

be a waste of time and money to attempt again the navigation of the vast oceans of ice. But Hudson stood before them, full of enthusiasm, and expressed his ardent conviction that Asia might be reached by the north-west. Petrus Plancius, the great cosmographer,¹ a clergyman of the Reformed Dutch church in Amsterdam, who had been engaged with Esselincx² in trying to found the West India company, opened a correspondence with Hudson, and sent him some of his own published works. Plancius had a profound knowledge of maritime affairs, the result of unwearied investigations, and he warmly seconded the effort to search for a northeastern passage. He said that the failure of Heemskerck, in 1596, was due to his trying to go through the straits of Weygate, instead of keeping to the north of the island of Nova Zembla.

The directors resident at Amsterdam decided that before positively engaging Hudson they must wait for the meeting of the company's committee of seventeen, in the following year. As soon as this delay was announced, Hudson was approached by Le Maire, a French merchant of Amsterdam and a former officer of the corporation, who on leaving it had become a keen opponent. Le Maire, aided by Jeannin, French ambassador at the Hague, at once sought to secure the enthusiastic navigator for the service of France. It only needed this suggestion to bring the East India directors to terms, and they signed a contract with Hudson on January 8, 1609. On that day four men came together in one of the rooms of the East India company; two of them were a committee empowered to enter into a contract with Hudson, the other two were the navigator and his friend, Jodocus Hondius, who was present as witness and interpreter, though Hudson himself had a fair knowledge of the Dutch language; indeed, it is supposed that his journal was all written in that tongue. This contract, drawn by P. Van Dam, the company's legal adviser, can be seen in the royal archives at the Hague. It specified that the directors should furnish a small vessel to Hudson, with the needed outfit, in which he was to sail as soon as the favorable season opened in April. He was to have eight hundred guilders for his expenses, and his family were to be taken care of during his absence; and should he not return, his widow was to

house built of driftwood and planks from the wrecked vessel. This was the first time an Arctic winter was successfully faced. In the spring they made their way in boats to the Lapland coast, but Barentz died during the voyage. Barentz's voyages stand in the first rank among the polar expeditions of the sixteenth century. They led directly to the whale and seal fisheries, which long enriched Holland.

¹ His universal map, containing the discoveries in the East and West Indies, and towards the North Pole, was published in 1592.

² William Usselinck, a wealthy merchant of Antwerp.