
THE DUTCH COLONIAL SYSTEM.

NOT a little irritation appears to have been excited in Holland by the comments on the Dutch colonial system in which some of our contemporaries indulged on the occasion of the recent Dutch defeat before Atchin. And it must be admitted that a little hesitation before passing a sweeping condemnation on the policy pursued by Holland in the East would be not unbecoming in writers who have to rely on second-hand information. Certain it is, at any rate, that Mr. Wallace, who spent eight years in the Indo-Malay archipelago, speaks of it in very different terms. Describing his visit to Java, Mr. Wallace says, "I believe that the Dutch system is the very best that can be adopted when a European nation conquers or otherwise acquires possession of a country inhabited by an industrious but semi-barbarous people." And again, having explained what the system is, he sums up:—"On the whole the people are well fed and decently clothed, and have acquired habits of steady industry and the art of scientific cultivation, which must be of service to them in the future." To judge the matter fairly, however, it must not be forgotten that long before Holland became a nation, Java was the seat of a very respectable civilization, which has left magnificent ruins which to this day excite the admiration of the European traveller. It is quite possible, therefore, that the "steady industry" at least is an inheritance from the past, not a habit learned from the Dutch. And the possibility of this becomes a probability of a very high degree when we learn that the neighbouring islands of Bali and Lombock are equally care-

fully cultivated. The Baleese are independent, and are Hindoos in religion, and Lombock was conquered by them a generation ago. Of Bali Mr. Wallace writes, "I was both astonished and delighted, for as my visit to Java was some years later, I had never beheld so beautiful and well-cultivated a district out of Europe. . . . Houses and villages, marked out by dense clumps of cocoanut palms, tamarind, and other fruit-trees, are dotted about in every direction, while between them extend luxuriant rice-grounds, watered by an elaborate system of irrigation that would be the pride of the best cultivated parts of Europe." And his remarks on Lombock are in the same strain: "It was now that I first obtained an adequate idea of one of the most wonderful systems of cultivation in the world, equalling all that is related of Chinese industry, and, as far as I know, surpassing in the labour that has been bestowed upon it any tract of equal extent in the most civilized countries of Europe." And from this island it must be understood that "all Europeans, except a few traders at the port, are jealously excluded." Mr. Wallace, however, relies less on the high state of cultivation of Java to prove the beneficence of Dutch rule than on the extraordinary increase which has taken place in the population during the present century. It appears that between 1826 and 1865, a period of no more than thirty-nine years, the increase has been from 5,500,000 to 14,168,416. But when we call to mind the rapid increase of the Irish population between 1801 and 1845, and the result to which it led, we may well doubt whether such growth is altogether a healthy sign. Still, making all allowance which may be thought necessary for over-favourable judgment, Mr. Wallace's testimony seems to dispose of much of the current criticism of the Dutch colonial system. When the population is really barbarous, at any rate, there seems no room at all to doubt that the system works admirably. Thus in the north of Celebes Mr. Wallace tells us that within the memory of persons still living the inhabitants of the several villages formed distinct tribes constantly at war with one another. To protect themselves from attack they built their houses on long poles. They were head-hunters, and, it is said, sometimes cannibals. Now feuds are at an end, life and property are protected, the people have been taught to cultivate coffee plantations with the greatest success, the country has been opened up by roads, the old houses have been pulled down, and in their place have been built neat, comfortable, and well-kept villages.
