not to completion, but to the stopping place at which it was destined to rest for two centuries. The voyage of Columbus in 1492, and the intervention of Ferdinand in the great conflict of France, the empire and the papacy for predominance in Italy, had, simultaneously, the effect of opening to her the world of conquest and adventure in America, and of committing her to incessant wars in the Italian Peninsula. The death of John, the only son of Ferdinand and Isabella, the worst misfortune which ever happened to Spain, opened the succession to all the crowns and coronets worn by the Catholic sovereigns to Charles of Habsburg—the emperor Charles V. From that day Spain became a part—the leader, then the paymaster, then the dupe—of the international mon­archical confederation called “ the illustrious House of Austria.” The Spaniard became the swordsman and executioner of the counter-Reformation, because the power of the House of Austria depended on the imposition of religious unity in Europe. The decision of Charles V., king of Spain and emperor, to leave the Netherlands to his son Philip II., committed the Spaniards to conflict on the sea with England, and to the insane attempt to secure a safe road for their armies across Europe from the shores of the Mediterranean to the North Sea. Thereby they threat- ened the very national existence of France. The arrangement was made possible only by the hopeless divisions of Germany, the blind pride of Spain, and the utter political incapacity of both. It forced every patriotic ruler of England to oppose Spain on the sea, and every statesmanlike master of France to ruin her power on the land. Meanwhile the Spaniards were endeavouring to check the advance of the Turks in the Mediterranean, and to exclude all Europe from the waters of the New World. In the intensity of their struggle with the Reformation they subjected education to a censorship which, in order to exclude all risk of heresy, stifled thought and reduced knowledge to the repetition of safe formulas. With their eyes on the ends of the earth, and a ring of enemies from Constantinople to the Antilles, the Spaniards fought, with steadily diminishing material resources, with a character and intellect which shrivelled by swift degrees. When nearly bled to death for the illustrious House of Austria, they were transferred to the House of Bourbon, which in its turn dragged them into conflict with Austria in Italy and England on the sea. At the beginning of the 19th century they had fallen into such a state of weak- ness that Napoleon could, with some considerable measure of excuse, look upon their country as a species of no-man’s-land into which his troops had only to march on police duty to secure immediate obedience. The history of the 19th century is the liquidation of an enormous bankruptcy, and the completion of the circle which confines the Spaniard once more to the soil of the Peninsula.

Ferdinand and Isabella were proclaimed king and queen of Castile together, although the crown was hers alone, and although she never consented to part with her sovereign authority. In the purely internal affairs of Castile it was always she who decided on questions of administration. Some opposition was offered by a faction of the nobles who took up the claims of Henry’s supposed daughter, commonly calIed Juana la Beltraneja, because her father was alleged to have been Don Beltran de la Cueva, who, however, fought for Isabella. Juana’s party had the support of the king of Portugal, who arranged a marriage between her and his son. The defeat of the Portuguese at Toro made an early end of the war. The new sovereigns immediately began the work of establishing order and obedience in their dominions. The line of policy followed by the Catholic sovereigns@@1 was to keep the old forms, but draw the substance of power to themselves. Thus, for instance, they organized a police to dear the country of brigands, and attached a special jurisdiction to it, but they gave it the old name of *Hermandad* and the very superficial appearance of a voluntary association of the cities and the gentry. It consisted of a force of well-appointed horsemen, in the pro­

portion of one to every hundred families. Its merits as a police have perhaps been exaggerated, and in the war with Granada its bands were employed as soldiers. But an end was at least put to the existence of *peñas bravas* in the dominions of the crown of Castile. And this was the uniform model of their policy. The masterships Of the military orders of Calatrava, St Iago and Alcántara were one by one annexed to the Crown. Their commandaries were used to pay, or pension, the servants of the sovereigns. No attack was made on the charters of the towns, but in Castile and Aragon alike royal officers were appointed to adjudicate on disputes within the corporations themselves, or between corporation and corporation. By them the old councils were rapidly reduced to a state of atrophy. The same course was followed with the Cortes. It continued to be summoned by the Catholic sovereigns and their successors of the Habsburg line, but it was needed only to grant money. The nobles and the clergy, who as exempt from taxation had no vote, became purely ornamental parts of the Cortes. The representatives of the third estate were confined by the indifference of the Castilians to eighteen towns, whose procurators were named by the councils either from among themselves in rotation, or from particular families. Moreover, they received pay from the Crown while the Cortes sat. For the work of legislation the Cortes was not needed, and never had been. It was not even summoned during the whole of the war with Granada. The Catholic sovereigns provided themselves with a revenue by the customary wholesale resumptions of grants made during the reigns of John II. and Henry IV., and by the suppression or reduction of the pensions they had granted with profusion. The nobles, having been brought to obedience by a frown, were left in possession of their estates, their social rank and the obli­gation to render military service. They were summoned to the royal council, but only as ornamental members, the real authority and the exclusive right to vote being confined to the *letrados,* or lawyers, chosen by the Crown from the class of the burghers. Encouragement of industry was not wanting; the state under- took to develop the herds of merino sheep, by issuing pro- hibitions against inclosures, which proved the ruin of agriculture, and gave premiums for large merchant ships, which ruined the owners of small vessels and reduced the merchant navy of Spain to a handful of galleons. *Tasas,* fixed prices, were placed on everything. The weaver, the fuller, the armourer, the potter, the shoemaker were told exactly how to do their own work. All this did not bear its full fruit during the reign of the Catholic sovereigns, but by the end of the 16th century it had reduced Spain to a state of Byzantine regulation in which every kind of work had to be done under the eye and subject to the interference of a vast swarm of government officials, all ill paid, and often not paid, all therefore necessitous and corrupt. When the New World was opened, commerce with it was limited to Seville in order that the supervision of the state might be more easily exercised. The great resource of the treasury was the *alcabalas* or excises—taxes (farmed by contractors) of 5 or 10% on an article every time it was sold—on the ox when sold to the butcher, on the hide when sold to the tanner, on the dressed hide sold to the shoemaker and on his shoes. All this also did not bear its full fruit till later times, but by the 17th century it had made Spain one of the two “ most beggarly nations in Europe ”—the other being Portugal.

The policy of the Catholic sovereigns towards the Church was of essentially the same character as their treatment of the nobles or the cities. They aimed at using it as an instrument of government. One of the first measures adopted by them in Castile, before the union with Aragon, was to stop the nomina- tion of foreigners to Spanish benefices by the pope. But the most characteristic part of their ecclesiastical policy was the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition (*q.v.).* By the bull of Sixtus IV. of 1578 they obtained authority to appoint three inquisitors, whom they were empowered to remove or replace, and who were indepen­dent of, and superior to, the inquisitorial courts of the bishops.

@@@1 The name was not formally given to them by the pope till later, but it is convenient to use it at once.