

centuries, and it becomes necessary to follow the fortunes of each state separately. Into the history of Granada it is as impossible as it would be tedious to enter within the limits of this article. It is a long record of revolution and civil war, in which nothing above the most petty personal interests are concerned. There is no change of dynasty, but one perpetual struggle between members of the same family. It would not be easy to enumerate even the names of the successive rulers, many of whom were several times deposed and restored to power. Even during the final struggle, when the existence of the kingdom was at stake and the one hope of resistance lay in unity, the national cause was sacrificed to the jealous rivalry of three claimants of the throne. The history of Castile and Aragon, on the other hand, assumes a new character and interest when the attention of kings and people ceased to be absorbed in the overwhelming excitement of a great religious war.

CASTILE
(1252-
1479).

Consti-
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The constitution of Castile traced its origin back to the institutions of the Visigoths, which had been carried by the original refugees into the mountains of Asturias, but it had been profoundly modified by the circumstances under which the kingdom had risen to greatness. The war with the infidel, while it had given strength and unity to the monarchy, had at the same time compelled the granting of considerable independence to the nobles and the great towns. The religious character of the war had enabled the clergy to retain greater powers than they possessed in any other European country, though they had lost that omnipotence which they had enjoyed under the Visigoths. Their councils and synods, which had once formed the sole constitutional machinery of the country, had been superseded by the secular assembly of the cortes. The early history of the cortes is wrapped in great obscurity, but its main outlines are fairly discernible. Originally a meeting of the great nobles and royal household, it had attained the position of a national assembly in 1162, when the deputies of the chief towns were admitted to membership. Its powers and procedure developed gradually, and naturally varied according to the character of the different kings. Its first functions were the approval of legislation and the granting of extraordinary taxation, though it is difficult to say when its sanction of such measures was regarded as essential. The assembly consisted of the three estates—clergy, nobles, and citizens—who deliberated sometimes separately and sometimes together. Representation existed only in the case of the third estate, whose members were elected at first by all free citizens and afterwards by the municipal magistrates. The number of cities which sent deputies varied very much at different times. As to what constituted the right of attendance in the case of the nobles and clergy there is great obscurity, but it probably depended partly upon tenancy-in-chief and partly upon royal summons. As both classes were exempt from taxation, their functions were less important than those of the third estate, and on more than one occasion we find meetings of the cortes in which the upper orders took no part. The weakness of the assembly, as contrasted with the English parliament, lay mainly in the absence of any class like the knights of the shire to form a link between the burgesses and the great nobles. In early times, probably the most effective check upon the royal power lay in the independent privileges claimed and exercised by the chief feudatories. Their tenants were bound to feudal service; and the right of private war made them petty sovereigns on their own estates. The long feud of the families of Castro and Lara is only a notable example of the difficulties which the central power had to contend with. For the protection of their privileges, both nobles and towns claimed

the right of forming an armed union or *hermandad*, which resembled the right of "confederation" exercised in later times by the nobles of Poland. The ordinary administration, except when war was going on, was local rather than central. The nobles had judicial powers within their domains, though it appears that these were granted by the crown rather than derived from their territorial position. The bishops and higher clergy administered ecclesiastical jurisdiction as in other countries, and at the same time exercised the same powers as the secular lords over the large estates which the piety or superstition of generations of benefactors had conferred upon them. The connexion with Rome, though established in the 11th century, had not become very close before the middle of the 12th century; the appointment to most of the benefices was in the hands of the crown, and the church of Castile was more independent even than that of England. In the cities and great towns, most of which included a considerable extent of adjacent territory, the administration both of justice and of local affairs was in the hands of elected corporations, which had received grants of liberties at the time when they had served as important outposts against the attacks of the infidel. In theory, probably, there existed in all cases a right of appeal to the crown, but this was a right which, in the nature of things, was rarely exercised. The attempt of subsequent kings to control or supersede the local administration of justice by the appointment of *corregidores* was always resisted as an encroachment upon traditional liberties. Even the taxes, though granted by a central assembly, were assessed and collected by the local officials, and jealous care was taken to secure that they should only be applied to the purpose for which the grant had been made.

Ferdinand III., "The Saint," was succeeded in 1252 by his son, Alfonso X., "The Wise." The new king gave up the military policy of his father, and the only territorial acquisition of his reign, the province of Murcia, was won for him by the arms of Aragon. On the other hand, he was a great student and patron both of literature and science, especially of astronomy. He invited to his court the most distinguished scholars not only in Christian but also in Arabic lore, and he raised the university of Salamanca to rank with the great schools of Paris and Oxford. He also turned his attention to legislation, and his code, the *Siete Partidas*, is one of the great legislative monuments of an age which produced the *Établissements* of St Louis and the great statutes of Edward I. Compiled under the influence of the civil and canon laws, the *Siete Partidas* was in some respects disadvantageous, especially as admitting papal encroachments upon the ecclesiastical power of the crown. Though drawn up under Alfonso X., it did not finally supersede the ancient *fueros* until 1348, when it was formally approved by the cortes. But Alfonso's reign, though distinguished in the history of literature and law, was not on the whole a prosperous period for Castile, and it was to a great extent his fault that the opportunity of driving the Moors from the Peninsula was allowed to slip. On the fall of the Hohenstaufen he came forward as a candidate for the imperial dignity, and through the period known as the "great interregnum" he and Richard of Cornwall, chosen by rival parties among the electors, bore the empty title of king of the Romans. The expense of bribing the electors and of maintaining a magnificent court involved Alfonso in pecuniary difficulties and compelled him to alienate his subjects by imposing heavy taxes and by debasing the coinage. But the hardships inflicted on the country by the king's futile ambition were as nothing compared with those which arose from a disputed succession to the crown. By the old custom of Castile nearness

of blood gave a superior claim to priority of descent, so that the second son of a king would be preferred to the children of the eldest son. The *Siete Partidas* recognized the more modern rule of succession; but, as that code had not yet been accepted by the cortes, its ruling had no binding force. The question arose in 1275, when Alfonso's eldest son, Ferdinand de la Cerda, perished in a campaign against the Moors, leaving two sons, Ferdinand and Alfonso. The king's second son, Sancho, was at once declared heir to the crown, but the widow, Blanche, announced her intention to uphold the rights of her children, and she received support both from Pedro III. of Aragon and from her brother, Philip III. of France. A long war followed, which was further complicated when Alfonso X., having quarrelled with his son, proposed a partition between the rival claimants. So far did the dispute go that the Moors, instead of being attacked in Granada, were called upon to give their assistance to the factions among their enemies.

The result of these internal quarrels was to increase the already excessive power of the noble families, and this was productive of further disturbances in the reign of Sancho IV. (1284-1295). The family of Castro seems to have sunk into comparative insignificance, but the Laras had found a new rival in the house of Haro. The whole state was divided by their feuds, and the king found himself degraded from the position of arbiter to that of a partisan. The condition of affairs became even worse when the death of Sancho gave the crown to his infant son Ferdinand IV. (1295-1312). In an early stage of society a minority is always an evil, and Castile at this period had more than a fair share of such misfortunes. The crown was contested, not only by the late king's brother John, but also by Alfonso de la Cerda, who returned from France to maintain a claim which had already been negated by the accession of Sancho. The king of Aragon supported Alfonso, while the rulers of Portugal and Granada mixed themselves up in the quarrel to obtain advantages for themselves. The regency had been bequeathed by Sancho to his widow, Maria de Molina, but her marriage had been declared uncanonical by the pope, so that a slur was cast upon the legitimacy of her son. Nothing but the great skill and capacity displayed by the regent could have secured victory under such discouraging circumstances. By mingled submission and defiance she disarmed one opponent after another, induced the pope to ratify her marriage, and finally succeeded in transferring the government to her son on his coming of age. Ferdinand's harshness provoked a renewal of the conflict; but ultimately the treaty of Camillo (1305) put an end to the struggle, and compensated the princes of La Cerda with lavish cessions of territory. Alfonso preferred to remain an exile rather than to abandon his claims, but his son accepted the proffered conditions and became the founder of the great house of Medina Sidonia. But the treaty made little difference to the country. Disorder and civil war had become a chronic disease in Castile, and Ferdinand IV. was himself too deeply imbued with the spirit of the age to maintain peace with a strong hand. The story that is told about his death illustrates his character. In spite of a solemn promise made twice during his reign that every accused person should have a fair trial, he ordered two brothers of the name of Carvajal to be put to death without the pretence of judicial forms. They summoned him to appear before the supreme tribunal within thirty days, and on one morning within that period he was found dead in his bed. The cause of his death was never ascertained, but the people regarded the event as a judgment, and he has received from this story the name of "The Summoned" (*El Emplazado*).

Ferdinand IV.'s death was followed by another and still

longer minority, as his son, Alfonso XI. (1312-1350), was only two years old at the time. The regency was claimed by the late king's brother Don Pedro and by his uncle Don John, and from this dispute arose a civil war fiercer and more destructive than any of its predecessors. The central authority ceased to exist; both nobles and towns had to protect themselves as best they could; the royal domains were seized upon by rapacious neighbours, and the person of the young king was only saved by his being concealed in the cathedral of Avila. At last the mediation of the pope and of Maria de Molina brought about a compromise, and the administration was divided between the two regents,—Pedro taking the south-eastern and John the north-western provinces (1315). But a few years later they were both killed in a joint campaign against the emir of Granada, and the disorders broke out with worse violence than ever (1319). Four "infants," as the members of the royal family were called, contended for the government, and the assumption of power by the king himself at the age of fifteen failed to put a stop to their feuds. The character of Alfonso XI. was as harsh and brutal as was to be expected in a man who had been educated in such troubled times. He invited his cousin, a younger Don John, to a banquet in the royal palace, and treacherously murdered him. His treatment of his first wife, whom he divorced in order to marry a daughter of the king of Portugal, provoked her father, Don John Emanuel, a nephew of Alfonso X., to head a rising which took years to suppress. The Portuguese princess was also repudiated by her husband, who had been inspired with a passion for the beautiful Eleanor de Guzman, and the forces of Portugal were added to those of the Castilian rebels. After a long struggle (1335-1337) Alfonso XI. succeeded in reducing his opponents to submission, while he conciliated Alfonso IV. of Portugal by restoring his daughter to her position as queen. The restoration of unity was extremely opportune, as Spain was threatened at this moment by a new invasion from Africa. Abu 'l Hakam, the head of the Merinids and emir of Fez, crossed over to Gibraltar with a huge army in 1339, and was acknowledged as suzerain by the ruler of Granada. Assistance was obtained both from Aragon and Portugal, and in 1340 Alfonso XI. marched to the relief of Tarifa, which was besieged by the Moors. On the banks of the Salado the Christians won a great victory, which destroyed the last chance of a revival of the Mohammedan power in Spain. Abu 'l Hakam fled to Africa, and in 1344 Alfonso concluded a glorious war by the reduction of Algesiras. In the hope of cutting off all connexion between Granada and Africa, Alfonso laid siege to Gibraltar in 1350, but before he could accomplish his design he was carried off by the Black Death. His victories over the infidel have led the Spanish historians to gloss over the acts of cruelty and treachery which have left an ineffaceable stain upon his character. His reign, troubled as it was, constitutes an important epoch in the history of Castilian liberties. In 1328 he issued two laws which formed the firmest basis of the powers of the cortes. He recognized the right of that assembly to be consulted in all important matters of state, and he solemnly pledged himself and his successors not to impose any new tax without its approval and consent. These concessions were to some extent counterbalanced by his restriction of the right of electing deputies to the *regidores* or magistrates of each city. This narrowing of the franchise was a great blow to the popular rights, and it gave the crown facilities for tampering with the elections which were frequently abused in later days. But at the time the municipal magistrates enjoyed considerable independence, and for several generations the cortes showed no signs of subservience. In fact

Alfonso's position made him dependent upon the support of the citizens against the great lords, so that he was not likely to aim at diminishing the power of the former class. Another important event of the reign was the granting by the cortes, for the expenses of the Moorish war, of the *alcavala*, a tax of a twentieth upon every sale of real or personal property. This tax, one of the most ruinous that can be conceived, illustrates the want of economical insight in the 14th century, and was destined in later times to seriously impede the industrial and commercial development of Spain.

The atrocities of Alfonso XI.'s reign sink into insignificance when compared with those committed by his son and successor, Pedro I. (1350-1369). The story of the latter's rule is mainly derived from the narrative of his avowed enemies, but there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the charges which have given him the name of "The Cruel." Some of his actions may perhaps be attributed to a politic desire to destroy the ascendancy of the great nobles, whom the princes of the royal house had often headed against the crown; but most of them can only be explained by a thirst for bloodshed which almost amounted to mania. He ascended the throne at the age of sixteen, and was at once urged by his mother Maria of Portugal to avenge the wrongs which she had endured at the hands of her rival, Eleanor de Guzman. The unfortunate Eleanor was strangled in prison, and her sons could only secure safety by flight. The eldest, Henry of Trastamara, found a refuge first in Portugal and afterwards in France. A wife was now found for the young king in Blanche, daughter of the duke of Bourbon, in the hope of strengthening his throne by a French alliance. But Pedro had formed a connexion with Maria de Padilla; and, when he was at last induced to go through the marriage ceremony with Blanche, he quitted her immediately to return to his mistress, whose brothers he advanced to the chief offices of state. A conspiracy of nobles, headed by Alfonso of Albuquerque, lately the king's favourite, was suppressed with ruthless severity. Pedro now concluded a second marriage with Juana de Castro, although Blanche was still living, but he again returned to Maria de Padilla. Another conspiracy, backed up by the pope and the French king, was more successful. After standing a long siege in Tordesillas, Pedro was compelled to concede the demands of the coalition and to acknowledge Blanche as his lawful queen. But his submission was only feigned. Seizing the opportunity of a hunting-party to escape from the imprisonment in which he was kept at Toro, he rallied a mercenary army round him and took terrible vengeance upon his opponents (1355-56). Henry of Trastamara, who had joined in the rising, escaped to France, where he took part in the war against the English. It would be wearisome to catalogue the long list of cruelties, beginning with the murder of the unfortunate Blanche of Bourbon, of which Pedro was guilty during the next ten years. It seems almost incredible that such a monster should have been allowed to reign in a country which had already shown so much independence as Castile. But several causes combined to secure him against deposition. In the first place, it was upon the nobles and the Jews that his hand fell with such severity, while to the citizen class he was on the whole a lenient ruler. This explains why it was that the cortes made little or no opposition when he endeavoured to secure the succession to his own children. In 1362 he solemnly swore that he had been lawfully married to Maria de Padilla, and his four children by her were recognized as heirs to the crown. His son Alfonso, however, died in the same year, and only two daughters, Constance and Isabella, survived their father. Another point in Pedro's favour was the outbreak in 1356 of a war

with Aragon, which lasted almost without intermission for the rest of the reign, and in the course of which the Aragonese king was joined by Henry of Trastamara. Much as the Castilian nobles hated Pedro, they hated Aragon still more, and they were unwilling to accept a king who might seem to be forced upon them by the neighbouring kingdom. This war was in a way harmful to the interests of both kings. They were both eager to depress the powerful nobles in their territories, but their continued hostilities only enabled these nobles to extend their power. On more than one occasion this community of interest was on the verge of leading to an agreement which would probably have excluded the house of Trastamara for ever from Castile, but each time national and personal enmity combined to revive the quarrel. Though Castile was larger and possessed of more resources than its rival, the presence of a large number of Castilian exiles in Aragon made the combat fairly even. But in 1365 Henry of Trastamara obtained new and more formidable auxiliaries. Charles V. of France, who was now beginning to reorganize that country after the English wars, was only too glad to allow the disorderly bodies of disbanded soldiers to seek employment in Spain under the leadership of Bertrand du Guesclin. To these formidable enemies Pedro did not venture to offer resistance, and fled to Bayonne, while his half-brother Henry was everywhere acknowledged as king (1366). But Pedro succeeded in convincing the Black Prince of the justice of his cause and of the impolicy of allowing the French king to gain overwhelming influence in the Peninsula. Before the end of the year Edward's army had crossed the Pyrenees, a number of English mercenaries in Du Guesclin's service deserted to the banner of their old leader, and in April 1367 was fought the great battle of Najera or Navarrete, near Logroño. Du Guesclin was taken prisoner; Henry of Trastamara fled to France; and Pedro was restored to his throne. But the Castilian king had learnt no wisdom from adversity. His barbarity disgusted his allies, who were further alienated by his failure to furnish his promised supplies. The fever had already begun to decimate his troops and to weaken his own health when the Black Prince quitted Castile. His departure gave another opportunity to Henry of Trastamara, who had obtained fresh reinforcements from Charles V. In 1369 the battle of Montiel was decided in Henry's favour. Pedro was taken prisoner, and was killed in a personal struggle with his rival, into whose tent he was brought. His two surviving daughters had been left as hostages at Bordeaux, and were married to two brothers of the Black Prince, — John of Gaunt, and Edmund Langley, duke of York.

Henry II. (1369-1379) was of illegitimate birth, and his marriage with the heiress of the La Cerdas was hardly sufficient to remove all doubts as to his claim to the succession. But within his kingdom he met with little opposition. The Castilians were glad to settle down under an orderly government after the late reign, and the few malcontents exiled themselves to join the foreign claimants of the throne. The most important of these was Pedro I. of Portugal, whose grandmother belonged to the legitimate line of Castile, and John of Gaunt, who came to Spain to vindicate the rights of his wife Constance. Pedro I. proved for a time a formidable enemy. He allied himself with the Moors, who seized the opportunity to recover Algeiras, and with the king of Aragon, who annexed the border districts of Castile. But Pedro was an incapable warrior, and soon abandoned his own claim to obtain the English support by acknowledging John of Gaunt. But this enabled Henry to renew his alliance with France, and with the help of French troops he invaded Portugal, besieged Lisbon, and compelled Pedro to make peace.

Two years later a treaty was concluded with the king of Aragon, by which his conquests were restored. For the remainder of his reign Henry's throne was secure, and he left the kingdom in peace to his son John I. (1379-1390). The chief interest of the new reign centres round the relations with Portugal. The first renewal of the war was the work of the Portuguese king Ferdinand, who again supported the English claims upon Castile. But the alliance with England was not popular in Portugal, and in 1383 a treaty was concluded, which, however, proved productive rather of evil than of good. Beatrix, the only daughter of Ferdinand, was married to the Castilian king; and it was agreed that her children, whether male or female, should succeed to the throne of Portugal. A few months later Ferdinand died. Beatrix was at once proclaimed queen, and her mother undertook the regency. But the idea of union with Castile, which would involve the subordination of the smaller kingdom, was intensely unpopular at Lisbon. A rising overthrew the authority of the queen-mother, and the administration was entrusted to John, a brother of the late king. John of Castile at once entered Portugal to enforce what he considered to be the rights of his wife. But his high-handed measures only added strength to the opposition, and made the new regent the leader of a national movement. In 1384 the Castilian forces laid siege to Lisbon, which held out with obstinate resolution for five months, when the besiegers retired. Exulting in their success, the Portuguese determined to have nothing more to do with Beatrix; and an assembly of the cortes gave the crown to the regent John. The Castilian king now made a determined effort to uphold his failing cause, but at the great battle of Aljubarrota (August 1385) his army suffered a crushing defeat. It was now the turn of the Portuguese to take the aggressive, and the arrival of John of Gaunt enabled them once more to take up his cause. It was only the aid of France and the dislike of the Castilians for the foreign-bred Constance and her husband that enabled John to make head against his numerous enemies. In 1387 he succeeded in terminating the English part of the quarrel. His eldest son Henry, the first heir to the crown who received the title of prince of Asturias, was betrothed to Catherine, daughter of Constance, in whose favour John of Gaunt renounced all claims on behalf of his wife (1387). The war with Portugal now sunk into a chronic struggle on the frontier, but was still going on when John I. died in 1390.

With the accession of Henry III. (1390-1406), a boy of eleven, Castile was again face to face with the difficulties of a minority, and these were the more formidable on account of the absence of any prince of the blood-royal to assume the regency. By the will of the late king the administration was entrusted to a council to be formed by joint representation of the three estates. But the composition of this body was altered so as to give more power to the great nobles and prelates, and their quarrels soon involved the kingdom in the troubles of a civil war, from which it had been comparatively free in the last two reigns. Luckily for Castile, the young king, who assumed the government in 1393, showed himself to be a man of equal insight and resolution. By throwing himself boldly upon the support of the third estate, and by giving them the predominance in the cortes, he succeeded in taking efficient measures against the nobles. All domain-lands which had been alienated during his minority had to be restored, and all confederations among the barons were declared illegal and dissolved. The discontent which these measures provoked was promptly suppressed before it could develop into insurrection. At the same time the country enjoyed the blessings of external peace. Henry's marriage with Catherine of Lancaster secured him against

hostilities not only from England but also from Portugal, whose queen was Catherine's sister. Unfortunately for the kingdom which he ruled with such wisdom and success, Henry III. died in 1406 at the early age of twenty-seven, leaving an infant son to succeed him.

The minority of John II. was the most orderly period of his reign (1406-1454). The government was wielded by the able hands of his uncle Ferdinand, to whom the Castilians would have given the crown if he had been willing to supplant his nephew. Even after his accession to the throne of Aragon in 1412 he continued to give his advice to the queen-mother. The administration during these years was strong and orderly. The fortress of Antequera was taken from the Moors, and the Castilian nobles were kept in the same subjection as in the late reign. A new and disastrous period commenced in 1417, when the death of his mother transferred the reins of government to John II. at the age of fourteen. Averse to the cares of business and absorbed in personal pleasures, the young king was only too ready to allow himself to be guided by any one who would take the responsibility of rule upon his own shoulders. Before many years had elapsed he had fallen completely under the influence of Alvaro de Luna, grandmaster of the order of St James and constable of Castile. The minister, possessed of all the qualities which would have endowed a great monarch, set himself to increase the royal power. Not only were the nobles depressed to a condition of impotence which they had never yet experienced, but steps were also taken to diminish the powers of the third estate. Many of the lesser towns in Castile, as in England at the same period, found that the right of representation involved pecuniary burdens which they were eager to get rid of. This made it easy for the minister to reduce the number of towns sending deputies to the cortes to some seventeen or eighteen of the larger cities. This diminution of the third estate, though not resented, was an insidious blow at its real interests, and made it easy for Charles V. and his successor to reduce the cortes to impotence. The arbitrary government of John II., which might have been endured if it had been really directed by the king himself, was intolerable to the nobles when it was known to be inspired by his minister. The reign is filled by a series of conspiracies, in which the domestic malcontents found powerful allies in John II.'s cousins, John and Henry of Aragon. But Alvaro de Luna was a warrior as well as a politician, and succeeded in foiling all direct attempts to effect his overthrow. His ultimate fall was due to the ingratitude of the king whom he had served too well. John's second wife, Isabella of Portugal, disgusted at the small amount of influence which the minister allowed her to exercise, set herself to effect his overthrow. Once deprived of the royal favour, Alvaro de Luna had no further support to rest upon. The very absolutism which he himself had built up was turned against him, and he was executed after a trial which was notoriously unfair. A year later John II. followed him to the grave, and the crown passed to his son, Henry IV., the feeblest sovereign that ruled in Castile before the 17th century. His mind was as feeble as his body, and the contempt of his subjects has fixed upon him the title of "The Impotent." His first favourite, the marquis of Villena, was supplanted, after Henry's marriage with Joanna of Portugal, by Beltran de la Cueva, whom scandal declared to be the queen's paramour. The birth of a daughter did nothing to check these rumours, and the unfortunate infanta was only known as "la Beltraneja." The government was not exactly oppressive, but it failed to command respect, and personal jealousies and ill-feeling were sufficient to produce a revolt. The leaders were the marquis of Villena

and Carillo, archbishop of Toledo, both of whom had objects of their own to serve. In 1465 the rebellion broke out, and its first act was the formal deposition of Henry at Avila, after an absurd ceremony in which the king was represented by a puppet. The conspirators denounced the infanta Joanna as illegitimate, and offered the crown to Henry's brother Alfonso. In the course of the civil war which followed, Alfonso died (1468), and his partisans at once put forward the claims of his sister Isabella. But the infanta, who already displayed a wisdom and moderation beyond her years, refused to be involved in hostilities with her elder brother, and she succeeded in arranging a treaty by which she was recognized as Henry IV.'s heiress. The king himself struggled hard to evade these conditions, and after his death in 1474 Joanna's cause was espoused by her uncle, Alfonso V. of Portugal. But Isabella succeeded in securing her accession to the throne, and her marriage with Ferdinand of Aragon, by paving the way for the union of the two kingdoms, begins a new period in which for the first time there is a real history of united Spain.

The kingdom of Aragon which we left in the reign of James the Conqueror (1213-1276), consisted of the three provinces of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia. Each province retained its own laws and institutions, and Valencia and Catalonia regarded with the keenest jealousy any attempt to govern them on the principles which prevailed in Aragon. The powers of the crown were far more limited than in the neighbouring kingdom of Castile. The great nobles, or *ricos hombres*, formed a small and exclusive class, whose privileges made them almost the equals of the monarch. All conquests had to be divided between them, and the king was forbidden to confer a fief or honour upon any person outside their ranks. They possessed and exercised the right of private war, and were entitled at will to renounce their allegiance to their sovereign. The smallness of their numbers made them much more united than the nobles of Castile, and proportionately more formidable. The difference between the two kingdoms was recognized by Ferdinand the Catholic with his usual acuteness when he said that "it was as difficult to divide the nobles of Aragon as it was to unite those of Castile." But the privileges of the nobles, great as they were, were not the only check upon the royal power. Each province had its own cortes, which possessed from a very early date the right of granting taxes and approving legislation. In Valencia and Catalonia the cortes consisted, as in Castile, of the ordinary three estates; but in Catalonia, where a maritime life had inspired the inhabitants with a passionate love of freedom, the commons enjoyed a predominance which was hardly to be paralleled in any other country in the Middle Ages. The cortes of Aragon, which were more important, and whose history has been more carefully elucidated, consisted of four estates or arms (*braços*). Besides the great prelates and the *ricos hombres*, both of whom had the right of appearing by proxy, there was a separate chamber of smaller landholders. This contained the *infanzones*, or lesser tenants-in-chief, and the *caballeros* or knights, who were tenants of the greater barons but whose military rank gave them the right of personal attendance. The fourth chamber alone was representative, and consisted of the deputies of the towns. Their presence is first mentioned in 1133, thirty years before anything is heard of popular representation in Castile. Their numbers were naturally small, as the kingdom was of very limited extent, but it seems to have been early established that a town which had once sent deputies was permanently entitled to the privilege, and this preserved them from having their rights tampered with by the crown as was

done in Castile. Besides their legislative and taxative functions, the Aragonese cortes were also a supreme court of justice, and in this capacity were presided over by the *justiciar*, an official whose unique powers have attracted the attention of all writers on Spanish history. In its origin the office had nothing very remarkable about it, and it is only the peculiar circumstances of the kingdom which forced it into such prominence. The justiciar was not at first entrusted with any political functions, but the difficulty of adjusting the relations between the king and the barons led to his being called in as mediator. By the 14th century he had become almost the supreme arbiter in all constitutional questions. To him the people could appeal against any infringement of their liberties, while the king regarded him as his chief councillor and as the most efficient barrier against armed rebellion, which was the only alternative method of settling disputes between his subjects and himself. As the justiciar thus became the pivot of the constitution, it was of great importance to secure that he should exercise his functions with firmness and impartiality. As the *ricos hombres* were exempted from corporal punishment, he was always chosen from the lesser nobles or knights, and was made responsible to the cortes under penalty of death. The dignity of the office was enhanced by the character of its successive holders; and the mediæval history of Aragon abounds with instances of their fearless opposition to the crown and of their resolute resistance to despotism on the one hand and to anarchy on the other.

The glorious reign of James (I.) the Conqueror was disturbed towards its close by quarrels which arose from his scheme of partitioning his conquests among his children. The death, however, of his youngest and favourite son put an end to these projects, and the most important of the provinces passed into the hands of Pedro III. (1276-1285). Under Pedro and his son and successor Alfonso III. (1285-1291), attention was almost wholly diverted from internal affairs to the conquest of Sicily. By his marriage with Constance, the daughter of Manfred, Pedro could put forward a claim to succeed to the Hohenstaufen in Naples and Sicily, but it is not probable that he would have been able to make any use of the claim if the Sicilian Vespers (1283) had not thrown that island into his hands. The result was a long series of wars with the Angevin rulers of Naples, but the hold upon Sicily was steadily retained. These wars had a notable influence upon Aragonese history, as they compelled the kings to purchase the support of their subjects by concessions which could only with great difficulty have been extorted from them. Thus in 1283 Pedro III. granted the famous "General Privilege," the Magna Carta of Aragon. By this the crown formally laid down a number of rules to secure all classes against oppression. The General Privilege is quite as important a document as the English charter; it is even more full and precise, and its numerous confirmations show that it was as highly prized. It had the additional advantage of being issued to a people already possessed of institutions sufficiently developed to employ and defend the national liberties. But if Pedro's concessions were for the advantage of his country, his successor went to an extreme which was equally harmful. In 1287 Alfonso III. signed the famous "Privilege of Union," by which his subjects were formally authorized to take up arms against their sovereign if he attempted to infringe their liberties. The right of revolt, while it is and must be the ultimate safeguard against oppression, becomes at once liable to abuse when it is formulated and discussed. The act of 1287 gave an unlimited licence to disorder, which could always disguise itself under the pretence of defending liberty. Until it was repealed

there was always a danger that the constitution would succumb, not to the tyrannical usurpations of the crown, but to the selfish interests of the nobles.

On the death of Alfonso III. the crown passed to his brother James II. (1291-1327). The new king handed over Sicily to his younger brother Frederick, thus creating a separate dynasty in that island. In the hope of depressing the greater barons, James II. strengthened the hands of the justiciar and sought to conciliate the clergy and citizens to the crown. By these steps he succeeded in avoiding any open conflict during his reign, and at the same time he sought to secure external unity by an edict which declared the three provinces of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia to be for ever indivisible (1319). But his successor, Alfonso IV. (1327-1336), did not hesitate to break this edict, in spirit if not in letter, by carving out great fiefs for his second wife, Eleanor of Castile, and her children. By this measure he gave rise to the difficulties, and indirectly to the triumphs, of his son, Pedro IV. (1336-1387). Pedro's reign is a great epoch in Aragonese history, as to him is due the arrest of the tendencies which threatened to divide and destroy the kingdom. He began by recalling his father's excessive grants to his stepmother and his half-brothers. The intervention of Alfonso XI. of Castile on behalf of his sister failed to make any impression upon the king, and it was only the pressing danger from the Moors, which was removed in 1340 by the Castilian victory on the Salado, that induced him at last to consent to a compromise. The same desire to unite all the possessions of the Aragonese crown is apparent in his treatment of the king of Majorca, James II., the descendant of James I.'s younger son, who had received from his father the Balearic Islands with Roussillon and Cerdagne as a vassal kingdom. As James II. showed inclination to evade his legal duties towards his suzerain, Pedro seized the first opportunity to pick a quarrel with him. In 1344 all the territories of the king of Majorca were declared to be united to Aragon; and, though James II. made an obstinate resistance, he met with little support from his former subjects, and the hopeless struggle was ended by his death in 1348.

These high-handed measures not unnaturally excited the misgivings of the nobles of Aragon, whose privileges were not likely to be very scrupulously respected by a prince with such an obvious sense of his own rights and duties. In 1347 chance gave them an eminent and capable leader. There was no law against female succession in Aragon, and there was the precedent of Queen Petronilla in its favour. On the other hand, there was a strong prejudice against it, and as a rule preference had been given to males, although further removed from the direct line. Pedro IV. had an only daughter, Constance, and he was eager to secure the succession to her in preference to his brother James, who was popularly regarded as the heir to the throne. This unconcealed intention excited the indignation of James, who was already discontented at the harsh treatment of the king of Majorca. He had no difficulty in inducing most of the chief nobles, including his half-brothers, to form a "Union," which was also joined by several of the towns in their discontent at the projected settlement of the succession (1347). Pedro was taken by surprise and could only gain time by concessions. He promised to convoke annual meetings of the cortes, to choose his councillors with the approval of the estates, to revoke his will in favour of his daughter, and to recognize his brother as his heir. Soon after this agreement, which left the Union master of the situation, James died; and men were not slow in attributing his death to the machinations of the king. This event was of the greatest advantage to Pedro, as it deprived his opponents of their leader and

from this moment the rebellion began to be split up by personal rivalries. The king and his advisers were not slow to avail themselves of the opportunity thus offered. The opposition was strongest in Aragon and Valencia, and Pedro succeeded in gaining over the Catalonians, who were always prone to act in isolation from the other provinces. With the troops thus acquired he met the army of the Union at Epila (1348) and won a complete victory. He followed up his success by destroying all the charters which gave any sanction to armed resistance to the crown, and especially the Privilege of Union of 1287. His elder half-brother Ferdinand, who had succeeded James as leader of the revolt and as heir-apparent to the throne, fled to Castile, but the chief nobles were severely punished, and the power of the crown was raised to a height which it had never before attained.

Thus Aragon, following the tendencies of the age, became centralized under a powerful monarchy, and the forces of feudal disunion received a final check. But Pedro IV. was far from establishing anything like a despotism. While destroying the Privilege of Union, he took a solemn oath to respect the political and personal liberties of his subjects, and enjoined the same oath upon his successors. At the same time he strengthened the powers of the justiciar, whose pre-eminence dates from this reign. The position of the king was immensely strengthened by the birth of a son, which destroyed the claims of his half-brothers. The later part of his reign was occupied with a war against Henry II. of Castile, which has been referred to above, and with resistance to James III. of Majorca, who made an unsuccessful effort to recover the territories of his father. Pedro concluded a second marriage with Sibilla, daughter of a Catalonian knight, and her influence involved him in a quarrel with his eldest son, whom he attempted to deprive of the office of lieutenant-general, which custom assigned to the heir to the throne. But he found that the authority of the justiciar was now strong enough to restrain the crown as well as the nobles. Dominic de Cerda, who now held the office, pronounced that the infant was legally entitled to the dignity from which he had been ousted, and compelled the king to restore him. The brief reign of John I. (1387-1395) was mainly occupied with wars in Sicily and Sardinia. The expense which these involved, which was increased by the luxury of a magnificent court, excited the most lively discontent on the part of the cortes. The remonstrances of his subjects were resented by the king, but they were backed up by the authority of the justiciar, and John I. gave way so far as to banish the unpopular favourites from the court. On the king's death his daughters were passed over, and the crown was transferred to his brother Martin, who was occupied in restoring the Aragonese supremacy in Sicily. Under Martin a private war between the great families of Urrea and Luna was put down, and the dependence of the great nobles was more firmly secured. But the death in 1409 of the king's only son, Martin the younger, brought the kingdom face to face with the difficulty of a disputed succession. There were two male claimants,—the count of Urgel, a great-grandson of Alfonso IV., and the duke of Gandia, a grandson of James II. The former was the undoubted heir if the succession was absolutely limited to males, while the latter was advanced in years and could only bring forward the old contention of nearness to the royal stock. But, although precedent was in favour of the exclusion of females, there was no definite rule to prevent the succession of their male descendants. Of such claimants there were two,—Louis of Calabria, the son of John I.'s daughter Violante, and Ferdinand, infant of Castile, the son of Martin's sister Eleanor. Moreover,

Pedro
IV.

Martin.