

He maintained greater state than was usual with the monarchs of Castile, keeping in pay a body-guard of thirty-six hundred lances, splendidly equipped, and officered by the sons of the nobility. He proclaimed a crusade against the Moors, a measure always popular in Castile; assuming the pomegranate branch, the device of Granada, on his escutcheon, in token of his intention to extirpate the Moslems from the Peninsula. He assembled the chivalry of the remote provinces; and, in the early part of his reign, scarce a year elapsed without one or more incursions into the hostile territory, with armies of thirty or forty thousand men. The results did not correspond with the magnificence of the apparatus; and these brilliant expeditions too often evaporated in a mere border foray, or in an empty gasconade under the walls of Granada. Orchards were cut down, harvests plundered, villages burnt to the ground, and all the other modes of annoyance peculiar to this barbarous warfare, put in practice by the invading armies as they swept over the face of the country; individual feats of prowess, too, commemorated in the romantic ballads of the time, were achieved; but no victory was gained, no important post acquired. The king in vain excused his hasty retreats and abortive enterprises, by saying, "that he prized the life of one of his soldiers, more than those of a thousand Mussulmans." His troops murmured at this timorous pol-

He disap-
points ex-
pectations.

appellation of "the Liberal," he is better known on the roll of Castilian sovereigns by the less flattering title of "the Impotent."

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icy, and the people of the south, on whom the charges of the expeditions fell with peculiar heaviness, from their neighbourhood to the scene of operations, complained that "the war was carried on against them, not against the infidel." On one occasion an attempt was made to detain the king's person, and thus prevent him from disbanding his forces. So soon had the royal authority fallen into contempt! The king of Granada himself, when summoned to pay tribute after a series of these ineffectual operations, replied "that, in the first years of Henry's reign, he would have offered any thing, even his children, to preserve peace to his dominions; but now he would give nothing."³

The contempt, to which the king exposed himself by his public conduct, was still further heightened by his domestic. With even a greater indisposition to business, than was manifested by his father,⁴ he possessed none of the cultivated tastes, which were the redeeming qualities of the latter. Having been addicted from his earliest youth to debauchery, when he had lost the powers, he retained all the relish, for the brutish pleasures of a voluptuary. He had repudiated his wife, Blanche of Aragon, after a union of twelve years, on grounds

³ Zuñiga, *Anales Eclesiásticos y Seculares de Sevilla*, (Madrid, 1667,) p. 344. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 20. — Mariana, *Hist. de España*, tom. ii. pp. 415, 419. — Alonso de Palencia, *Corónica*, MS., part. 1, cap. 14 et seq. — The surprise of Gibraltar, the unhappy source of feud between the families of

Guzman and Ponce de Leon, did not occur till a later period, 1462.

⁴ Such was his apathy, says Mariana, that he would subscribe his name to public ordinances, without taking the trouble to acquaint himself with their contents. *Hist. de España*, tom. ii. p. 423.

His dissolute habits.

sufficiently ridiculous and humiliating.⁵ In 1455, he espoused Joanna, a Portuguese princess, sister of Alfonso the Fifth, the reigning monarch. This lady, then in the bloom of youth, was possessed of personal graces and a lively wit, which, say the historians, made her the delight of the court of Portugal. She was accompanied by a brilliant train of maidens, and her entrance into Castile was greeted by the festivities and military pageants, which belong to an age of chivalry. The light and lively manners of the young queen, however, which seemed to defy the formal etiquette of the Castilian court, gave occasion to the grossest suspicions. The tongue of scandal indicated Beltran de la Cueva, one of the handsomest cavaliers in the kingdom, and then newly risen in the royal graces, as the person to whom she most liberally dispensed her favors. This knight defended a passage of arms, in presence of the court, near Madrid, in which he maintained the superior beauty of his mistress, against all comers. The king was so much delighted with his prowess, that he commemorated the event by the erection of a monastery dedicated to St. Jerome; a whimsical origin for a religious institution.⁶

⁵ Pulgar, Crónica de los Reyes Católicos, (Valencia, 1780,) cap. 2.—Alonso de Palencia, Corónica, MS., part. 1, cap. 4.—Aleson, Anales de Navarra, tom. iv. pp. 519, 520.—The marriage between Blanche and Henry was publicly declared void by the bishop of Segovia, confirmed by the archbishop

of Toledo, "por *impotencia respectiva*, owing to some malign influence"!

⁶ La Clède, Hist. de Portugal, tom. iii. pp. 325, 345.—Florez, Reynas Cathólicas, tom. ii. pp. 763, 766.—Alonso de Palencia, Corónica, MS., part. 1, cap. 20, 21.—It does not appear, however, whom

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The queen's levity might have sought some justification in the unveiled licentiousness of her husband. One of the maids of honor, whom she brought in her train, acquired an ascendancy over Henry, which he did not attempt to disguise; and the palace, after the exhibition of the most disgraceful scenes, became divided by the factions of the hostile fair ones. The archbishop of Seville did not blush to espouse the cause of the paramour, who maintained a magnificence of state, which rivalled that of royalty itself. The public were still more scandalized by Henry's sacrilegious intrusion of another of his mistresses into the post of abbess of a convent in Toledo, after the expulsion of her predecessor, a lady of noble rank and irreproachable character.⁷

Oppression
of the peo-
ple.

The stream of corruption soon finds its way from the higher to the more humble walks of life. The middling classes, imitating their superiors, indulged in an excess of luxury equally demoralizing, and ruinous to their fortunes. The contagion of example infected even the higher ecclesiastics; and we find the archbishop of St. James hunted from his see by the indignant populace, in consequence of an out-

Beltran de la Cueva indicated as the lady of his love on this occasion. (See Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 23, 24.) Two anecdotes may be mentioned as characteristic of the gallantry of the times. The archbishop of Seville concluded a superb *fête*, given in honor of the royal nuptials, by introducing on the table two vases filled with rings garnished with precious stones, to be distrib-

uted among his female guests. At a ball given on another occasion, the young queen having condescended to dance with the French ambassador, the latter made a solemn vow, in commemoration of so distinguished an honor, never to dance with any other woman.

⁷ Alonso de Palencia, *Corónica*, MS., cap. 42, 47. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 23.

rage attempted on a youthful bride, as she was returning from church, after the performance of the nuptial ceremony. The rights of the people could be but little consulted, or cared for, in a court thus abandoned to unbounded license. Accordingly we find a repetition of most of the unconstitutional and oppressive acts which occurred under John the Second, of Castile; attempts at arbitrary taxation, interference in the freedom of elections, and in the right exercised by the cities of nominating the commanders of such contingents of troops, as they might contribute to the public defence. Their territories were repeatedly alienated, and, as well as the immense sums raised by the sale of papal indulgences for the prosecution of the Moorish war, were lavished on the royal satellites.⁸

But, perhaps, the most crying evil of this period was the shameless adulteration of the coin. Instead of five royal mints, which formerly existed, there were now one hundred and fifty in the hands of authorized individuals, who debased the coin to such a deplorable extent, that the most common

Debasement
of the coin.

⁸ Alonso de Palencia, *Corónica*, MS., cap. 35. — Sempere, *Hist. del Luxo*, tom. i. p. 183. — Idem, *Hist. des Cortès*, ch. 19. — Marina, *Teoría*, part. 1, cap. 20. — part. 2, pp. 390, 391. — Zuñiga, *Anales de Sevilla*, pp. 346, 349. — The papal bulls of crusade issued on these occasions, says Palencia, contained among other indulgences an exemption from the pains and penalties of purgatory, assuring to the soul of the purchaser, after death, an immediate translation into a state of glory. Some of the more ortho-

dox casuists doubted the validity of such a bull. But it was decided after due examination, that, as the holy father possessed plenary power of absolution of all offences committed upon earth, and as purgatory is situated upon earth, it properly fell within his jurisdiction. (cap. 32.) Bulls of crusade were sold at the rate of 200 maravedies each; and it is computed by the same historian, that no less than 4,000,000 maravedies were amassed by this traffic in Castile, in the space of four years!

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articles of life were enhanced in value three, four, and even six fold. Those who owed debts eagerly anticipated the season of payment; and, as the creditors refused to accept it in the depreciated currency, it became a fruitful source of litigation and tumult, until the whole nation seemed on the verge of bankruptcy. In this general license, the right of the strongest was the only one which could make itself heard. The nobles, converting their castles into dens of robbers, plundered the property of the traveller, which was afterwards sold publicly in the cities. One of these robber chieftains, who held an important command on the frontiers of Murcia, was in the habit of carrying on an infamous traffic with the Moors by selling to them as slaves the Christian prisoners of either sex, whom he had captured in his marauding expeditions. When subdued by Henry, after a sturdy resistance, he was again received into favor, and reinstated in his possessions. The pusillanimous monarch knew neither when to pardon, nor when to punish.⁹

But no part of Henry's conduct gave such umbrage to his nobles, as the facility with which he resigned himself to the control of favorites, whom he had created as it were from nothing, and whom he advanced over the heads of the ancient aristocracy of the land. Among those especially disgusted by this proceeding, were Juan Pacheco, marquis of Villena, and Alfonso Carillo, archbishop of

Character of
Pacheco,
marquis of
Villena.

⁹ Saez, *Monedas de Enrique IV.*, de Palencia, Corónica, MS., cap. (Madrid, 1805,) pp. 2-5.—Alonso 36, 39.—Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 19.

Toledo. These two personages exercised so important an influence over the destinies of Henry, as to deserve more particular notice. The former was of noble Portuguese extraction, and originally a page in the service of the constable Alvaro de Luna, by whom he had been introduced into the household of Prince Henry, during the lifetime of John the Second. His polished and plausible address soon acquired him a complete ascendancy over the feeble mind of his master, who was guided by his pernicious counsels, in his frequent dissensions with his father. His invention was ever busy in devising intrigues, which he recommended by his subtile, insinuating eloquence; and he seemed to prefer the attainment of his purposes by a crooked rather than by a direct policy, even when the latter might equally well have answered. He sustained reverses with imperturbable composure; and, when his schemes were most successful, he was willing to risk all for the excitement of a new revolution. Although naturally humane, and without violent or revengeful passions, his restless spirit was perpetually involving his country in all the disasters of civil war. He was created marquis of Villena, by John the Second; and his ample domains, lying on the confines of Toledo, Murcia, and Valencia, and embracing an immense extent of populous and well-fortified territory, made him the most powerful vassal in the kingdom.¹⁰

¹⁰ Pulgar, *Claros Varones*, tit. 6. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 15. — Mendoza, *Monarquía de España*, tom. i. p. 328. — The ancient marquisate of Villena, having been incorporated into the crown of

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Character of
the arch-
bishop of
Toledo.

His uncle, the archbishop of Toledo, was of a sterner character. He was one of those turbulent prelates, not unfrequent in a rude age, who seem intended by nature for the camp rather than the church. He was fierce, haughty, intractable; and he was supported in the execution of his ambitious enterprises, no less by his undaunted resolution, than by the extraordinary resources, which he enjoyed as primate of Spain. He was capable of warm attachments, and of making great personal sacrifices for his friends, from whom, in return, he exacted the most implicit deference; and, as he was both easily offended and implacable in his resentments, he seems to have been almost equally formidable as a friend and as an enemy.¹¹

These early adherents of Henry, little satisfied with seeing their own consequence eclipsed by the rising glories of the newly-created favorites, began secretly to stir up cabals and confederacies among the nobles, until the occurrence of other circumstances obviated the necessity, and indeed the possibility, of further dissimulation. Henry had been persuaded to take part in the internal dissensions which then agitated the kingdom of Aragon, and had supported the Catalans in their opposition to their

Castile, devolved to Prince Henry of Aragon, on his marriage with the daughter of John II. It was subsequently confiscated by that monarch, in consequence of the repeated rebellions of Prince Henry; and the title, together with a large proportion of the domains originally attached to it, was conferred on Don Juan Pacheco, by whom it was

transmitted to his son, afterwards raised to the rank of duke of Escalona, in the reign of Isabella. Salazar de Mendoza, *Dignidades de Castilla y Leon*, (Madrid, 1794,) lib. 3, cap. 12, 17.

¹¹ Pulgar, *Claros Varones*, tit. 20.—Bernaldez, *Reyes Católicos*, MS., cap. 10, 11.

sovereign by seasonable supplies of men and money. He had even made some considerable conquests for himself, when he was induced, by the advice of the marquis of Villena and the archbishop of Toledo, to refer the arbitration of his differences with the king of Aragon to Louis the Eleventh, of France; a monarch whose habitual policy allowed him to refuse no opportunity of interference in the concerns of his neighbours.

The conferences were conducted at Bayonne, and an interview was subsequently agreed on between the kings of France and Castile, to be held near that city, on the banks of the Bidassoa, which divides the dominions of the respective monarchs. The contrast exhibited by the two princes at this interview, in their style of dress and equipage, was sufficiently striking to deserve notice. Louis, who was even worse attired than usual, according to Comines, wore a coat of coarse woollen cloth cut short, a fashion then deemed very unsuitable to persons of rank, with a doublet of fustian, and a weather-beaten hat, surmounted by a little leaden image of the Virgin. His imitative courtiers adopted a similar costume. The Castilians, on the other hand, displayed uncommon magnificence. The barge of the royal favorite, Beltran de la Cueva, was resplendent with sails of cloth of gold, and his apparel glittered with a profusion of costly jewels. Henry was escorted by his Moorish guard gorgeously equipped, and the cavaliers of his train vied with each other in the sumptuous decorations of

Interview
between
Henry IV.
and Louis
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dress and equipage. The two nations appear to have been mutually disgusted with the contrast exhibited by their opposite affectations. The French sneered at the ostentation of the Spaniards, and the latter, in their turn, derided the sordid parsimony of their neighbours; and thus the seeds of a national aversion were implanted, which, under the influence of more important circumstances, ripened into open hostility.¹²

The monarchs seem to have separated with as little esteem for each other as did their respective courtiers; and Comines profits by the occasion to inculcate the inexpediency of such interviews between princes, who have exchanged the careless jollity of youth for the cold and calculating policy of riper years. The award of Louis dissatisfied all parties; a tolerable proof of its impartiality. The Castilians, in particular, complained, that the marquis of Villena and the archbishop of Toledo had compromised the honor of the nation, by allowing their sovereign to cross over to the French shore of the Bidassoa, and its interests, by the cession of the conquered territory to Aragon. They loudly accused them of being pensionaries of Louis, a fact which does not appear improbable, considering the usual policy of this prince, who, as is well known, maintained an espionage over the councils of most of his neighbours. Henry was so far convinced of

Disgrace of Villena and the archbishop of Toledo.

¹² At least these are the important consequences imputed to this interview by the French writers. See Gaillard, *Rivalité*, tom. iii. pp. 241 - 243. — Comines, *Mémoires*, liv. 3, chap. 8. — Also Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 48, 49. — Zurita, *Anales*, lib. 17, cap. 50.