Two years later a treaty was concluded with the king of Aragon, by which his conquests were restored. For the remainder of his reign Henry’s throne was secure, and he left the kingdom in peace to his son John I. (1379-1390). The chief interest of the new reign centres round the relations with Portugal. The first renewal of the war was the work of the Portuguese king Ferdinand, who again supported the English claims upon Castile. But the alliance with England was not popular in Portugal, and in 1383 a treaty was concluded, which, however, proved productive rather of evil than of good. Beatrix, the only daughter of Ferdinand, was married to the Castilian king ; and it was agreed that her children, whether male or female, should succeed to the throne of Portugal. A few months later Ferdinand died. Beatrix was at once pro­claimed queen, and her mother undertook the regency. But the idea of union with Castile, which would involve the subordination of the smaller kingdom, was intensely unpopular at Lisbon. A rising overthrew the authority of the queen-mother, and the administration was entrusted to John, a brother of the late king. John of Castile at once entered Portugal to enforce what he considered to be the rights of his wife. But his high-handed measures only added strength to the opposition, and made the new regent the leader of a national movement. In 1384 the Castilian forces laid siege to Lisbon, which held out with obstinate resolution for five months, when the besiegers retired. Exulting in their success, the Portuguese determined to have nothing more to do with Beatrix ; and an assembly of the cortes gave the crown to the regent John. The Castilian king now made a determined effort to uphold his failing cause, but at the great battle of Aljubarrota (August 1385) his army suffered a crushing defeat. It was now the turn of the Portuguese to take the aggressive,

and the arrival of John of Gaunt enabled them once more to take up his cause. It was only the aid of France and the dislike of the Castilians for the foreign-bred Constance and her husband that enabled John to make head against his numerous enemies. In 1387 he succeeded in termin­ating the English part of the quarrel. His eldest son Henry, the first heir to the crown who received the title of prince of Asturias, was betrothed to Catherine, daughter of Constance, in whose favour John of Gaunt renounced all claims on behalf of his wife (1387). The war with Portugal now sunk into a chronic struggle on the frontier, but was still going on when John I. died in 1390.

With the accession of Henry III. (1390-1406), a boy of eleven, Castile was again face to face with the difficulties of a minority, and these were the more formidable on account of the absence of any prince of the blood-royal to assume the regency. By the will of the late king the administra­tion was entrusted to a council to be formed by joint representation of the three estates. But the composition of this body was altered so as to give more power to the great nobles and prelates, and their quarrels soon involved the kingdom in the troubles of a civil war, from which it had been comparatively free in the last two reigns. Luckily for Castile, the young king, who assumed the government in 1393, showed himself to be a man of equal insight and resolution. By throwing himself boldly upon the support of the third estate, and by giving them the predominance in the cortes, he succeeded in taking efficient measures against the nobles. All domain-lands which had been alienated during his minority had to be restored, and all confederations among the barons were declared illegal and dissolved. The discontent which these measures provoked was promptly suppressed before it could develop into insurrection. At the same time the country enjoyed the blessings of external peace. Henry’s marriage with Catherine of Lancaster secured him against

hostilities not only from England but also from Portugal, whose queen was Catherine’s sister. Unfortunately for the kingdom which he ruled with such wisdom and success, Henry III. died in 1406 at the early age of twenty-seven, leaving an infant son to succeed him.

The minority of John II. was the most orderly period of his reign (1406-1454). The government was wielded by the able hands of his uncle Ferdinand, to whom the Castilians would have given the crown if he had been willing to supplant his nephew. Even after his accession to the throne of Aragon in 1412 he continued to give his advice to the queen-mother. The administration during these years was strong and orderly. The fortress of Antequera was taken from the Moors, and the Castilian nobles were kept in the same subjection as in the late reign. A new and disastrous period commenced in 1417, when the death of his mother transferred the reins of government to John II. at the age of fourteen. Averse to the cares of business and absorbed in personal pleasures, the young king was only too ready to allow himself to be guided by any one who would take the responsibility of rule upon his own shoulders. Before many years had elapsed he had fallen completely under the influence of Alvaro de Luna, grandmaster of the order of St James and constable of Castile. The minister, possessed of all the qualities which would have endowed a great monarch, set himself to increase the royal power. Not only were the nobles depressed to a condition of impotence which they had never yet experienced, but steps were also taken to diminish the powers of the third estate. Many of the lesser towns in Castile, as in England at the same period, found that the right of representation involved pecuniary burdens which they were eager to get rid of. This made it easy for the minister to reduce the number of towns sending deputies to the cortes to some seventeen or eighteen of the larger cities. This diminution of the third estate, though not resented, was an insidious blow at its real interests, and made it easy for Charles V. and his successor to reduce the cortes to impotence. The arbitrary government of John II., which might have been endured if it had been really directed by the king himself, was intolerable to the nobles when it was known to be inspired by his minister. The reign is filled by a series of conspiracies, in which the domestic malcontents found powerful allies in John II.’s cousins, John and Henry of Aragon. But Alvaro de Luna was a warrior as well as a politician, and succeeded in foiling all direct attempts to effect his overthrow. His ultimate fall was due to the ingratitude of the king whom he had served too well. John’s second wife, Isabella of Portugal, disgusted at the small amount of influence which the minister allowed her to exercise, set herself to effect his overthrow. Once deprived of the royal favour, Alvaro de Luna had no further support to rest upon. The very absolutism which he himself had built up was turned against him, and he was executed after a trial which was notoriously unfair. A year later John II. followed him to the grave, and the crown passed to his son, Henry IV., the feeblest sovereign that ruled in Castile before the 17th century. His mind was as feeble as his body, and the contempt of his sub­jects has fixed upon him the title of “The Impotent.” His first favourite, the marquis of Villena, was supplanted, after Henry’s marriage with Joanna of Portugal, by Beltran de la Cueva, whom scandal declared to be the queen’s paramour. The birth of a daughter did nothing to check these rumours, and the unfortunate infanta was only known as “la Beltraneja.” The government was not exactly oppressive, but it failed to command respect, and personal jealousies and ill-feeling were sufficient to pro­duce a revolt. The leaders were the marquis of Villena