

THE CANADIAN METHODIST MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

IN THE SPICE ISLANDS.*

IN the Eastern seas the flags of France, Spain, and Portugal are still kept flying over possessions, the intrinsic value of which to the mother country is comparatively small, and which attract little attention or interest in the outside world. But the possessions of the Dutch in these seas are on a very different scale. Twice in their short history that indomitable people have established a colonial empire: the first was due to their maritime power, and passed into the hands of the English, their successful maritime rivals; while the existing Netherlands India has been created within the last seventy years, almost unnoticed by the great powers of Europe, among which Holland once held so proud a place. By far the most important and valuable part of Netherlands India is Java, slightly exceeding in superficial area England without Wales, and containing at the last census a population of nearly eighteen millions—four times as great as it had in 1816, when it was restored by the British to the Netherlands. Many persons regard the surrender of this magnificent island as a piece of reckless folly or quixotic generosity, but it was nothing more than an act of simple justice, and one which Englishmen may remember with unmixed satisfaction. We then restored to Holland, our ally at Waterloo, a colony which had formerly been hers, and which we had recovered from the common foe. The restoration of Java provided the nucleus of a new colonial empire, which has since spread gradually over the whole Malay archipelago, and although the outlying possessions are now governed as mere dependencies of Java, and are still comparatively unproductive

* Abridged from an article by Sir David Wedderburn in the *Fortnightly Review*.