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 negatived 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 Ḥakam, 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 Ί Ḥakam 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