

Greenland fishery was stopped, the herring fishery, the 'gold mine of Holland,' unsafe and almost worthless, the English having captured an immense number of the boats; and the decay of trade so great, that in Amsterdam alone 3,000 houses were lying vacant."¹

The gradual disruption of the channels of trade had been circumspectly viewed by Tomys Swartwout, who, on seeing the growing stagnation of general business in Amsterdam and the rapid lessening of the value of property in the city, began to entertain fears respecting the welfare of his family should he continue to invest his means there in business as a merchant under the adverse circumstances then attending trade and commerce in the Netherlands. He and his wife were also seriously concerned, at that time, in determining the character of the advantages which they might afford their offspring before their sons and daughters reached manhood and womanhood. The enticing accounts heard by them of the climate and the productions of New Netherland naturally directed their thoughts to the benefits to be realized by settling within its limits. They pondered the issues of this change of residence with mingled feelings of ambition and affection. They could not debar from their minds thoughts of a separation from their kindred in Holland and an exclusion from the social, educational, and religious privileges so long enjoyed by them in Amsterdam. They mentally surveyed the self-denials to which they would be subjected on becoming denizens of the remote country, where most of their surroundings would be primitive in character, where they would be destitute of many household comforts and conveniences, and be compelled to inure themselves and their children to various hardships incidental to their settlements in "the bush."

At that time the government of New Netherland was administered by General Petrus Stuyvesant, resident director-general of the West-India Company, who had assumed the responsibilities of his office at New Amsterdam, in May, 1647, as successor to Director-General Kieft. In a letter addressed to him on March 21, 1651, the directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of the West-India Company disclose in part the will and purpose of the corporation in opening the territory of New Netherland for the settlement of colonists:

"We * * * * direct you herewith, not to grant land to any one without his acknowledging properly the authority of the West-India Company, and you will especially take care that henceforth not more land is granted to people than what in your opinion, after a thorough examination of their means, they will be able and intend shortly to populate, cultivate, and bring into a good state of tillage. * * * *

¹ History of Holland. Davies, vol. II, pp. 721, 722.