

THE KING OF SPAIN ATTAINS HIS MAJORITY.

BY S. L. BENSUSAN.

WHILE Great Britain and her Colonies are busy putting the finishing touches to Coronation preparations, Alfonso XIII. of Spain steps with comparatively little ceremony into the complete possession of his high estate. Born on the 17th May, 1886, posthumous son of Alfonso XII., the young King attains his constitutional majority on his sixteenth birthday, and succeeds to supreme authority. We in England are curiously ignorant of the nature and growth of the many forces that affect the Spanish throne, of the great struggles that are still being waged, of the possibilities that hang upon their issue. To the few of us who, knowing something of Spain and Spaniards, have a deep affection for country and people, there is a great and abiding interest in Spanish progress, and a very sincere sympathy with the young ruler called upon to battle with difficulties that might well tax the most experienced statesman. Granting that to outward seeming King Alfonso XIII. is secure upon his throne, ruler of a contented people, it must be acknowledged that people who have studied the question see quite another picture. They see a lad whose youth prohibits experience; delicate, or at least not robust in health; crammed with a various learning, and supported by a faithful few; called upon to direct personally the affairs of a country whose inhabitants vary according to district, who are giving allegiance to the most diverse political creeds, who have suffered from oppression in the past, and are bound to remain in suffering for some time to come, because the wounds of civil and foreign wars are not yet healed.

The Spanish throne to which Alfonso XIII. succeeds with undivided authority on the 17th May is supported by the union of the Liberals and Conservatives of Spain against the lessening forces of Carlism and the growing forces of Republicanism and Socialism. Round the throne one sees the Queen Mother, brave, devoted, loyal to her religion and to the country of her adoption; the Duke of Tetuan, tired of politics, but unflinching in his duty towards his King;



Photo by A. Gerber.]

[Las Palmas.

HIS MAJESTY KING ALFONSO XIII.

Praxedes Mateo Sagasta, the "Grand Old Man" of Spanish politics, the one great statesman left to the country. They will pull many of the strings of government, will give office and patronage and preferment to all who can support the *status quo*, and must keep sleepless eye upon the grandiloquent Don Carlos and his more dangerous son, upon the people of the Basque provinces, who hate the Alfonsists and all their works, upon Barcelona, the prosperous capital of the Catalans, whose constant cry is for separation, upon the Army, held in the powerful grasp of General Valeriano Weyler, Marquis of Tenerife, most powerful of all Spain's modern Ministers of War. Spain has suffered so much and so long, that no statesman, however progressive, dares draw hastily into line with modern emancipation. Elections are still a

mockery, jobbery is still rampant, abuses surround the Spaniard on all sides, and yet it would require no common courage to suggest that the present condition, with all

Jews, the bigotry of Spanish kings, and the horrors of the Inquisition, speak wisely of avenging Destiny, of Providence, and of retribution. They are too ready to over-

look the more meritorious part that Spain has played in the world's history; they are unmindful of her discovery of America, of her civilising missions in southern America, of the example she gave to Europe when, defenceless and almost alone, she turned upon the great Napoleon and began the work that the Duke of Wellington consummated at Waterloo. Spain has her long roll of heroes, patriots, statesmen, martyrs to just causes; if her past history holds much that is to be regretted, she has yet paid the full price of her mistakes.

Charles III. was too progressive; he sought to emancipate people who, two generations later, cried in the streets, "Hurrah for chains! Down with liberty!" His son, the weak, amiable Charles IV., suffered Napoleon to overrun Spain, and when the usurper put his brother, Josef Buonaparte, on the throne at Madrid, Charles IV. and his son, "Ferdinand the Desired," worst and basest of all the Spanish Bourbons, went into exile. When Ferdinand VII. was brought back in triumph, he made his subjects suffer more than they had suffered previously. Napoleon's generals had chastised them with whips; "Ferdinand the Desired" chastised them with scorpions. In his reign the revocation of the Succession Law, passed secretly in Charles IV.'s time, was published, and it gave rise, on the birth of his daughter Isabella, to the movement known as Carlism. The folly of rulers, the distractions of Carlism, the rise and brief triumph of Republicanism, the Cuban and American wars, have proved a heavy burden of trouble to the country, and it says something for the people that they have shown a very great power of recuperation. Spain to-day is in a period of convalescence; her great danger is a relapse.



Photo by Valentin.]

[Madrid.

HER MAJESTY MARIA CRISTINA, QUEEN REGENT OF SPAIN.

its abuses, is not better than what its collapse would bring about.

Since Charles III. came from Naples to the throne of Spain, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the country has known nothing but trouble. Moralists, ever ready to recall the expulsion of the Moors and the

rise and brief triumph of Republicanism, the Cuban and American wars, have proved a heavy burden of trouble to the country, and it says something for the people that they have shown a very great power of recuperation. Spain to-day is in a period of convalescence; her great danger is a relapse.

Such relapse may take the form of a Carlist rising or a Republican outbreak; and while, from the stand-points of Legitimists and Progressives, such disturbances would be reasonable enough, they would be in the last degree dangerous to the over-taxed, over-wrought country.

If the ruling power plays at constitutional government, pretending to be Liberal and Conservative in turn, while keeping all the irreconcilable elements excluded from representation, if it keeps up prohibitive taxes and farms the oppressive *octroi* tax, that weighs so heavily upon all poor Spaniards, there is at least this great excuse—the *status quo* must be maintained. A successful Carlist rising would result in a free fight between the priest-ridden Carlists and the freethinking Republicans; similarly, successful Republicanism would bring the Carlists as well as the Alfonsists in arms. Then again, Señor Sagasta has to keep certain prominent Legitimists in peace by refraining from too liberal or anti-clerical legislation, and if no steps of any sort were taken to keep Catholic Clericalism within

bounds, Republicanism and Socialism would spread over a still wider area. To hold the scales with some approach to justice, while doing nothing to offend the Army, which is the one active power of the State, is a task that may well baffle any statesman. Happily for Spain, Señor Sagasta's political experience extends over very many years and embraces several forms of government. He has outlived personal ambition and devotes his great talents to the State. Only once of late years has he had a serious difference with the Queen Regent, and that was when the Infanta Mercedes was affianced to the Count of Caserta, younger brother of the Duke of Calabria, and son of the Carlist Count of Caserta. Señor Sagasta, doubtless cognisant of



THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, MADRID.



THE ROYAL PALACE, MADRID, FROM THE CAMPO MORO.

the risks that must come if King Alfonso XIII. dies childless, and the Infanta has a son, opposed the marriage, and on the fall of the Conservative Cabinet refused to form a Liberal substitute. That is why we saw the Azcarraga Cabinet that preceded



Photo by Fernandez.]

[Madrid.

SEÑOR SAGASTA.
Prime Minister.

Sagasta's. Had persuasion been effective, the Caserta marriage would not have taken place, but the Queen Regent refused to sacrifice her daughter's happiness to any political considerations, and General Weyler supported her

action throughout, making a very short work of the outbreak that was organised for political purposes by certain low-lying Madrileños. Don Carlos has well nigh passed beyond the sphere of active politics; he fulminates ineffectively from his beautiful palace in Venice. Don Jaime, who has served with some distinction in the Russian Army, is, at the time of writing, just convalescent after an exhausting attack of fever. On this account it may be that the threatened Carlist outbreak, arranged to synchronise with King Alfonso's succession, will be indefinitely postponed. Carlists have been full of threats for many years now, but in the hands of Don Carlos the movement has degenerated—to the great benefit of Spain, for it is foolish, and the people it aims to elevate are ill-suited to power. Republicanism, on the other hand, has grown far and wide through Catalonia; the prosperity of its merchants, while making them averse from decisive action, has made them more than ever sensitive to the taxation claims of the central Government. Under the present system of representation, Republicans are excluded as far as is possible from the Cortes, and taxation without due representation is having the inevitable result. Politicians believe and hope that Spain's general prosperity, follow-

ing the civil war and the deadly drain of youth and money that resulted from the Cuban troubles, will act automatically upon the discontent—that people will grow to accept the limitations of the governing system until such time as anomalies may be safely modified. Peace-loving opponents of the Government say that so long as there are loaves and fishes for Liberals and Conservatives to share in turn, reform will be postponed indefinitely; how far they are justified it is not easy to say. A very intimate knowledge of Spanish affairs would be required to justify the expression of a decided opinion.

A consideration of the political relations between Great Britain and Spain must ever be full of interest while the integrity of Morocco is maintained and we continue to possess Gibraltar, "a post temporarily in the occupation of Great Britain," as Spanish State documents describe it. Alliances are in the air; "splendid isolation" is as dead as the Corn Laws. Consequently, we are justified in looking round Europe and considering the groupings and arrangements of forces that may come with the next few years, particularly in countries possessing a great Mediterranean interest. With Portugal this country has established very friendly relations during the past few years, while our developments with Spain were checked by the Spanish-American war and one of our most prominent statesmen's public reference to "dying nations." In Spain, among people of education and attainments, I have found a considerable uneasiness occasioned by the friendly relations between Great Britain and Portugal, and a feeling that the latter country would be encouraged to manifest her ill-will to Spain. This feeling has undoubtedly been developed by a certain section of the Portuguese public, though it appears to have little enough foundation in fact. The Alfonsist ministers of Spain, Liberal or Conservative, are very well disposed towards Great Britain. Carlists and Republicans are not. The reasons are simple enough. The present Spanish Government desires the preservation of the Mediterranean balance of power, and if Spain cannot possess Morocco, she desires that unique corner of Africa to maintain its independence, and not to fall into the hands of France or any other first-class Power, whose fortifications along the Mediterranean shore would be a standing menace to Spain.

Great Britain's interests in Morocco are identical with those of Spain. The aim of

our politicians has been to help Morocco to help herself rather than to precipitate the partition that other Powers desire. Some substantial progress has been made lately in the direction of this accomplishment, and certain definite reforms are in progress. It is an open secret that Spain, bereft of her colonies, centres all her hopes of conquest upon Morocco, and, recognising that the time has not yet arrived for military adventure, is delighted to see Morocco left in peace. Here, then, is the chief ground for friendliness between the Alfonsist Government and Great Britain. The Republicans, on the other hand, look to France. Catalonia has cried



SEÑOR GONZALEZ.

SAGASTA'S CABINET: THE MARQUIS VILLANEUVA
Minister of Agriculture and Public Works.

aloud for a union with her northern neighbours, and would welcome it at any price as a relief from the heavy impositions of the Spanish Government. Neither Republicans nor Socialists have sympathy with Spanish dreams of Empire, and French designs in northern Africa would leave them unmoved. Consequently a Republican Government in Spain would be a serious menace to this country. Less capable but equally hostile, a Carlist Government would be at the beck and call of Rome and would welcome any action dictated by the Church that was prejudicial to British interests. Short of establishing the Holy Inquisition once again, Don Carlos would stop at nothing to reaffirm the temporal power of the Pope. He has said as much in a manifesto. The situation, thus reduced to its simplest form, leads the unprejudiced observer to believe that on the maintenance of the Alfonsist Government depend the development and maintenance of the Anglo-Spanish *entente*, although it is undeniable that the Republicans and their relations

labour under many and serious disadvantages that call for sympathy from liberal people. Alfonso XIII. has a rare chance of improving Anglo-Spanish relations, and it is not unlikely that he will take it. He has a very complete knowledge of the English language and is well disposed towards this country.

We shall be asked in these days, what manner of man or boy is Alfonso XIII., who is called upon to do so much? And in reply many contradictory statements will be made by people who are not properly qualified to express any opinion. Every sovereign's character is guarded jealously, and though we read of the fierce light that beats upon the throne, it may be suggested that the light is so fierce that it dazzles the eyes; we look and see a blaze, nothing more. Yet from people in the King's immediate circle it is possible to obtain replies to questions that may be asked and answered without impropriety. I have been assured on excellent authority that King Alfonso is a hard-working, highly talented lad, with great linguistic accomplishments and a very considerable acquaintance with military matters. For one so young his military knowledge and his interest in the Army are quite surprising. He has the delicate expression and slender

frame that are common to so many princes of the House of Hapsburg, but I have been assured that he is not nearly so delicate as he appears to be, and that down to the present he has manifested none of the symptoms of the trouble that carried his gallant father from throne to grave in his twenty-eighth year.

A very careful training, a knowledge of the difficulties surrounding the throne, and the assistance of the best and most enlightened minds in the country are the points in his

favour. Against these one has to set the statement that the young King is inclined to believe in his divine rights and to take the reins of government rather too eagerly. He is charged with the possession of enthusiasm, a dangerous gift for a lad called upon to

exercise authority over one of the Latin peoples, possessors of the most sanguine temperaments and the most florid eloquence, the quickest passions, and the slowest critical faculty. There is no big part for him to play—at least, there is no big part in the



Photo by Fernandez.] [Madrid.
DUKE OF ALMODOVAR DEL RIO.
Minister for Foreign Affairs.

ordinarily accepted sense of the term. To lighten taxation, consolidate trade interests, coerce Carlism, reconcile the Catalans, organise the Navy, control the Army, these are the tasks that lie before him, and, greater than all of them, the maintenance of peace. Recalling the years when Spain was sending her blood and treasure to Cuba to wage a war whose full extent America has since had occasion to realise, one sees signs of a growing prosperity that bids fair to heal many a grievance automatically. The trade in big towns has gone ahead, developments are proceeding apace in the country, and Spain is finding herself possessed of many resources hitherto unsuspected. This is particularly the case in regard to minerals, whose presence in paying quantities is rapidly transforming certain districts hitherto undeveloped. Many of these districts are worked by British enterprise, and need nothing more than capital for their profitable development. So soon as there is full security for commercial enterprise there will be no lack of money. It will be noticed that many of the best city improvements, such as electric lighting, tramways, etc., are organised by foreigners in Spain, and if the profits go to alien shareholders, the benefits at least are enjoyed by the natives and are calculated to



Photo by Fernandez.] [Madrid.
SAGASTA'S CABINET: SEÑOR MORET.
Minister of the Interior.

stimulate a healthy discontent in cities where no progress is visible at present. Foreign initiative was absolutely necessary. I remember



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[Madrid.

GENERAL WEYLER, MARQUIS OF
TENERIFFE.
Minister of War.

meeting a young German engineer in Seville some seven years ago. He told me he was organising electric trams for the city. Natives assured me that they preferred their tumbled, dirty cars, drawn by the broken-down horses whose appearance in the bull-ring was only a few months away. "We want no electric cars,"

they said. A few months ago in Seville I had to look very carefully to find a horse-tram anywhere. Decent electric cars served every point of the city and were abundantly patronised. The good folk of Seville now laugh at the cities where electric traction is still unpractised; they have quite forgotten their own earlier sentiments and do not even care to be reminded of them.

In these directions, then, we must look for Spanish progress under King Alfonso XIII. Commercial and industrial progress are the desiderata, internal tranquillity, and a more complete recovery from civil and external war. A reformed currency and a reduced taxation are other important points that cry aloud for consideration. Will Alfonso XIII. be content to labour for these achievements? Will he be content to rely for his fame and reputation upon work that scarcely echoes outside the place of its accomplishment? He who can answer this question can speak with authority of the future of Spain. Devotion, concentration, self-repression will spell prosperity; ambition, impatience, recklessness will give renewed life to Carlism, fresh strength to Republicanism, and an extended period to general unrest. So much is certain, and the rest is on the knees of the gods.



THE WAR OFFICE, MADRID.