

## CHAPTER III.

## HENRY HUDSON.

AMONG the most important voyages that ever have yet been undertaken in the direction of the unknown Polar region are, undoubtedly, those of Henry Hudson; for this able and persevering seaman examined the whole extent of the ocean which leads to it, searching for an entrance along the pack edge from Greenland to Novaya Zemlya.

Nothing whatever is certainly known of the early history of Hudson, although General Meredith Read, in his valuable 'Historical Inquiry,' has made some probable conjectures as to his parentage.<sup>1</sup> He first appears fitting out a little cockboat for the Muscovy Company, called the 'Hopewell' (80 tons), to discover a passage by the North Pole. On May 1, 1607, he

<sup>1</sup> General Read's view is that the great navigator was a grandson of another Henry Hudson, who died, when an Alderman of London, in 1555. Henry, the navigator, was a citizen of London, and had a house there, and was bred up in the service of the Muscovy Company.—*An Historical Inquiry concerning Henry Hudson, by John Meredith Read, Jun. (Albany, 1856).*

weighed anchor at Greenwich. When we consider the means with which he was provided for the achievement of this great discovery, we are astonished at the fearless audacity of the attempt. Here was a crew of twelve men and a boy, in a wretched little craft of eighty tons, coolly talking of sailing right across the Pole to Japan, and actually making as careful and judicious a trial of the possibility of doing so, as has ever been effected by the best equipped modern expeditions. Nor was Hudson ignorant of the difficulties and dangers of such a voyage, for the result of the three expeditions of Barents were known to him, and he had with him the best existing charts.

Imagine this bold seaman sailing from Gravesend, bound for the North Pole, in a craft about the size of one of the smallest of modern collier brigs. We can form a good idea of her general appearance, because three such vessels are delineated on the chart drawn by Hudson himself. The 'Hopewell' was more like an old Surat buggalow than anything else that now sails the seas, with high stern, and low pointed bow; she had no head sails on her bowsprit, but to make up for this, the foremast was stepped chock forward. There was a cabin under the high and narrow poop, where Hudson and his little son were accommodated, and the men were crowded forward. Thus equipped and provided for the voyage,

Hudson, as we have seen, sailed from Greenwich and passed the Shetland Islands on May 26, 1607. He came in sight of the east coast of Greenland, which he describes as a very high land with much ice near the shore, on June 13, and continued to stand along it with a northerly course, until the 22nd. Although he was stopped in this direction, yet he considered the time well spent, seeing that extensive land had been discovered which was not marked on any chart, and he adds 'for aught we could see, it is like to be a good land and worth the seeing.' He named it 'Hold with Hope,' and found his latitude, when in sight of it on the 22nd, to be 73° N. Hudson then left the Greenland coast, and, steering in a north-easterly direction for five days, came in sight of a part of Spitzbergen, or Newland as he called it, which he supposed to be the Vogel-sang of Barents. The ice was found in latitude 78° 30' N. trending away from Spitzbergen to the westward; and the little craft was in many dangers amongst so huge a quantity of ice and fogge.' Hudson continued to examine the coast of Spitzbergen during many days, constantly attempting to make a passage to the northward, but always stopped by the ice. He gave the name which it still bears, to the N.W. point of Spitzbergen—Hakluyt Headland. At one time he found his latitude to be 81°, to the northward of Spitzbergen, when the land he sighted was pro-

bably the Seven Islands; he observed that the sea was in some places green, and in others blue, and he says, 'our green sea we found to be freest from ice, and our azure blue sea to be our icie sea.' Scoresby considers this to be accidental, and he ascertained the green colour to be caused by myriads of minute *medusæ*, 110,592 in a cubic foot.

Having completed the examination of the western side of Spitzbergen, which he describes as very high mountainous land, like rugged rocks, with snow between them, Hudson formed the magnificent design of sailing round the north end of Greenland, and returning to England by Davis Strait. With this object he again examined the sea between Spitzbergen and Greenland, towards the end of July, but judged, from the strong ice-blink along the northern horizon, that there was no passage in that direction. He, therefore, after sighting Spitzbergen, determined to return to England, and, on his way homewards, he discovered an island in  $71^{\circ}$  N. which he named 'Hudson's Tutches.' There cannot now be any doubt that this island, discovered by Hudson, is the same as has since so improperly been called Jan Mayen, after a Dutch skipper, who, on very weak authority, is said to have seen it some years afterwards, in 1611. The island is about 30 miles long, by 9 miles broad, and at its northern end rises up the remarkable volcanic peak of Beerenberg, 6,870.

feet high. The little 'Hopewell' was safely anchored in the Thames again on September 15.

The results of this voyage were very important, both in a geographical and a commercial point of view. Hudson had discovered a portion of the east coast of Greenland; he had examined the edge of the ice between Greenland and Spitzbergen twice, in June and in the end of July; and he had sailed to the northward of Spitzbergen, until he was stopped by the ice; reaching almost as high a latitude as Scoresby in 1806, which was  $81^{\circ} 12' 42''$  N. Hudson's highest latitude by observation was  $80^{\circ} 23'$ ; but he sailed for two more days in a north-easterly direction. The practical consequence of Hudson's voyage was that his account of the quantities of whales and sea-horses in the Spitzbergen seas led to the establishment of a rich and prosperous fishery which continued to flourish for two centuries.

In 1608, Hudson fitted out a second expedition to attempt a passage between Spitzbergen and Novaya Zemlya. His crew consisted of fourteen hands. Robert Juet was the mate; and two of the men had sailed with Hudson in his former voyage, namely, John Cooke, now promoted to the rank of boatswain, and James Skrutton. John Hudson, the captain's son, was also on board. On April 22 they sailed from the Thames, and reached the edge of the ice, in latitude  $75^{\circ} 29'$ , on June 9. Hudson hoped

to bore his ship through the pack, so he stood into it for several leagues, but found the ice ahead to be firm and thick, and was obliged to give up the attempt. He then sailed along the pack edge to the eastward, always keeping the ice in sight on his port beam, and watching for an opening until the 26th, when he reached the coast of Novaya Zemlya, in latitude  $72^{\circ} 25' N$ . He had thus ascertained that the barrier of ice between Spitzbergen and Novaya Zemlya was impenetrable, as on his former voyage it had proved to be between Greenland and Spitzbergen. It was quite clear that for 'Search-thrifts,' 'Hopewells,' and such like craft, the portals of the unknown region were firmly closed. It remains to be seen whether a sharp-bowed screw steamer will be able to force them open. Stout Henry Hudson had failed, and his additional laurels were to be won elsewhere; but he had done all that the boldest mariner could do, with nothing but a little 'Hopewell' under his feet; and no explorer has done much more in the same direction, since that 25th of June 1608, when he sighted Novaya Zemlya, and turned his vessel's head to the south. As a Polar explorer we shall meet him no more. He examined a part of the Novaya Zemlya coast, and arrived at Gravesend on August 26. During this second voyage, Hudson observed numerous pieces of drift wood floating in the gulf stream, from the North Cape to latitude  $75^{\circ} 30' N$ .

Hudson, as is well known, was foully murdered. It is pleasing to find that his services were acknowledged by the bountiful old East India Company. Mrs. Hudson was left very poor, and the Court gave an appointment to her son on board one of their ships, in the year 1614, because the brave father perished in the service of the Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup>

After the voyages of Hudson, the whale fishery commenced in the Spitzbergen seas. Captain Jonas Poole made four voyages for the Muscovy Company, in 1609, 1610, 1611 and 1612, for killing whales and morses. Horn Sound, and Bel Sound, in the south of Spitzbergen, still retain the names given by Poole; and, in 1612, he tells us that a skipper from Hull, named Thomas Marmaduke, went as far as  $82^{\circ} N$ .; two degrees beyond Hakluyt's Headland. Baffin was in the Spitzbergen seas with the whaling fleet in 1613, and in the two following years Robert Fotherby was sent up to make new discoveries, with Baffin as his pilot. In 1614,

<sup>1</sup> 'Being informed that Mrs. Hudson, the widow of Mr. Hudson, who was left in the North-west discovery, desired their favour for employing a youth, a son of his, she being left very poor, and conceiving that they were partly obliged in charity to give assistance, in regard that his father perished in the advance of the Commonwealth, resolved to recommend him to the care of some one who is to go to the voyage.' (April 9, 1614.)

'Mrs. Hudson's son recommended to the care of Hunt, master's mate in the "Samaritan": five pounds to be laid out upon him in apparel and necessaries.' (April 19, 1614.)—*Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series. East Indies. 1513-1616, paras. 709 and 711.*

Fotherby and Baffin, in the ship 'Thomazen,' sailed a few miles to the north of Spitzbergen, until they reached 80° and odd minutes;<sup>1</sup> and in the same year some islands to the eastward of Spitzbergen were discovered by four other ships belonging to the Muscovy Company. In 1615 Fotherby was despatched by Sir Thomas Smith to seek a passage to the northward, in the 'Richard,' of twenty tons. As usual they were stopped by the Polar pack near Hakluyt's Headland, and like Hudson before them, they examined the pack edge for a considerable distance to the westward, but could find no opening. Master Fotherby, however, was a man of a hopeful disposition, and though he could not deny that the sea between Greenland and King James his Newland (Spitzbergen), was much pestered with ice, yet he 'would not seem to dissuade this worshipfull Companie from the yearly adventuring of 150*l.* or 200*l.* till some further discoverie be made of the said seas and lands adjacent.' For the next century and a half we must seek for any further information respecting the Spitzbergen seas in the annals of the Dutch and English whaling trade; and

<sup>1</sup> 'Purchas' iii. p. 466. This is all that we know of Baffin's voyage of 1611. Dr. Petermann, in a letter to the President R. G. S. dated Nov. 7th, 1871, says it is highly probable that, in this voyage, Baffin sighted the west coast of the land discovered by the Austrian Expedition in 1873. It will be seen that there is not the shadow of a reason for supposing anything of the kind.

several points of considerable interest, as throwing light on the border territory between the known and the unknown, may be obtained from these sources. They will be considered in the next chapter; but in the meanwhile it is necessary to give an account of a notable attempt to reach the North Pole, under the auspices of the Merry Monarch's Admiralty.

Since Henry VIII. had sent divers cunning men to seek strange regions in 1527, the Government had taken no part in these northern voyages of discovery. But at last the Admiralty was warmed into action by the eager persuasions of a master's mate. John Wood had served as master's mate in the 'Sweepstakes,' under Sir John Narborough, during that officer's discreditable voyage to Patagonia and Chili, in 1669. Cloudesley Shovel, then in his twentieth year, and Grenville Collins, the future hydrographer, also served on board the 'Sweepstakes.' The master's mate was not a man to hide his light under a bushel. On his return he published 'Captian Wood's Voyage through the Streights of Magellan,' in which Narborough's name is not once mentioned, and, for all that appears to the contrary, Wood was commanding the expedition. In 1676 Mr. John Wood offered a plan to Charles II. and his brother the Duke of York, for discovery of a passage to the Indies by the North-East; the success of which he represented to be probable for the following reasons. He urged, in

the first place, that the old Dutch navigators, Rijp and Barents, had always maintained that, by steering north-east from the North Cape of Norway, and keeping between Spitzbergen and Novaya Zemlya, at a distance from both, a sea free of ice might probably be found. This idea arose from the erroneous belief of the old navigators that ice could only be formed in the neighbourhood of land. Wood's second reason is that Hendrich Hamel, in his narrative of a captivity in the Corea, says that whales were found in the sea of Tartary with European harpoons in them. The rest of his argument is founded on absurd stories about Dutch whalers having sailed to and beyond the North Pole. His inducements to undertake the voyage were the honour of the king, the interests of his country, and want of employment at home, together with his aversion to an idle life. These arguments were irresistible to Mr. Samuel Pepys, then Secretary to the Admiralty, and Captain Wood was put in command of the 'Speedwell' frigate, with the 'Prosperous' pink, as a tender. Wood's old shipmate, Grenville Collins, went out as master of the 'Speedwell,' and the expedition sailed from England on the 28th of May 1676.

At noon on the 22nd of June, when on a meridian about midway between the North Cape and Novaya Zemlya, and in latitude  $75^{\circ} 59' N.$ , they sighted the

edge of the Polar pack right ahead, extending E.S.E., and W.N.W. Wood then stood along the edge of the ice to the eastward, examining it carefully, and seeing many openings, which he sailed into and found to be bays. On the 26th he came in sight of Novaya Zemlya, and in the night of the 29th, the 'Speedwell' ran on a reef of rocks and became a wreck. Wood and his men went on board the 'Prosperous,' and arrived in the Thames on the 24th of August. In his letter to Nicholas Witsen, Grenville Collins says, that 'the proceedings of the voyage gave him full satisfaction that there was no passage between Greenland or Spitzbergen and Novaya Zemlya.'

The voyages of Hudson, Poole, Fotherby, and Wood, completed the examination of the whole extent of the Polar pack ice, extending from the east coast of Greenland to Novaya Zemlya; while Barents, until quite lately, was the sole authority respecting the state of the ice on the northern coast of the latter islands. All further information that can be gathered from the experience of whalers, and the narratives of modern expeditions, merely supplements the work of those intrepid navigators of the seventeenth century.