Martin the younger had left an illegitimate son, Frederick, count of Luna, and if the question had arisen a century earlier, before tho clergy had obtained so much power, it is probable that his claims would have been preferred. The question was still unsettled on the death of the elder Martin in 1410, with whom ended the male line of the counts of Barcelona. A prolonged civil war seemed inevitable, and for two years the kingdom endured the evils of an interregnum. If the dispute was to be settled by force of arms, the count of Urgel seemed likely to carry all before him, as he had the pretty unanimous support both of the Catalans and of the powerful family of Luna. But his followers, confident in their superiority, allowed themselves to indulge in acts of violence which alienated the more orderly part of the population. The justiciar, Juan de Cerda, who had acted with such impartial firmness in the reign of John I., succeeded in forming a patriotic party which determined to settle the dispute by a legal decision. Jealousy of the De Lunas gave to this party the support of the rival house of Urrea. They succeeded in procuring the appointment of a joint commission of nine members,—three from the cortes of each province. After a careful examination of all the claims, the commissioners decided, on what principle it is difficult to determine, in favour of the infant Ferdinand, who was then acting as regent of Castile for his nephew John II. (1412). As far as ability and merit went, the choice was probably the best that could have been made. By mingled firmness and concession Ferdinand succeeded in restoring order and unity to the kingdom and its dependencies. A revolt headed by the disappointed count of Urgel in the next year was suppressed, and its leader was punished with the confiscation of his territories and perpetual imprisonment.

Thus the house of Trastamara succeeded in obtaining the crown of Aragon as well as that of Castile. Ferdinand I., the first king of the new dynasty, did not live long to wield the sceptre which he had so fortunately acquired. On his death in 1416 the crown passed to his son Alfonso V. (1416-1458). The new prince played little part in Aragonese history, as his attention was almost wholly absorbed in the affairs of Italy. To his inherited posses­sions of Sicily and Sardinia he added the kingdom of Naples after a seven years’ contest with the Angevin claimant, René le Bon of Provence (1435-1442). From this time he never quitted his new kingdom, where his politic rule and his patronage of literature acquired for him the name of “ The Magnanimous.” During his absence the government of Aragon was entrusted to his brother John, as lieutenant-general. The arbitrary char­acter of this prince, which is so clearly visible in his subsequent history, seems to have been foreseen by his subjects. In order to secure the justiciar from undue influence on the part of the crown, a law was made in 1442 that the office should be held for life, and that its occupant could only be dismissed by the king with the express approval of the cortes. In 1461 this provision was followed up by another law which directed that all complaints against the justiciar should be heard before a commission regularly chosen from the four estates.

The history of John, both as regent for his brother and later as king in his own right, centres round the family quarrels which finally led to a formidable rebellion against him. His first wife was Blanche, widow of Martin of Sicily and heiress of Navarre. This little kingdom, which comprised territory on both sides of the Pyrenees, had been more closely connected with France than with Spain since its separation from Aragon on the death of Alfonso I. (1134). In the 13th century it was united to the French crown by the marriage of Jeanne of Navarre with

the French king, Philip IV., but it again became independent on the death of Louis X. in 1315. His daughter Jeanne was the undoubted heiress of Navarre, and, though she was kept out of her rights by her uncles, Philip V. and Charles IV., she was allowed to succeed after their death. In 1329 she was crowned at Pamplona with her husband, Philip of Evreux. Her son, Charles the Bad (1349-1387), obtained an unenviable notoriety for the part which he played in French history during the troublous period of the English wars. His son, Charles III. (1387-1425), was a peace-loving prince, who devoted more attention to art and literature than to politics. The marriage of his daughter Blanche with John of Aragon brought the mountain-kingdom once more into close connexion with the western peninsula. By her marriage contract, Navarre was to pass on her death to her children and not to her husband, but a later agreement enjoined her son, before assuming the sovereignty, to obtain “the goodwill and approbation of his father.” When Blanche died in 1442, John seems to have considered that this later stipulation justified him in retaining the title of king of Navarre, though he entrusted the administration of the kingdom to his son, Charles of Viana. For some time no difficulty was made about this arrangement. But in 1447 John married a second wife, Joanna Henriquez, a de­scendant of the royal family of Castile, and a few years later he sent Joanna to share the government of Navarre with his son. This appointment, coupled with the arrogant conduct of his stepmother, was regarded as an insult by Charles of Viana, who was not slow to remember that by right he was entitled to the crown. The old parties of Navarre, the Beaumonts and Agramonts, seized the opportunity to renew their feuds,—the former espous­ing the cause of the prince, the latter that of the queen. Before long the dispute developed into civil war, and John marched into Navarre to assist his wife, who was besieged in Estella by her stepson. At Aybar the hostile forces met in open conflict, but the superior discipline of the royal troops gave them a complete victory, and Charles fell a prisoner into his father’s hands (1452). The prince was released after a short imprisonment, but the recon­ciliation was only a hollow one. The birth of a son to Joanna Henriquez (1452), afterwards famous as Ferdinand the Catholic, was a serious blow to the interests of the elder son. The queen scarcely concealed her desire to secure the succession to her own child, and her influence over her husband was unbounded. Charles found that his defeat had given the supremacy in Navarre to the hostile party, and after a vain attempt to recover his power he went to Naples to appeal to his uncle Alfonso V. But his hopes in this quarter were destroyed by Alfonso’s death in 1458. Of his possessions, Aragon, Sicily, and Sardinia passed to his brother John II., while Naples, as a private acquisition of his own, was bequeathed to his natural son Ferdinand. The Neapolitan barons, dreading the gloomy and tyrannical character of their new ruler, offered to support Charles of Viana as a candidate for the throne, but he refused to oppose his cousin, and retired to Sicily, where he spent the next two years in seclusion. In 1460 he was induced to return by the solicitations of his father, who seems to have been dis­quieted by the popularity which the prince had obtained among the Sicilians. The intrigues of Joanna were not long in exciting the old mistrust between father and son, and her hostility towards Charles was increased by his attempts to obtain the hand of Isabella of Castile, whom she had already fixed upon as a suitable bride for her own son Ferdinand. In 1461 Charles was induced to meet his father at Lerida, and was at once imprisoned. When asked about the cause of this arbitrary proceeding, John