

THE DUTCH COLONIES.—*From the Times.*—
Although much attention has been paid of late both by the government and the public to the treaties which regulate our commercial intercourse with foreign states and their dependencies, we are not aware that the arrangements affecting our trade with Holland and the Dutch colonies have been examined with the interest which they deserve. We are by no means inclined to regret the cession of Java and the adjacent islands to Holland; the territorial advantages which the Dutch have derived from the occupation of those possessions have been more than compensated by the incessant wars they have had to sustain; and down to the present hour they are obliged to waste considerable sums of money in a military establishment, and in the erection of fortifications against their internal or external foes. But it is to be regretted that in this, as in most of the other precipitate diplomatic arrangements of that period, when kingdoms and colonies were floating like loosened floes of ice about the world, so little attention should have been paid to the commercial side of these transactions; and that England, when she was literally dictating the distribution of the transmarine dependencies of all Europe, should have surrendered the finest parts of the Eastern Archipelago without a stipulation in favour of the commercial interests of her late subjects or her own merchants. Mr Canning's treaty of 1824 was rightly conceived in order to repair this mischief. It professed to open the markets of the Dutch Indies to the manufactures of England at a rate of duty not exceeding six per cent. on such articles as were exported to those colonies from their mother country free of duty, and in no case more than double the duty levied on the produce of the Netherlands; it solemnly disclaimed the intention of either country to aim either at political supremacy or commercial monopoly in the Eastern Archipelago; and it promised to the Dutch the same facilities of trade with Ceylon and the continent of India which they extended to British vessels in their colonies. The Dutch possessions in the Eastern seas are situated between three continents, in all of which the power or the trade of this country preponderates. Hindostan, New Holland, and China are probably the regions where European commerce has yet to make its most extensive, though pacific, conquests. To these countries, or at least to the ports which belong to the dominions of England, the Dutch shipping should, by the treaty of 1824, and, as we believe, by a truly enlightened policy, be admitted on the footing of the most favoured nation. The British settlements on the northern coast of New Holland and the southern extremity of the Malay peninsula are the keys to those vast and imperfectly explored regions. Since the treaty of 1824 was concluded the mercantile privileges of the East India Company have been abolished, and the work which was begun by opening the East to the general trade of England must be completed by encouraging in the British Eastern possessions the general trade of the world. By the revolution of 1830, which dissolved the connexion between Holland and Belgium, the Dutch government is no longer compelled to maintain a protective system in favour of the Belgian manufacturers. As a trading nation, dealing largely in colonial produce, they are bound to give no preference to the manufacturers of any country in Europe, except that which the price and quality of their goods prescribe. Lastly, by the abdication of the ex-King of the Netherlands, the principal shareholder in the Handelsmaatschappij is no longer the absolute master of the colonial policy of that crown. On the side of England there are changes of at least equal importance. The people of England require not only to be allowed to sell in a market of 10,000,000 or 12,000,000 of Asiatics, occupying perhaps the most productive parts of the Eastern hemisphere, with whom they are brought into perpetual contact by their colonial positions and their mercantile navy, but they require to be at liberty to buy in that market with equal freedom. In 1824 no treaty which Mr Canning could sign, or Mr Huskisson recommend, could have invaded the strict preserves of the West Indian interests. In 1843 the time is rapidly approaching when, be it in the East or in the West, England must be supplied with the great necessities of life, and in particular with colonial produce, on the most favourable terms, to be limited only by the demands of the public revenue and the temporary claims of existing interests. The real guarantee of our safety in our commercial negotiations is to open the foreign markets widely enough. As for our own produce, we must be prepared to meet the competition of other manufacturing countries; and who is not prepared to meet it, provided we stand on equal terms? So also with the produce of foreign countries; the terms we offer to Brazil we may offer with greater security to Holland—nay, we would offer them to Holland, even though to Brazil they were still refused. Need we add that we feel entire confidence that on such a basis a treaty of far greater importance than that of 1824 might be concluded? The state of Holland requires it—the state of Java is said to be even more embarrassing than that of the mother country; and it will not be difficult to show that this question is closely connected with the negotiations which have been going on for the commercial union of Belgium and France.