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HENRY HUDSON, THE NAVIGATOR

“THE NORTH SEAS’ GREAT COLUMBUS”

BY MARY L. D. FERRIS

“To sound his praises to posterity,
It is held
That valor is the chiefest virtue, and
Most dignifies the haver : if this be,
The man I speak of cannot in the world
Be singly counterpoised.”

Among the persons in intimate relations with the Muscovy company of England,¹ of which Sebastian Cabot was the first governor, and which had sent the expedition of Willoughby² in search of a northwest passage to India, was the experienced navigator, Henry Hudson. Of his personal history very little is known. Four years covers the period during which he was familiar to the world.

His father, it is supposed, was Christopher Hudson, one of the factors of the Muscovy company, and their agent in Russia as early as 1560, a little later being made governor of the company, an office which he held until 1601. The grandfather of the famous navigator was doubtless the Henry Hudson who, in 1544, figured among the founders, and was the first assistant, of the Muscovy company; and it was perhaps due to family influence that Hudson was held in such high esteem and trust by the members of the company, and employed in other important voyages before he went upon those by which he is best known. Research inclines to the belief that he was a native, as he was a citizen, of London. He had a family and a house in London, but the name of the woman who shared his glory and mourned his fate is unknown to the world. His son,

¹ The Muscovy company, formerly known as “The Society for the Discovery of Unknown Lands,” received a formal charter from the crown in 1555, as well as a charter of privileges from the Russian emperor, Ivan the Terrible, and at once commenced active operations. The same company is still in existence.

² Commanded by Sir Hugh Willoughby, who discovered Nova Zembla, and perished with all his men, of starvation, in a harbor of Lapland.

“Such was the Briton’s fate,
As with first prow (what have not Britons done?)
He for a passage sought, attempted since
So much in vain.”