office, but also, in the rough, elemental struggle for existence, he played the man. His was the spirit of Gilbert, of Raleigh and of Grenville, save that it was touched to finer issues. Amid the rude log cabins reared by hands unused to labor stood the first English Church in America. This church was but "a homely thing like a barn set upon crochets, covered with rafts, sedge and earth, so were also the walls"; but for all that the best building in the settlement. Here this young preacher ministered to the colonists. When the little cabin-capital was devastated by fire in the winter of 1607-1608 the church was burned. But it is recorded: "Good Master Hunt, our preacher, lost all his librarie, and all that he had (but the clothes on his backe), yet none ever saw him repine at his losse. Upon any alarm he would be as ready for defence as any; and till he could not speak he never ceased to his utmost to animate us to persist; whose soule questionless is with God."

Some time during the next year Hunt died. He must have lived to see the summer, for we read that while men were busy planting the corn fields and repairing the palisades, others were at work building again a church for the worship of God. His last strength was spent upon this work, and then he went to render to God an account of his stewardship.

Thus passed into peace "Good Master Hunt, an honest, religious and courageous divine. During whose life our factions were oft qualified, our wants and greatest extremities so comforted that they seemed easie in comparison of what we endured after his memorable death."

Dr. Hawks, in his "Contributions to the Ecclesiastical

History of the United States of America," speaking of Mr. Hunt, says:

"Not an incident is related of him which does not illustrate the possession of a Christian spirit. The wholesome influence by which he was able to control the angry passions of his companions was probably founded in their respect for his consistent piety, and as we hear of no efforts made to enrich himself in the colony, it is not difficult to believe that his emigration resulted from an honest desire to supply the ministrations of the Gospel to the destitute and benighted."

And in closing this sketch we may join in Dr. Hawks' lament that more is not known of such a man, and in what he adds:

"Had nothing more been related of him than that he was twice able to reconcile the discords of angry rulers without being claimed as a partisan by either, he would have left behind him a reputation becoming the Minister of Him who said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'"



