

Provençale of the south of France reached its highest perfection ; and, when the tempest of persecution in the beginning of the thirteenth century fell on the lovely valleys of that unhappy country, its minstrels found a hospitable asylum in the court of the kings of Aragon ; many of whom not only protected, but cultivated the *gay science* with considerable success.⁸⁷ Their names have descended to us, as well as those of less illustrious troubadours, whom Petrarch and his contemporaries did not disdain to imitate ;⁸⁸ but their compositions, for the most part, lie still buried in those cemeteries of the intellect so numerous in Spain, and call loudly for the diligence of some Sainte Palaye or Raynouard to disinter them.⁸⁹

The languishing condition of the poetic art, at the close of the fourteenth century, induced John

Poetical
academy
of Tortosa.

⁸⁷ Velazquez, Origenes de la Poesía Castellana, (Málaga, 1797,) pp. 20 - 22. — Andres, Letteratura, part. 1, cap. 11. — Alfonso II., Peter II., Peter III., James I., Peter IV., have all left compositions in the Limousin tongue behind them ; the three former in verse ; the two latter in prose, setting forth the history of their own time. For a particular account of their respective productions, see Latassa, (Escritores Aragoneses, tom. i. pp. 175-179, 185 - 189, 222, 224, 242 - 248 ; tom. ii. p. 28,) also Lanuza. (Historias Eclesiásticas y Seculares de Aragon, (Zaragoza, 1622,) tom. i. p. 553.) The Chronicle of James I. is particularly esteemed for its fidelity.

⁸⁸ Whether Jordi stole from Petrarch, or Petrarch from Jordi, has been matter of hot debate between the Spanish and French *littéra-*

teurs. Sanchez, after a careful examination of the evidence, candidly decides against his countryman. (Poesías Castellanas, tom. i. pp. 81-84.) A competent critic in the Retrospective Review, (No. 7, art. 2,) who enjoyed the advantage over Sanchez of perusing a MS. copy of Jordi's original poem, makes out a very plausible argument in favor of the originality of the Valencian poet. After all, as the amount stolen, or, to speak more reverently, borrowed, does not exceed half a dozen lines, it is not of vital importance to the reputation of either poet.

⁸⁹ The abate Andres lamented fifty years ago, that the worms and moths should be allowed to revel among the precious relics of ancient Castilian literature. (Letteratura, tom. ii. p. 306.) Have their revels been disturbed yet ?

INTROD.

the First, who mingled somewhat of the ridiculous even with his most respectable tastes, to depute a solemn embassy to the king of France, requesting that a commission might be detached from the Floral Academy of Toulouse, into Spain, to erect there a similar institution. This was accordingly done, and the Consistory of Barcelona was organized, in 1390. The kings of Aragon endowed it with funds, and with a library valuable for that day, presiding over its meetings in person, and distributing the poetical premiums with their own hands. During the troubles consequent on the death of Martin, this establishment fell into decay, until it was again revived, on the accession of Ferdinand the First, by the celebrated Henry, marquis of Villena, who transplanted it to Tortosa.⁹⁰

The marquis, in his treatise on the *gaya sciencia*, details with becoming gravity the pompous ceremonial observed in his academy on the event of a public celebration. The topics of discussion were "the praises of the Virgin, love, arms, and other good usages." The performances of the candidates, "inscribed on parchment of various colors, richly enamelled with gold and silver, and beautifully illuminated," were publicly recited, and then referred to a committee, who made solemn oath to decide impartially and according to the rules of the art. On the delivery of the verdict, a wreath of gold was deposited on the victorious poem, which

⁹⁰ Mayáns y Siscár, *Orígenes de la Lengua Española*, (Madrid, 1737,) tom. ii. pp. 323, 324. — Cre-scimbeni, *Istoria della Volgare Poesia*, (Venezia, 1731,) tom. ii. p. 170. — Mariana, *Hist. de España*, tom. i. p. 183. — Velazquez, *Poesia Castellana*, pp. 23, 24.

was registered in the academic archives; and the fortunate troubadour, greeted with a magnificent prize, was escorted to the royal palace amid a *cortège* of minstrelsy and chivalry; "thus manifesting to the world," says the marquis, "the superiority which God and nature have assigned to genius over dulness."⁹¹

The influence of such an institution in awakening a poetic spirit is at best very questionable. Whatever effect an academy may have in stimulating the researches of science, the inspirations of genius must come unbidden;

"Adflata est numine quando
Jam propiore dei."

The Catalans, indeed, seem to have been of this opinion; for they suffered the Consistory of Tortosa to expire with its founder. Somewhat later, in 1430, was established the University of Barcelona, placed under the direction of the municipality, and endowed by the city with ample funds for instruction in the various departments of law, theology, medicine, and the belles-lettres. This institution survived until the commencement of the last century.⁹²

During the first half of the fifteenth century,

⁹¹ Mayans y Siscar, *Origenes*, tom. ii. pp. 325 - 327.

⁹² Andres, *Letteratura*, tom. iv. pp. 85, 86. — Capmany, *Mem. de Barcelona*, tom. ii. Apend. no. 16.

— There were thirty-two chairs, or professorships, founded and maintained at the expense of the city; six of theology; six of jurisprudence; five of medicine; six of phi-

losophy; four of grammar; one of rhetoric; one of surgery; one of anatomy; one of Hebrew, and another of Greek. It is singular, that none should have existed for the Latin, so much more currently studied at that time, and of so much more practical application always, than either of the other ancient languages.

INTROD.

Brief glory
of the Li-
mousin.

long after the genuine race of the troubadours had passed away, the Provençale or Limousin verse was carried to its highest excellence by the poets of Valencia.⁹³ It would be presumptuous for any one, who has not made the *romance* dialects his particular study, to attempt a discriminating criticism of these compositions, so much of the merit of which necessarily consists in the almost impalpable beauties of style and expression. The Spaniards, however, applaud, in the verses of Ausias March, the same musical combinations of sound, and the same tone of moral melancholy, which pervade the productions of Petrarch.⁹⁴ In prose too, they have (to borrow the words of Andres) their Boccacio in Martorell; whose fiction of "Tirante el Blanco" is honored by the commendation of the curate in Don Quixote, as "the best book in the world of the kind, since the knights-errant in it eat, drink, sleep, and die quietly in their beds, like other folk, and very unlike most heroes of romance." The productions of these, and some other of their distinguished contemporaries, obtained a general circulation very early by means of the recently invented art of printing, and subsequently passed into repeated editions.⁹⁵

⁹³ The Valencian, "the sweetest and most graceful of the Limousin dialects," says Mayans y Siscar, *Origenes*, tom. i. p. 58.

⁹⁴ Nicolás Antonio, *Bibliotheca Hispana Vetus*, (Matriti, 1788,) tom. ii. p. 146. — Andres, *Letteratura*, tom. iv. p. 87.

⁹⁵ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, (ed. de Pellicer, Madrid, 1787,) tom. i. p. 62. — Mendez, *Typographia Española*, (Madrid, 1796,) pp. 72

— 75. — Andres, *Letteratura*, ubi supra. — Pellicer seems to take Martorell's word in good earnest, that his book is only a version from the Castilian.

The *names* of some of the most noted troubadours are collected by Velazquez, *Poesía Castellana*, (pp. 20 - 24. — Capmany, *Mem. de Barcelona*, tom. ii. Apend. no. 5.) Some extracts and pertinent criticisms on their productions may be

But their language has long since ceased to be the language of literature. On the union of the two crowns of Castile and Aragon, the dialect of the former became that of the court and of the Muses. The beautiful Provençale, once more rich and me-

SECTION
II.

found by the English reader in the Retrospective Review. (No. 7. art. 2.) It is to be regretted that

the author has not redeemed his pledge of continuing his notices to the Castilian era of Spanish poetry.

The influence of free institutions in Aragon is perceptible in the familiarity displayed by its writers with public affairs, and in the freedom with which they have discussed the organization, and general economy of its government. The creation of the office of national chronicler, under Charles V., gave wider scope to the development of historic talent. Among the most conspicuous of these historiographers was Jerome Blancas, several of whose productions, as the "Coronaciones de los Reyes," "Modo de Proceder en Cortes," and "Commentarii Rerum Aragonensium," especially the last, have been repeatedly quoted in the preceding section. This work presents a view of the different orders of the state, and particularly of the office of the Justicia, with their peculiar functions and privileges. The author, omitting the usual details of history, has devoted himself to the illustration of the constitutional antiquities of his country, in the execution of which he has shown a sagacity and erudition equally profound. His sentiments breathe a generous love of freedom, which one would scarcely suppose to have existed, and still less to have been promulgated, under Philip II. His style is distinguished by the purity and even elegance of its latinity. The first edition, being that which I

have used, appeared in 1588, in folio at Saragossa, executed with much typographical beauty. The work was afterwards incorporated into Schottus's "Hispania Illustrata." — Blancas, after having held his office for ten years, died in his native city of Saragossa, in 1590.

Jerome Martel, from whose little treatise, "Forma de Celebrar Cortes," I have also liberally cited, was appointed public historiographer in 1597. His continuation of Zurita's Annals, which he left unpublished at his decease, was never admitted to the honors of the press, because, says his biographer, Uztarroz, *verdades lastiman*; a reason as creditable to the author, as disgraceful to the government.

A third writer, and the one chiefly relied on for the account of Catalonia, is Don Antonio Capmany. His "Memorias Históricas de Barcelona," (5 tom. 4to. Madrid, 1779-1792,) may be thought somewhat too discursive and circumstantial for his subject; but it is hardly right to quarrel with information so rare, and painfully collected; the sin of exuberance at any rate is much less frequent, and more easily corrected, than that of sterility. His work is a vast repertory of facts relating to the commerce, manufactures, general policy, and public prosperity, not only of Barcelona, but of Catalonia.

Constitutional writers on Aragon.

Blancas, Martel, and Capmany.

SECTION
II.

lodious than any other idiom in the Peninsula, was abandoned as a *patois* to the lower orders of the Catalans, who, with the language, may boast that they also have inherited the noble principles of freedom, which distinguished their ancestors.

It is written with an independent and liberal spirit, which may be regarded as affording the best commentary on the genius of the institutions which he celebrates.—Capmany closed his useful labors at Madrid, in 1810, at the age of fifty-six.

Notwithstanding the interesting character of the Aragonese constitution, and the amplitude of materials for its history, the subject has been hitherto neglected, as far as I am aware, by continental writers. Robertson and Hallam, more espe-

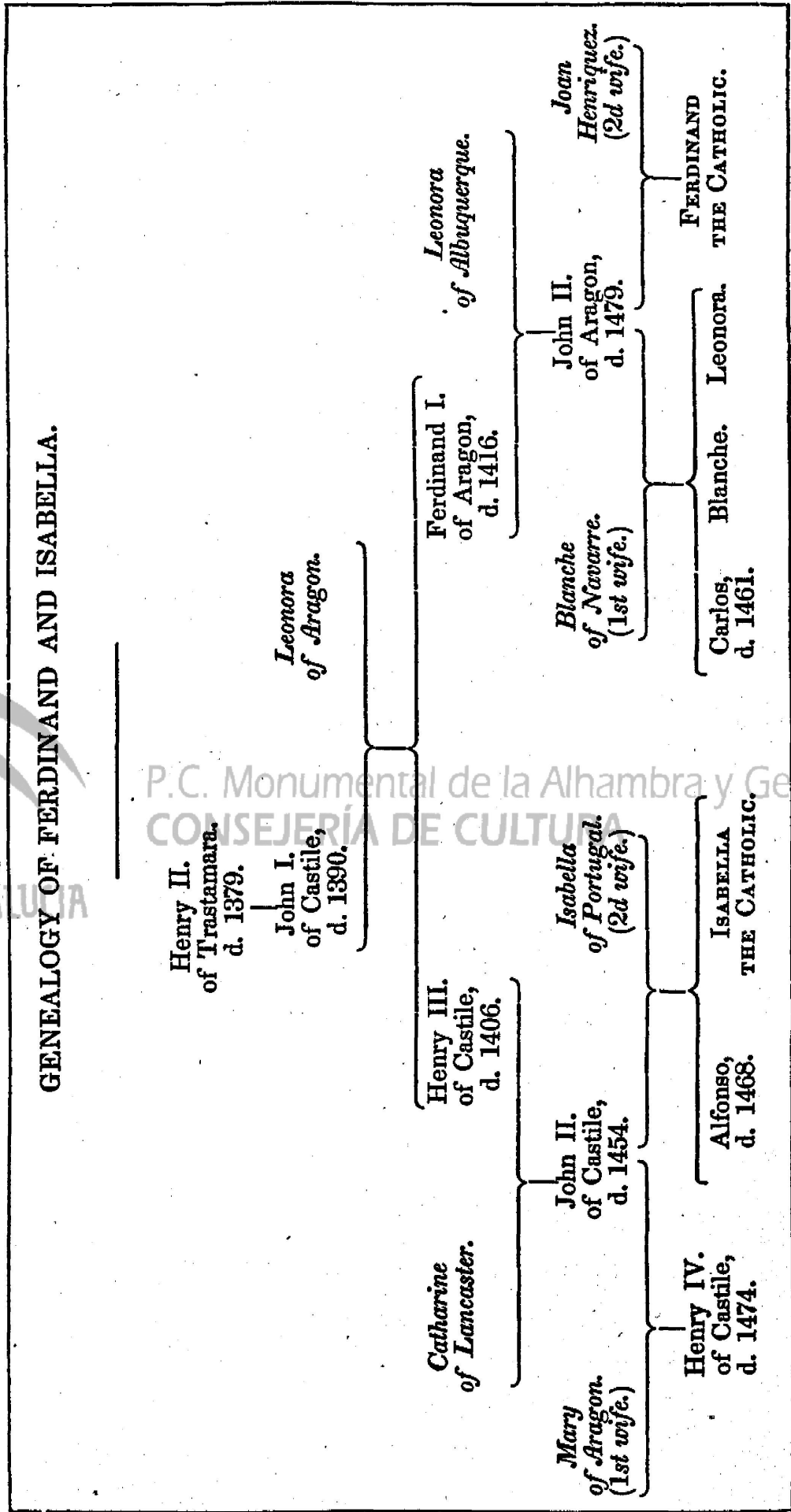
cially the latter, have given such a view of its prominent features to the English reader, as must, I fear, deprive the sketch which I have attempted, in a great degree, of novelty. To these names must now be added that of the author of the "History of Spain and Portugal," (Cabinet Cyclopædia,) whose work, published since the preceding pages were written, contains much curious and learned disquisition on the early jurisprudence and municipal institutions of both Castile and Aragon.

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalif
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA



JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

GENEALOGY OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA.



PART FIRST.

1406 — 1492.

THE PERIOD, WHEN THE DIFFERENT KINGDOMS OF SPAIN WERE
FIRST UNITED UNDER ONE MONARCHY, AND A THOROUGH
REFORM WAS INTRODUCED INTO THEIR INTERNAL ADMINIS-
TRATION; OR THE PERIOD EXHIBITING MOST FULLY THE
DOMESTIC POLICY OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

STATE OF CASTILE AT THE BIRTH OF ISABELLA. — REIGN OF
JOHN II., OF CASTILE.

1406 — 1454.

Revolution of Trastamara. — Accession of John II. — Rise of Alvaro de Luna. — Jealousy of the Nobles. — Oppression of the Commons. — Its Consequences. — Early Literature of Castile. — Its Encouragement under John II. — Decline of Alvaro de Luna. — His Fall. — Death of John II. — Birth of Isabella.

THE fierce civil feuds, which preceded the accession of the House of Trastamara in 1368, were as fatal to the nobility of Castile, as the wars of the Roses were to that of England. There was scarcely a family of note, which had not poured out its blood on the field or the scaffold. The influence of the aristocracy was, of course, much diminished with its numbers. The long wars with foreign powers, which a disputed succession entailed on the country, were almost equally prejudicial to the authority of the monarch, who was willing to buoy up his tottering title by the most liberal concession of privileges to the people. Thus the commons rose in proportion as the crown and the privileged orders

CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA
JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA
monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CHAPTER
I.

PART
I.Revolution
of Trasta-
mara.

descended in the scale; and, when the claims of the several competitors for the throne were finally extinguished, and the tranquillity of the kingdom was secured, by the union of Henry the Third with Catharine of Lancaster at the close of the fourteenth century, the third estate may be said to have attained to the highest degree of political consequence, which it ever reached in Castile.

The healthful action of the body politic, during the long interval of peace that followed this auspicious union, enabled it to repair the strength, which had been wasted in its murderous civil contests. The ancient channels of commerce were again opened; various new manufactures were introduced, and carried to a considerable perfection;¹ wealth, with its usual concomitants, elegance and comfort, flowed in apace; and the nation promised itself a long career of prosperity under a monarch, who respected the laws in his own person, and administered them with vigor. All these fair hopes were blasted by the premature death of Henry the Third, before he had reached his twenty-eighth year. The crown devolved on his son John the Second, then a minor, whose reign was one of the longest and the most disastrous in the Castilian annals.² As it was that, however, which gave birth to Isabella, the illustrious subject of our narrative, it will be necessary

Accession of
John II.

¹ Sempere y Guarinos, *Historia del Luxo, y de las Leyes Suntuarias de España*, (Madrid, 1788,) tom. i. p. 171.

² *Crónica de Enrique III.*, edición de la Academia, (Madrid, 1780,) passim. — *Crónica de Juan II.*, (Valencia, 1779,) p. 6.