went on almost continuously as long as the régime of moderate tariffs and commercial treatises lasted, i.e. until 1890.

In 1881 the Dynastic Liberals began to show impatience at being kept too long in the cold shade of opposition. Their chief, Sagasta, had found allies in several Con- servative and Liberal generals—Campos, Jovellar, Lopez-Dominguez and Serrano—who had taken offence at the ‘idea that Canovas wanted to monopolize power for civil politicians. These allies were said to be the dynastic and monarchical ballast, and in some sort the dynastic guarantees of liberalism in the eyes of the court. Canovas came to the conclusion that it was expedient for the Restoration to give a fair trial to the quondam revolutionists who coalesced under Sagasta in such conditions. He arranged with the king to moot a series of financial projects the accept- ance of which by His Majesty would have implied a long tenure of office for the Conservatives, and so Alphonso XII. found a pretext to dissent from the views of his premier, who resigned on the spot, recommending the king to send for Sagasta. The Liberal administration which that statesman formed lasted two years and some months. The policy of Sagasta in domestic affairs resembled that of Canovas. The Liberals had to act cautiously and slowly, because they perceived that any pre- mature move towards reform or democratic legislation would not be welcome at court, and might displease the generals. Sagasta and his colleagues therefore devoted their attention chiefly to the material interests of the country. They made several treaties of commerce with European and Spanish- American governments. They reformed the tariff in harmony with the treaties, and with a view to the reduction of the import duties by quinquennial stages to a fiscal maximum of 15% *ad valorem.* They undertook to carry out a general conversion of the consolidated external and internal debts by a considerable reduction of capital and interest, to which the bondholders assented. They consolidated the floating debt proper in the shape of a 4% stock redeemable in 40 years, of which ₤70,000,000 was issued in 1882 by Señor Camacho, the greatest Spanish financier of the century. Sagasta was not so fortunate in his dealings with the anti-dynastic parties, and the Republicans gave him much trouble in August 1883. The most irreconcilable Republicans knew that they could not expect much from popular risings in great towns or from the disaffected and anarchist peasantry in Andalusia, so they resorted to the old practice of barrack conspiracies, courting especially the non-commissioned officers and some ambitious subalterns. The chief of the exiles, Don Manuel Ruiz Zorilla, who had retired to Paris since the Restoration, organized a military conspiracy, which was sprung upon the Madrid government at Badajoz, at Seo de Urgel, and at Santo Domingo in the Ebro valley. This revolutionary outbreak was swiftly and severely repressed. It served, however, to weaken the prestige of Sagasta’s administration just when a Dynastic Left was being formed by some discontented Liberals, headed by Marshal Serrano and his nephew, General Lopez-Dominguez. They were joined by many Democrats and Radicals, who seized this opportunity to break off all relations with Ruiz Zorilla and to adhere to the monarchy. After a while Sagasta resigned in order to let the king show the Dynastic Left that he had no objection to their attempting a mildly democratic policy, on condition that the Cortes should not be dissolved and that . Sagasta and his Liberal majorities in both houses should grant their support to the cabinet presided over by Señor Posada Herrera, a former Conservative, of which the principal members were General Lopez-Dominguez and Señores Moret, Montero Rios and Becerra. The support of Sagasta did not last long, and he managed with skill to elbow the Dynastic Left out of office, and to convince all dissentients and free lances that there was neither room nor prospect for third parties in the state between the two great coalitions of Liberals and Conservatives under Sagasta and Canovas. When Posada Herrera resigned, the Liberals and Sagasta did not seem much displeased at the advent to power of Canovas in 1884, and soon almost all the members of the Dynastic Left joined the Liberal party.

From 1881 to 1883, under the two Liberal administrations of Sagasta and Posada Herrera, the foreign policy of Spain was much like that of Canovas, who likewise had had to bow to the king’s very evident inclination for closer relations with Germany, Austria and Italy than with any other European powers. Alphonso XII. found a very willing minister for foreign affairs in the person of the marquis de la Vega de Armijo, who cordially detested France and cared as little for Great Britain. The Red-books revealed very plainly the aims of the king and his minister. Spanish diplomacy endeavoured to obtain the patronage of Italy and Germany with a view to secure the admission of Spain into the European concert, and into international con- ferences whenever Mediterranean and North African questions should be mooted. It prepared the way for raising the rank of the representatives of Spain in Berlin, Vienna, Rome, St Petersburg and London to that of ambassadors. In Paris the country had been represented by ambassadors since 1760. The Madrid foreign office welcomed most readily a clever move of Prince Bismarck’s to estrange Spain from France and to flatter the young king of Spain. Alphonso XII. was induced to pay a visit to the old emperor William in Germany, and during his stay there, in September 1883, he was made honorary colonel of a Uhlan regiment quartered at Strassburg. The French people resented the act, and the Madrid government was sorely embarrassed, as the king had announced his inten- tion of visiting Paris on his way back from Germany. Nothing daunted by the ominous attacks of the French people and press, King Alphonso went to Paris. He behaved with much coolness and self-possession when he was met in the streets by a noisy and disgraceful demonstration. The president of the Republic and his ministers had to call in person on their guest to tender an apology, which was coldly received by Alphonso and his minister for foreign affairs. After the king’s return, the German emperor sent his son the crown prince Frederick, with a brilliant suite, to the Spanish capital, where they were the guests of the king for several days. Until the end of his reign Alphonso XII. kept up his friendly relations with the German Imperial family and with the German government.

The close of the reign of Alphonso XII. was marked by much trouble in domestic politics, and by some great national calami- ties and foreign complications, while the declining health of the monarch himself cast a gloom over the court and govern- ing classes. The last Conservative cabinet of this reign was neither popular nor successful. When the cholera appeared in France, quarantine was so rigorously enforced in the Peninsula that the external trade and railway traffic were grievously affected. On Christmas night, 1884, an earthquake caused much damage and loss of life in the provinces of Granada and Malaga. Many villages in the mountains which separate those provinces were nearly destroyed. At Alhama, in Granada, more than 1000 persons were killed and injured, several churches and convents destroyed, and 300 houses laid in ruins. King Alphonso went down to visit the district, and distributed relief to the distressed inhabitants, despite his visibly failing health. He held on gallantly through the greater part of 1885 under great difficulties. In the Cortes the tension in the relations between the government and the opposition was growing daily more serious. Outside, the Republicans and Carlists were getting troublesome, and the tone of their press vied with that of the Liberals in their attacks on the Conservative cabinet. Then, to make matters worse, an outbreak of cholera occurred in the eastern provinces of the kingdom. The epidemic spread rapidly over the Peninsula, causing great havoc in important cities like Granada, Saragossa and Valencia. The authorities confessed that 105,000 persons died of cholera in the summer and autumn of 1885, being on an average from 41 to 56% of those attacked.

In September a conflict arose between Spain and Germany which had an adverse effect upon his health. Prince Bismarck