

operating the public grist-mill standing at the northwest side of the fort, and alarming the inhabitants lest the quantity of flour needed by them should not be ground.

The cultivation of tobacco by the colonists of New Netherland was begun as soon as their tilled fields provided them with food-products sufficient for themselves and cattle. It is said that, as early as the year 1616, when the English colony on the James River comprised three hundred and fifty-one souls, a law was enacted to prevent the settlers there from neglecting the cultivation of food crops in order to engage in that of tobacco. As the indigenous plant grew vigorously in the rich soil of the cleared-forest land of New Netherland, the colonists soon discovered that it would be profitable for them to cultivate it for shipment and sale in Holland, where it then commanded high prices. In 1629, the West-India Company, in a memorial enumerating its financial benefits to Holland, called attention to the fact that its ships had brought there "a considerable quantity of tobacco, which is now an important article of commerce."

The engagement in 1629 of Wybrandt, Tomys, and Herman Swartwout as a firm in the wholesale business of buying and selling tobacco in the city of Amsterdam evidently gave the three brothers no little prominence among its merchants, inasmuch as the importation of tobacco into Holland was still in its incipiency at that time. It may also be inferred that their transactions associated them with traders going to and returning from New Netherland, which country had been known by that geographical title fifteen years prior to their residence in Amsterdam.

The site of the city of Amsterdam at the conjunction of the Amstel River, and an estuary of the Southern Sea (*Zuiderzee*), called the *Ij*,¹ was originally the site of a castle, built in 1204, by Gysbrecht II., Lord of Amstel, near which he constructed a dam that in time obtained the name of Amsterdam. Two centuries later a flourishing city was attracting there merchants and ships from other marts and ports. In 1490 Maximilian I., Emperor of Germany, conferred the right upon the city of using the imperial crown of that country as the crest of its armorial insignia. In the seventeenth century Amsterdam was recognized as the greatest commercial city in Europe.

The peculiar horseshoe-like curvature of the broad canals, bending southward from the *Ij*, margined by streets and spanned by bridges, conduces greatly to the picturesqueness of the city. These and other intersecting canals, or *grachten* as they are styled in Dutch, now divide the city, it is said, into ninety islands connected by nearly three hundred bridges. As described

¹ Pronounced as I.