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 *(brazos).* 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 infraction 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