

Banda Nutmegs and Mace.

History, Cultivation, Trade and Use.

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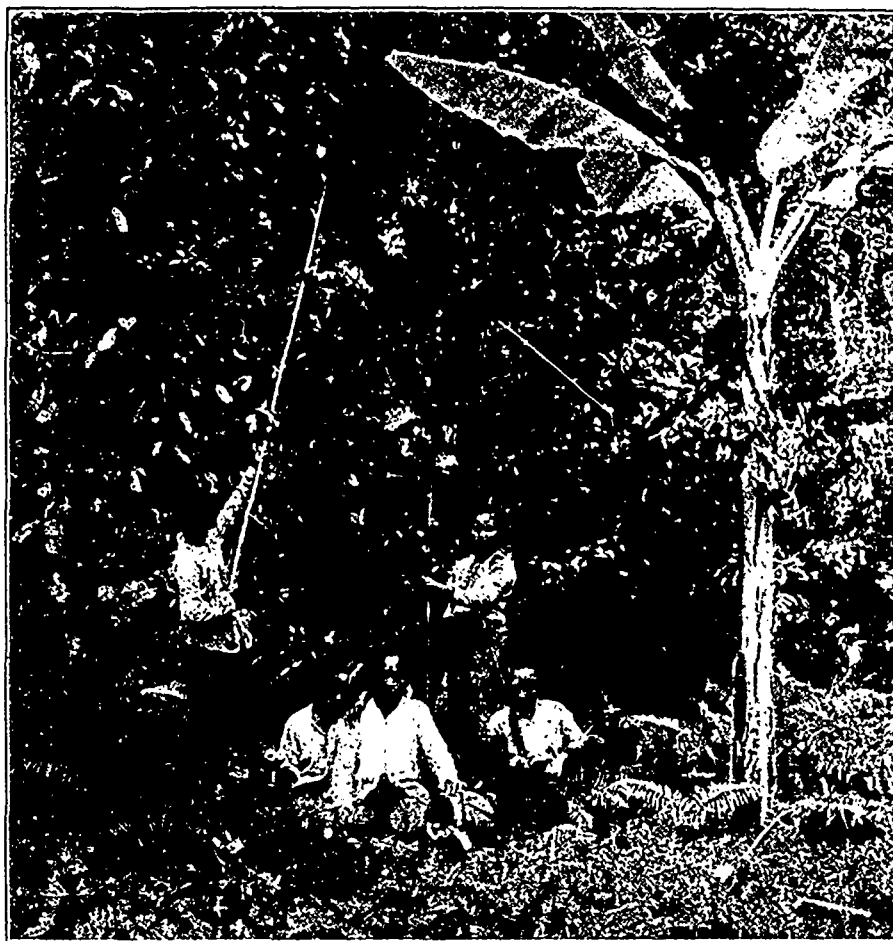
I. HISTORY.

Spices had come to Europe long before the Dutch dared to open a direct trade with the Indies. We do not know exactly how many years it is since the trade of spices commenced, but we may take it that the Arabs were amongst the first to value nutmegs and mace either at the beginning or near the middle of the ninth century. Their learned doctors mention them. History even goes so far as to

Carried from the Moluccas to Aden, crossing the desert land route and following the Nile down to Alexandria, it is easily understood that heavy charges enhanced the price of a product which had to change hands so often before it could so much as reach one of the European gates of Eastern trade, whilst these themselves were not at all reluctant to make money out of every open door monopoly, which by chance or cunning had fallen into their hands.

About 1400 Genoa and Barcelona are the principal markets for spices. But the attention of the North of Europe as well

years later the Spaniards under Charles V. went out to the Moluccan Archipelago. The interests of the two nationalities collide. Then follows war, which ceases, however, for the moment, when the Spice Islands are sold by the Spaniards to Portugal. Columbus discovers the New World and the Holy Father settles everything in peace, reserving the West to the Spaniards and the East to the Portuguese. Under the reign of Philip, Portugal being united with Spain, the world might have come to peace for ever, but for the excluded North interposing its veto. The rage for spices kindles a fire which will



On a Nutmeg Plantation

show that one of them, Ibn Amrau, highly esteeming the *Nux Moschata* for its medicinal properties, loses his head by a too liberal use of his spicebox.

Some hundred years later we find the *Karoun Aromatikon* having made its way into the pharmacopœia of Europe, and since then it soon spread over different markets. Its price remains excessively high on account of the charges incurred by the route used in those days for all Indian produce.

* Holland Abroad.

has been directed—though on a lesser scale—to those far away countries, visited by Marco Polo. Others follow him, describing the marvels of their visits to Asia, in colors to bewitch even the most sceptic. A rage for spices springs up in Europe and continues through the century.† Direct shipping trade with India begins here.

To the Portuguese falls the honor of having first traded into the Far East. In 1511 Albuquerque visited Banda. A few

† St. Johns.

last for centuries, dividing Europe and bringing war as well here as in the unhappy Indian territory, endowed by Nature with the trees that bear gold.‡

Profit had been reaped up, and continued pouring into the lap of the daring Portuguese and Spaniards, but profit, won so freely, soon called opponents into the field. Rivalry, the ever watchful stimulus of trade had opened the eyes of the North. Yet what most of all caused these nations, especially the Dutch, to

‡ Lans.