

six hundred infantry and a few horse), under Theodore Cornputte, their commander, was no less gallant than that which the Prince of Parma had encountered at Maastricht [in the province of Limburg, in 1579]. Such was the firmness of the besieged, and so inefficient the condition of the artillery at this period, that a fortress, comparatively so insignificant, was enabled to hold out against the whole force of the Count of Renneberg, consisting of six thousand foot and twelve troops of cavalry, for a period of nineteen weeks."<sup>1</sup>

One of the most memorable incidents giving historical importance to the siege of Steenwijk, in 1580, was a courageous act of Arent Swartwolt, whose father, in 1581, was elected a courtier by the *Brouwersgilde* of Groningen. The fact that this loyal young soldier was then a member of the infantry company commanded by Captain Cornput undoubtedly justifies the assertion that not only was Arent Swartwolt's father, but all his kinsmen in Groningen, including Johan Swartwolt, the Sworn Commoner, were patriotic supporters of the States-General, and consequently in personal disfavor with the Count of Renneberg.

It happened that the Count of Renneberg's soldiers, occupying an earthwork opposite one of the gates of Steenwijk, having failed in preventing a sortie of a small body of the defenders of the place, who thereupon burned a windmill standing dangerously near the gateway, were greatly exasperated, and, in a spirit of emulation, determined to burn a fence of heavy palisades protecting that particular gate. Having, on a dark night, in the month of October, compelled the sentinels guarding it to retire from an advantageous point of observation by keeping a constant fire of musketry upon it, they carried to the line of palisades a quantity of straw and a barrel of tar and brimstone, to which they set fire in order to ignite and consume the wooden barrier. Having accomplished the ignition of the protecting palisades, they hastily fled behind their earthworks with the loss of one man killed.

When the flames illumined the sky and the intention of the incendiaries was discovered, the extinguishment of the fire became a matter of immediate consideration and importance to the defenders of Steenwijk. Seeing the threatening character of the fierce flames, Arent Swartwolt solicited the privilege of making an attempt to quench them. It being granted him, he descended by a rope to the moat, and swam across it with the bail of a leathern bucket in his mouth. Unmindful of the blistering heat and the jeopardy to which he was exposed, he rolled the barrel of burning tar and brimstone away from the palisades into the moat, and with water taken in the bucket from it, he extinguished the flames and saved the defensive barricade.

<sup>1</sup>History of Holland. By C. M. Davies. London, 1842, vol. ii., pp. 99, 100.