

ENGLAND AND RUSSIA;

COMPRISING

THE VOYAGES

OF JOHN TRADESCANT THE ELDER,
SIR HUGH WILLOUGHBY, RICHARD CHANCELLOR,
NELSON, AND OTHERS,

TO THE WHITE SEA,

ETC.

BY DR. J. HAMEL.

TRANSLATED

BY JOHN STUDDY LEIGH, F.R.G.S.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

At a period like the present, when we are involved in a contest with Russia, and when all information bearing on that country is caught up with avidity, to present to the public a translation of Dr. Hamel's valuable work may not be deemed a superfluous task ; for, although his historical and descriptive sketches are somewhat loosely scattered through its pages, they possess the advantage of coming from the pen of a Russian who unwittingly discloses to our generation much of the aggressive and barbarous policy by which the rulers of his country were actuated even at the early period to which this Work principally relates.

Moreover now that, notwithstanding the great scarcity of books hitherto published having reference to that vast empire, our information with regard to its present resources is gradually becoming more correct, and we are made aware of their importance, it is curious to observe, in Dr. Hamel's notices, how very insignificant they must have been at that time ; for we find that, in spite of Russia's would-be aggrandisement, she was subjected to repeated dis-

asters, owing to her inability to defend herself effectually either against the Poles on the one side, or against the Tartars on the other, whilst at the same period she was oppressing the Fins, Samoiedes, and other tribes, who were destitute of the means and were too few in number to oppose her.

But before proceeding any further with the deductions to which a perusal of the Work itself naturally leads, we will mention what knowledge we possess of the author, and ascertain how he became acquainted with the facts he adduces, and what reliance can be placed on his statements. Unfortunately that knowledge is not very extensive; for we are merely informed that Dr. Hamel came to England in the train of the Emperor Alexander in 1814, and that with so good an introduction, and his already acquired reputation for learning and science, he found no difficulty then and in succeeding years in obtaining access to many of our public establishments, and, more especially with reference to this Work, to the Bodleian Library and the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. There he diligently applied himself to decipher the MSS. containing accounts of the early naval and commercial intercourse between the two countries, a task in which he was eminently successful, as will be seen by the following pages, where much is brought to light that is interesting, not only from its relation to the voyages of the northern navigators of those days, and, as already mentioned, to the history of Russia, but to that of England herself. So far as regards his sketches of

his own country, he was also in a great measure favoured by his position, which enabled him to have recourse to the archives at St. Petersburg and Moscow, for he was (and probably still is) a Privy Councillor, and a Member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences.

One of the most striking points in the whole Work is to be found in the first page, where the author recommends, that in order to commemorate the long duration of amicable intercourse between England and Russia, which at the time he wrote (1846) had existed uninterruptedly for nearly three centuries, there should be a jubilee in 1853, when that period would be completed, and which, owing to a curious coincidence, proved to be the very year in which diplomatic relations ceased between the two countries, followed by the war in which we are at present engaged. Unfortunately, then, Dr. Hamel's amicable idea has been frustrated by events which must have inflicted much pain on a mind imbued with such friendly feelings towards the English.

What will also strike the reader is the elaborate minuteness with which he has sought out and given the genealogy, with all its ramifications, of the families, not only of the leaders, but even of the abettors, of the early voyages of discovery to the North, and more especially that of Sir Hugh Willoughby, the chief of the first expedition which reached Russia from our shores, and who, with the crews of two vessels, perished miserably, being frozen to death, in the winter of 1553-54. To those devoted