

rule; but Isabella is remembered not only for her purity and modesty, but also as being the noblest and most illustrious person that ever graced the Spanish throne.

She came upon the stage of action when the world was just emerging from barbarism. All Europe was a boiling, seething mass. Tribes and classes of all sorts were roughly jostling each other in their desperate attempts to extend their boundaries and establish their governments. In fact, it was the time when the foundations of all the great nations were being laid. The Spanish peninsula was even in a worse condition than other parts of Europe, for here the Moors had firmly established themselves, and had ruled the greater portion of Spain for several centuries, but now were giving way before superior numbers and a higher degree of civilization.

Besides this trouble, there was one of still greater moment. Not only were the different provinces at war with each other, but also each division was convulsed by internal strife. It could almost be said that every man's hand was against his neighbor's, or rather that noble was pitted against noble. Everything was in a state of chaos. Unity, without which a nation can do nothing, was nowhere to be found in the Spanish peninsula. Kings were no more than figureheads of their respective provinces, oft-times having less authority than many of their nobles. It was from such a state of things and from such a people that Isabella was compelled to draw forth the Spanish nation and place it on a firm foundation for her successors, and, we believe, had it not been for her Spain would never have gained even the distinction she did. Prescott, in comparing her with Elizabeth, her illustrious namesake, well remarks, that when the Virgin Queen took hold of English affairs, she found the materials already sorted and sifted, and a good foundation upon which to erect the British government; whereas Isabella was compelled to select and gather together all the materials for

her structure from the haughtiest and most unmanageable relics of the Feudal System, which required vastly more labor, a far milder and more winning disposition, yet as determined a character as that of Elizabeth.

From this heterogeneous and discordant mass she, together with her illustrious husband Ferdinand, soon collected a respectable army, and drove the Moor from one stronghold to another until he took refuge in the desert wastes of Africa. The armies of Spain, under the guiding hand of Isabella, were everywhere victorious. The whole peninsula was recovered. Northern Africa and almost all Italy were brought under Spanish rule. Isabella, while besieging the Moorish stronghold, Granada, by a personal sacrifice in pledging her jewels, raised the means whereby the American continent was discovered, and from that day the wealth of the new world began to flow into her coffers. The Spanish nation then reached its zenith. With a treasury full to overflowing, a magnificent country, by the discovery of Columbus an outlet for her surplus population, and above all a guiding hand at the helm which scarcely ever erred, Spain was then in a more prosperous condition than any other nation of the world. Had the counsels of Isabella been followed, and had good rulers risen up, Spain to-day would probably be leading the world, instead of being convulsed by internal strife and scarcely able to maintain her existence.

Isabella was looked upon by all her subjects as almost divine. They would brave any danger, even wade through seas of blood, for the sake of their lovely ruler, and indeed she well deserved all the loyalty and respect they could bestow. She was not, as most rulers, unable to place herself on a level with her subjects and yet be absolute mistress. One day she might be found encased in a coat of arms, riding boldly at the head of her troops, thus stimulating them to far greater exertion than they would otherwise