

the truth of these imputations, that he dismissed the obnoxious ministers from their employments.¹³

CHAPTER
III.

The disgraced nobles instantly set about the organization of one of those formidable confederacies, which had so often shaken the monarchs of Castile upon their throne, and which, although not authorized by positive law, as in Aragon, seem to have derived somewhat of a constitutional sanction from ancient usage. Some of the members of this coalition were doubtless influenced exclusively by personal jealousies; but many others entered into it from disgust at the imbecile and arbitrary proceedings of the crown.

League of
the nobles.

In 1462, the queen had been delivered of a daughter, who was named like herself Joanna, but who, from her reputed father, Beltran de la Cueva, was better known in the progress of her unfortunate history by the cognomen of Beltraneja. Henry, however, had required the usual oath of allegiance to be tendered to her as presumptive heir to the crown. The confederates, assembled at Burgos, declared this oath of fealty a compulsory act, and that many of them had privately protested against it at the time, from a conviction of the illegitimacy of Joanna. In the bill of grievances, which they now presented to the monarch, they required that he should deliver his brother Alfonso

¹³ Ferreras, *Hist. d'Espagne*, tom. ii. p. 122. — Zurita, *Anales*, lib. 17, cap. 56. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 51, 52, 58. — The queen of Aragon, who was as skilful a diplomatist as her husband, John I., assailed the vanity of Villena,

quite as much as his interest. On one of his missions to her court, she invited him to dine with her *tête-à-tête* at her own table, while during the repast they were served by the ladies of the palace. *Ibid.*, cap. 40.

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into their hands, to be publicly acknowledged as his successor; they enumerated the manifold abuses, which pervaded every department of government, which they freely imputed to the unwholesome influence exercised by the favorite, Beltran de la Cueva, over the royal counsels, doubtless the true key to much of their patriotic sensibility; and they entered into a covenant, sanctioned by all the solemnities of religion usual on these occasions, not to reënter the service of their sovereign, or accept any favor from him until he had redressed their wrongs.¹⁴

The king, who by an efficient policy might perhaps have crushed these revolutionary movements in their birth, was naturally averse to violent, or even vigorous measures. He replied to the bishop of Cuença, his ancient preceptor, who recommended these measures; "You priests, who are not called to engage in the fight, are very liberal of the blood of others." To which the prelate rejoined, with more warmth than breeding, "Since you are not true to your own honor, at a time like this, I shall live to see you the most degraded monarch in Spain; when you will repent too late this unseasonable pusillanimity."¹⁵

Henry, unmoved either by the entreaties or remonstrances of his adherents, resorted to the milder

¹⁴ See the memorial presented to the king, cited at length in Marina, Teoría, tom. iii. Apend. no. 7.—Castillo, Crónica, cap. 58, 64.—Zurita, Anales, lib. 17, cap. 56.—Lebrija, Hispanarum Rerum Ferdinando Rege et Elisabe Regina Gestarum Decades, (apud Granatam, 1545,) lib. 1, cap. 1, 2.—Alonso de Palencia, Corónica, MS., part. 1, cap. 6.—Bernaldez, Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 9.

¹⁵ Castillo, Crónica, cap. 65.

method of negotiation. He consented to an interview with the confederates, in which he was induced, by the plausible arguments of the marquis of Villena, to comply with most of their demands. He delivered his brother Alfonso into their hands, to be recognised as the lawful heir to the crown, on condition of his subsequent union with Joanna; and he agreed to nominate, in conjunction with his opponents, a commission of five, who should deliberate on the state of the kingdom, and provide an effectual reform of abuses.¹⁶ The result of this deliberation, however, proved so prejudicial to the royal authority, that the feeble monarch was easily persuaded to disavow the proceedings of the commissioners, on the ground of their secret collusion with his enemies, and even to attempt the seizure of their persons. The confederates, disgusted with this breach of faith, and in pursuance, perhaps, of their original design, instantly decided on the execution of that bold measure, which some writers denounce as a flagrant act of rebellion, and others vindicate as a just and constitutional proceeding.

In an open plain, not far from the city of Avila, they caused a scaffold to be erected, of sufficient elevation to be easily seen from the surrounding country. A chair of state was placed on it, and in this was seated an effigy of King Henry, clad in sable robes and adorned with all the insignia of royalty, a sword at its side, a sceptre in its hand,

Deposition
of Henry at
Avila.
1465.

¹⁶ See copies from the original instruments, which are still preserved in the archives of the house of Villena, in Marina, Teoría, tom. iii. part. 2, Ap. 6, 8. — Castillo, Crónica, cap. 66, 67. — Alonso de Palencia, Crónica, MS., part. 1, cap. 57.

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and a crown upon its head. A manifesto was then read, exhibiting in glowing colors the tyrannical conduct of the king, and the consequent determination to depose him; and vindicating the proceeding by several precedents drawn from the history of the monarchy. The archbishop of Toledo, then ascending the platform, tore the diadem from the head of the statue; the marquis of Villena removed the sceptre, the count of Placencia the sword, the grand master of Alcantara and the counts of Benavente and Paredes the rest of the regal insignia; when the image, thus despoiled of its honors, was rolled in the dust, amid the mingled groans and clamors of the spectators. The young prince Alfonso, at that time only eleven years of age, was seated on the vacant throne, and the assembled grandees severally kissed his hand in token of their homage; the trumpets announced the completion of the ceremony, and the populace greeted with joyful acclamations the accession of their new sovereign.¹⁷

Such are the details of this extraordinary transaction, as recorded by the two contemporary historians of the rival factions. The tidings were borne, with the usual celerity of evil news, to the remotest parts of the kingdom. The pulpit and the forum resounded with the debates of disputants, who denied, or defended, the right of the subject to sit in judgment on the conduct of his

¹⁷ Alonso de Palencia, *Corónica*, MS., part. 1, cap. 62. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 68, 69, 74.

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III.Division of
parties.

sovereign. Every man was compelled to choose his side in this strange division of the kingdom. Henry received intelligence of the defection, successively, of the capital cities of Burgos, Toledo, Cordova, Seville, together with a large part of the southern provinces, where lay the estates of some of the most powerful partisans of the opposite faction. The unfortunate monarch, thus deserted by his subjects, abandoned himself to despair, and expressed the extremity of his anguish in the strong language of Job: "Naked came I from my mother's womb, and naked must I go down to the earth!"¹⁸

A large, probably the larger part of the nation, however, disapproved of the tumultuous proceedings of the confederates. However much they contemned the person of the monarch, they were not prepared to see the royal authority thus openly degraded. They indulged, too, some compassion for a prince, whose political vices, at least, were imputable to mental incapacity, and to evil counselors, rather than to any natural turpitude of heart. Among the nobles who adhered to him, the most conspicuous were "the good count of Haro," and the powerful family of Mendoza, the worthy scions of an illustrious stock. The estates of the marquis of Santillana, the head of this house, lay chiefly in the Asturias, and gave him a considerable influence in the northern provinces,¹⁹ the majority of whose

¹⁸ Alonso de Palencia, *Crónica*, MS., part. 1, cap. 63, 70. — Castiello, *Crónica*, cap. 75, 76.

¹⁹ The celebrated marquis of

Santillana died in 1458, at the age of sixty. (Sanchez, *Poesias Castellanas*, tom. i. p. 23.) The title descended to his eldest son, Diego

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inhabitants remained constant in their attachment to the royal cause.

When Henry's summons, therefore, was issued for the attendance of all his loyal subjects capable of bearing arms, it was answered by a formidable array of numbers, that must have greatly exceeded that of his rival, and which is swelled by his biographer to seventy thousand foot and fourteen thousand horse; a much smaller force, under the direction of an efficient leader, would doubtless have sufficed to extinguish the rising spirit of revolt. But Henry's temper led him to adopt a more conciliatory policy, and to try what could be effected by negotiation, before resorting to arms. In the former, however, he was no match for the confederates, or rather the marquis of Villena, their representative on these occasions. This nobleman, who had so zealously coöperated with his party in conferring the title of king on Alfonso, had intended to reserve the authority to himself. He probably found more difficulty in controlling the operations of the jealous and aspiring aristocracy, with whom he was associated, than he had imagined; and he was willing to aid the opposite party in maintaining a sufficient degree of strength to form

Hurtado de Mendoza, who is represented by his contemporaries to have been worthy of his sire. Like him he was imbued with a love of letters; he was conspicuous for his magnanimity and chivalrous honor, his moderation, constancy, and uniform loyalty to his sovereign, virtues of rare worth in those rapacious and turbulent times. (Pulgar, Claros

Varones, tit. 9.) Ferdinand and Isabella created him duke del Infantado. This domain derives its name from its having been once the patrimony of the *infantes* of Castile. See Salazar de Mendoza, *Monarquía*, tom. i. p. 219, — and *Dignidades de Castilla*, lib. 3, cap. 17. — Oviedo, *Quincuagenas*, MS., bat. 1, quinc. 1, dial. 8.

a counterpoise to that of the confederates, and thus, while he made his own services the more necessary to the latter, to provide a safe retreat for himself, in case of the shipwreck of their fortunes.²⁰

In conformity with this dubious policy, he had, soon after the occurrence at Avila, opened a secret correspondence with his former master, and suggested to him the idea of terminating their differences by some amicable adjustment. In consequence of these intimations, Henry consented to enter into a negotiation with the confederates; and it was agreed, that the forces on both sides should be disbanded, and that a suspension of hostilities for six months should take place, during which some definitive and permanent scheme of reconciliation might be devised. Henry, in compliance with this arrangement, instantly disbanded his levies; they retired overwhelmed with indignation at the conduct of their sovereign, who so readily relinquished the only means of redress that he possessed, and whom they now saw it would be unavailing to assist, since he was so ready to desert himself.²¹

Henry dis-
bands his
forces.

It would be an unprofitable task to attempt to unravel all the fine-spun intrigues, by which the marquis of Villena contrived to defeat every attempt at an ultimate accommodation between the parties,

²⁰ Alonso de Palencia, *Crónica*, MS., part. 1, cap. 64. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 78.

²¹ Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 80, 82.

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until he was very generally execrated as the real source of the disturbances in the kingdom. In the mean while, the singular spectacle was exhibited of two monarchs presiding over one nation, surrounded by their respective courts, administering the laws, convoking cortes, and in fine assuming the state and exercising all the functions of sovereignty. It was apparent that this state of things could not last long; and that the political ferment, which now agitated the minds of men from one extremity of the kingdom to the other, and which occasionally displayed itself in tumults and acts of violence, would soon burst forth with all the horrors of a civil war.

Proposition
for the mar-
riage of Isa-
bella.

At this juncture, a proposition was made to Henry for detaching the powerful family of Pacheco from the interests of the confederates, by the marriage of his sister Isabella with the brother of the marquis of Villena, Don Pedro Giron, grand master of the order of Calatrava, a nobleman of aspiring views, and one of the most active partisans of his faction. The archbishop of Toledo would naturally follow the fortunes of his nephew, and thus the league, deprived of its principal supports, must soon crumble to pieces. Instead of resenting this proposal as an affront upon his honor, the abject mind of Henry was content to purchase repose even by the most humiliating sacrifice. He acceded to the conditions; application was made to Rome for a dispensation from the vows of celibacy imposed on the grand master as the companion of a religious

order; and splendid preparations were instantly commenced for the approaching nuptials.²²

CHAPTER
III.

Her early
education.

Isabella was then in her sixteenth year. On her father's death, she retired with her mother to the little town of Arevalo, where, in seclusion, and far from the voice of flattery and falsehood, she had been permitted to unfold the natural graces of mind and person, which might have been blighted in the pestilent atmosphere of a court. Here, under the maternal eye, she was carefully instructed in those lessons of practical piety, and in the deep reverence for religion, which distinguished her maturer years. On the birth of the princess Joanna, she was removed, together with her brother Alfonso, by Henry to the royal palace, in order more effectually to discourage the formation of any faction, adverse to the interests of his supposed daughter. In this abode of pleasure, surrounded by all the seductions most dazzling to youth, she did not forget the early lessons, that she had imbibed; and the blameless purity of her conduct shone with additional lustre amid the scenes of levity and licentiousness by which she was surrounded.²³

The near connexion of Isabella with the crown, as well as her personal character, invited the application of numerous suitors. Her hand was first solicited for that very Ferdinand, who was destined to be her future husband, though not till after the

²² Rades y Andrada, *Crónica de Las Tres Ordenes y Cavallerías*, (Toledo, 1572,) fol. 76. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 85. — Alonso de Palencia, *Crónica*, MS., part. 1, cap. 73.

²³ L. Marineo, *Cosas Memorables*, fol. 154. — Florez, *Reynas Cathólicas*, tom. ii. p. 789. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 37.

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intervention of many inauspicious circumstances. She was next betrothed to his elder brother, Carlos; and some years after his decease, when thirteen years of age, was promised by Henry to Alfonso, of Portugal. Isabella was present with her brother at a personal interview with that monarch in 1464, but neither threats nor entreaties could induce her to accede to a union so unsuitable from the disparity of their years; and with her characteristic discretion, even at this early age, she rested her refusal on the ground, that "the infantas of Castile could not be disposed of in marriage, without the consent of the nobles of the realm."²⁴

When Isabella understood in what manner she was now to be sacrificed to the selfish policy of her brother, in the prosecution of which, compulsory measures if necessary were to be employed, she was filled with the liveliest emotions of grief and resentment. The master of Calatrava was well known as a fierce and turbulent leader of faction, and his private life was stained with most of the licentious vices of the age. He was even accused of having invaded the privacy of the queen dowager, Isabella's mother, by proposals of the most degrading nature, an outrage which the king had either not the power, or the inclination, to resent.²⁵ With this person, then, so inferior to her in birth,

²⁴ Aleson, *Anales de Navarra*, tom. iv. pp. 561, 562. — Zurita, *Anales*, lib. 16, cap. 46, lib. 17, cap. 3. — Castillo, *Crónica*, cap. 31, 57. — Alonso de Palencia, *Crónica*, MS., cap. 55.

²⁵ *Decad. de Palencia*, apud *Mem. de la Acad. de Hist.*, tom. vi. p. 65, nota.