

Henry VIII. though the church is still standing. All the mowers and husbandmen in these parts constantly visited it once a year, and innumerable other pilgrims resorted to it, not only from all parts of England, but also from beyond the seas. The church is sacred to the memory of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. Walstan.

ST. FERDINAND III. CONFESSOR,

KING OF CASTILE AND LEON.

HE was eldest son to Alphonsus, king of Leon, and of Berangera of Castile, elder sister¹ of Blanche, mother of St. Lewis of France, and was born about the end of the year 1198 or some time in 1199. Berangera had been obliged by pope Innocent III. to a separation from Alphonsus of Leon after having borne to him two sons, Ferdinand and Alphonsus, and two daughters, because though in the third degree of consanguinity, they had been married, without a dispensation, which was at that time very difficult to be obtained. But because this marriage had been contracted *bonâ fide* by the decrees of the pope, and the states of the two kingdoms, their children were declared their lawful heirs. Berangera returned to her father Alphonsus IX. of Castile, one of the most valiant and most virtuous kings that ever reigned in Spain, and who was to her the most tender and best of fathers. He dying in 1214, his son Henry, eleven years of age, succeeded him under the tutorship and regency of his mother in Eleonor of England. But she followed her husband to the grave within twenty-five days; grief for having lost him being the cause of her death. Berangera was charged with the guardianship of her

¹ Roderiguez, at that time first dean, then archbishop of Toledo, assures us that Berangera was the eldest of all the children of this king, and next heir to the kingdom after her brother's death. It is therefore a notorious mistake of those who call Blanche the elder sister.

brother and the regency of the kingdom, but out of love of retirement suffered herself to be persuaded to resign both to a nobleman called Don Alvarez, who proved a perfidious, turbulent man, and for several years embroiled all Castile and the neighbouring kingdoms. Berangera was a princess of accomplished prudence and piety, and exercises of devotion were her chief delight. King Henry, by the contrivance of Alvarez, at twelve years of age was married to Mafalda, sister to Alphonsus, king of Portugal, but upon an impediment of consanguinity which was proved before commissaries, pope Innocent III. declared the marriage null, and Mafalda returning to Portugal, founded a Cistercian nunnery at Arouca, took herself the veil, and lived in so great sanctity as to be honoured among the saints on the 1st of May. The young king Henry died of a wound he received by a tile falling upon his head at Palencia on the 6th of June, 1217, and Berangera put in her claim to the crown; but transferring her right upon her son Ferdinand, surnamed the Saint, caused him, who was in the eighteenth year of his age, to be proclaimed king at Palencia, Valladolid, and Burgos, having first lodged in the archives of the church of this last city, the solemn act of her own resignation. Don Alvarez and other factious spirits filled the kingdom with disturbances and civil wars for several years; but these the young king by his clemency, prudence, and valour, assisted by his mother's counsels, stifled and overcame. Alvarez was taken and pardoned; and perfidiously renewed his treasonable cabals and broils, both at home and abroad. Though Ferdinand was so great a king, no child ever obeyed a mother with a more ready and perfect submission than he did Berangera to the time of her death, as his ancient historian assures us.¹ By her advice he took to wife, in 1219, Bea-

¹ Luc. Tudenz.

trix, daughter of Philip of Suabia, emperor of Germany, a most virtuous and accomplished princess. The happy union of their hearts was never disturbed by the least cloud during the fifteen years of their cohabitation; and their marriage was blessed with a numerous family of seven sons and three daughters. St. Ferdinand was severe in the administration and the execution of the laws, but readily pardoned all personal injuries; and no sooner were rebellions crushed, but he granted general amnesties. His prudence and his constant attention to the care of his people appeared most conspicuous in the happy choice he always made of governors, magistrates, and generals. Rodriguez, archbishop of Toledo and chancellor of Castile, was during thirty years at the head of all his councils, and so perfectly united with Berangera and St. Ferdinand in all their deliberations as to seem to have but one soul with them. To set a curb to inferior tribunals he established the court, since called the royal council of Castile, which consists of ten auditors, and to which there lies an appeal from all other courts. A code of laws which he caused to be compiled by the most able lawyers¹ is still used in that kingdom.

Nothing ever so much troubled our saint, as when his own father Alphonsus, king of Leon, stirred up by Alvarez, laid claim to and invaded his dominions. St. Ferdinand endeavoured by the most dutiful and endearing letters to give him all possible satisfaction, and lent him his own forces to fight against the Moors. With this succour his father conquered Caures, Merida, and Badajoz, and extended his dominions to the frontiers of Andalusia. Being resolved as much as possible never to draw his sword but against the infidels, he restored several places the claims to which seemed doubtful, and waived all occasions

¹ This code is called by the Spaniards *Las Partidas*.

of quarrels with the kings of Portugal and Arragon, and with Eleonor of England in Gascony. He founded several bishoprics, and contributed munificently to the building or repairing of many stately cathedrals, other churches, monasteries, and hospitals. No necessity could ever make him impose any heavy tax upon his subjects. In his wars with the Moors, when one suggested to him a method of raising an extraordinary subsidy, he rejected the proposal with indignation; saying, "God would not fail to supply him other ways, and that he feared more the curse of one poor old woman than the whole army of the Moors." He first marched against them into the kingdom of Baëza in 1225, and in the second year Aben Mahomet, a prince of the race of the Miramolins of Africa, king of that country, yielded himself up vassal to king Ferdinand, and surrendered to him his strongest holds. In 1230 he took nearly twenty strong places in Andalusia, and in the kingdoms of Cordova and Jaën. Aben Mahomet having been murdered by a general conspiracy of his subjects because he had made himself vassal to a Christian king who was the sworn enemy of their religion, St. Ferdinand took occasion to conquer the whole kingdom of Baëza, and to erect a bishopric in its capital. His whole conduct bore testimony to the truth of his solemn protestation, in which he appealed to heaven, saying,¹ "Thou, O Lord, who searchest the secrets of hearts, knowest that I desire thy glory, not mine; and the increase of thy faith, and holy religion, not of transitory kingdoms." The archbishop Rodriguez performed the solemn office, and all pastoral functions in the army, and the bishop of Palencia in his room one year that he happened to be sick. St. Ferdinand set his soldiers the most perfect example of devotion. He fasted rigorously, prayed much, wore a rough hair-shirt made

¹ Sancius, Episc. Palent. Hist. Hisp. par. 3. c. 39.

in the shape of a cross, spent often whole nights in tears and prayers, especially before battles, and gave to God the whole glory of all his victories. In his army he caused an image of the Blessed Virgin to be carried, and wore another small one on his breast, or sometimes when on horseback placed it on the pommel of his saddle before him. From the spoils taken in war he contributed in a truly royal manner to the rebuilding of the most stately cathedral of Toledo, of which he laid the first stone. Several towns which were conquered from the Moors, he gave to the Order of Calatrava or others, and to the archbishopric of Toledo, upon condition they should defend them against the infidels. This is the origin of the great riches of that archbishopric, and of the military religious Orders in Spain.

St. Ferdinand was marching to lay siege to Jaën in 1230, when he received news of the death of his father Alphonsus of Leon, and was called by his mother to take possession of that kingdom, which from that time has remained united with Castile. It cost him three years to settle the affairs of his new kingdom; but in 1234 he recommenced his wars against the Moors by the siege of Ubeda, which he took after having spent the whole campaign before it. In the meantime the infant Alphonsus with fifteen hundred men defeated at Xeres the formidable army of Abenhut king of Seville, divided into seven bodies of troops, each of which was more numerous than the whole Christian army. From the deposition of several prisoners and others, the Christians concluded that the apostle St. James had appeared at the head of their troops in the armour of a knight, mounted on a white horse; and this victory cost the Christians only the lives of one knight, who had refused to forgive an injury, and ten soldiers. The joy of these victories was allayed by the death of the virtuous queen

Beatrix, St. Ferdinand's consort, who departed this life at Toro, about the beginning of the year 1236. The grief for this loss did not long suspend his warlike operations, and whilst James, king of Arragon wrested from the Moors the kingdom of Majorca and that of Valentia, he completed the conquest of the two Moorish kingdoms of Baëza and Cordova. This last city had been in the hands of those infidels five hundred and twenty-four years, and had been long the capital of their empire in Spain, when St. Ferdinand, after a long siege, entered it by capitulation, on SS. Peter and Paul's day in 1236. The great mosque was purified by John, bishop of Osma, and converted into a church under the invocation of the Mother of God, and Saint Ferdinand refounded there a bishopric. The great bells of Compostella, which Almansor had caused to be brought hither on the backs of Christians, St. Ferdinand commanded to be carried back on the backs of Moors.

In 1237, by the counsels of his mother, he married a second wife, chiefly at the recommendation of his aunt Blanche, dowager queen of France. This was Jane of Ponthieu, who bore him two sons and a daughter,¹ and lived in the most happy constant harmony with the queen mother and the king till their death, and joined them in all their exercises of piety and devotion. The winter they usually spent together; in spring, when the king put himself at the head of his army to march to new conquests, she usually assisted Berangera in superintending the domestic administration of the affairs of state. St. Ferdinand in the campaigns which followed the taking of Cordova made himself master of twenty-four other towns, of which Ecija was the first and Moron the last. Abenhudiel, king of

¹ This daughter named Eleonor, after the death of her father, was carried by her mother into France, became heiress of the counties of Ponthieu and Montreuil, and by marrying Edward I. of England, united them to the dominions of that crown. See Trivet Chron. &c.

Murcia, voluntarily surrendered his kingdom to king Ferdinand, reserving some open places to himself and certain lords of his country, which they were to hold in vassalage. St. Ferdinand sent his son Alphonsus to take possession of the city of Murcia, to purify the mosques, and establish there a bishopric. The strong cities of Lorca, Mula, and Carthagená, which refused to yield themselves up to him, he took three years after. Arjona and Jaén maintained obstinate sieges, but at length fell into the hands of Ferdinand, with Alcalá, Real, Ivora, and some other places dependent on Jaén. The loss of this capital so terrified Benalhamar, king of Granada, that he repaired to the camp of Ferdinand, cast himself at the feet of the conqueror, and offered to hold his kingdom of him in vassalage, and to pay him an annual tribute of one hundred and fifty thousand maravedis. These conditions were accepted, and by remaining always faithful to king Ferdinand, he transmitted his kingdom to his posterity. The rich and strong city of Seville, after the death of its king Abenhut, had formed itself into a republic, when king Ferdinand resolved to turn his forces against that place, far the most important which the Moors at that time possessed in Spain. The death of Archbishop Rodriguez his most faithful minister, followed by that of Berangera, his mother, interrupted his preparations for a short time; but motives of religion moderating his grief for the loss of the best of mothers, he had no sooner settled the administration by the orders which he despatched into Castile, but he resumed his expedition with greater vigour than ever. The siege held sixteen months, Seville being then the largest and strongest city in Spain. Its double walls were very broad and high, and defended by one hundred and sixty-six towers, the western side of the city was secured by the great river Guadal-

quivir, besides a deep broad moat at the foot of the innermost wall round the city. All provisions were abundantly supplied from the famous garden of Hercules, esteemed by the ancients the most delightful spot of ground in the world, called by the Moors Axarafa. This territory is about thirty miles in length and twelve in breadth, and contained one hundred thousand farms besides castles and towns. It lay on the right side of the river, where its communication with the city was secured by the castle of Triana on that bank, which was joined by a great iron chain, and a bridge of boats with the golden tower on the opposite bank at the bottom of the city. St. Ferdinand's fleet defeated that of the Moors, and mounted the river within sight of the castle of Triana; his land forces vanquished the succours sent from Africa, and in daily combats gained continual advantages. Yet the siege was not advanced till in the tenth month, on the feast of the Invention of the Cross in May, Ferdinand's admiral, by launching two great ships upon the chain and bridge of boats broke both. Triana was then besieged, and after having been long battered with rams and other engines, and stood many assaults, was at length reduced. The city itself surrendered on the 23rd of November, 1249; the Moors were allowed a month to sell or dispose of their goods; three hundred thousand removed to Xeres, one hundred thousand passed into Africa. Axataf, governor general of the Moors at Seville, being arrived at a hill called Belvedere, from which he had a prospect of the sea before him, and of the city behind him, turning toward Seville to take his last leave of that city, said with tears, that only a saint who by his justice and piety had heaven in his interest in all his undertakings could ever have taken so rich, so populous, and so strong a city with so small an army; but that God by his eternal decrees had

taken it from the Moors. St. Ferdinand after the most solemn thanksgivings to God implored the intercession of the Virgin Mother before her famous image which is still preserved, and refounded the cathedral with such magnificence and splendour, that it yielded to no church in Christendom but that of Toledo. The three years which he survived he resided at Seville to settle the tribunals and regulate the affairs of this important conquest; but added at the same time to his dominions Xeres, Medina, Sionia, Alcala de los Gazules, Begar, Port St. Mary's, Cadiz, St. Lucar, Arcos, Lebrixa, Rota, Trebuxena, and a great number of other towns and castles. He showed by his example that devotion is consistent with the duties of a king and Christian soldier; he was in all things severe to himself, but compassionate and mild to all others, always master of himself and his passions. He was preparing an expedition against the Moors in Africa, when he was taken with his last sickness. He prepared himself for death by the most edifying sentiments of compunction and a general confession; then called for the viaticum; and whilst the bishop of Segovia, attended by all the clergy of Seville, and the court, brought the holy sacrament, the king rose from his bed, fell on his knees on the floor, put a cord about his neck, and taking a crucifix in his hands, kissed and saluted the wounds of his Saviour, watering each of them with his tears. He then made his confession aloud, though he had nothing to accuse himself of which others could think to have been criminal, how much soever he was himself penetrated with confusion and regret for the least appearance of a fault. He made an act of faith in presence of the holy sacrament, which he received pouring forth a flood of tears of tender love and devotion. Before his death he called for all his children, gave them excellent instruc-

tions with his blessing, and asked pardon of all the world if ever he had given offence to any. In his agony, holding a blessed taper in his hands, he recommended his soul to God through the merits of his crucified Redeemer in the most pathetic aspirations; then caused the clergy to recite near him the Litanies, and afterward the Te Deum. This was scarce finished when he calmly yielded up his soul into the hands of his Creator on the 30th of May¹ in the year 1252, the fifty-third of his age the thirty-fifth of his reign in Castile, and the twenty-second in Leon. According to his desire he was buried before the image of our Lady in the great church at Seville, and his body is still preserved in that church in a rich shrine without the least blemish or corruption, and has been honoured with miracles. Saint Ferdinand was canonized by Clement X. in 1671. See the Chronicle of Rodriguez Ximenes, archbishop of Toledo, high chancellor of Castile.

ST. MAGUIL, IN LATIN MADELGISILUS,

RECLUSE IN PICARDY.

He is said to have been a native of Ireland, and the inseparable companion of St. Fursey, with whom he passed into France. After the death of that saint (who is honoured on the 16th of January) Maguil retired among the monks of St. Riquier, whom he exceedingly edified by his vir-

¹ Mariana and others place the death of St. Ferdinand on the 30th of May; but Flores shows that the Spaniards at that time called it the 31st. For May had thirty-one days where the Julian alteration of the months was not adopted, and the Dionysian epoch, in which the years were counted from Christ, was not introduced in Spain till very late, and after this time. The Spanish era preceded it thirty-eight years, commencing from the first year of Augustus's reign in Spain. Hence St. Ferdinand died in the year of Christ 1252, of the Spanish era 1290. See Flores, the learned Austin friar, rector of the Royal College at Alcala, in his *Espana Sagrada*, upon *Chronologia de la Historia de Espana*, part 1. c. 6. p. 112. ib. c. 2. n. 52, 53. p. 36.