

no redress to be obtained if the law did not express their views, nor could any remonstrance be presented by that body until their next session, usually three years later. The practice established by Charles the Fifth, of postponing the presenting of petitions till the supplies had been voted, and the immediate adjournment of the legislature afterwards, secured an absolute authority to the princes of the house of Austria, that made a fearful change in the ancient constitution of Castile.

Yet the meetings of the cortes, shorn as that body was of its ancient privileges, were not without important benefits to the nation. None could be better acquainted than the deputies with the actual wants and wishes of their constituents. It was a manifest advantage for the king to receive this information. It enabled him to take the course best suited to the interests of the people, to which he would naturally be inclined when he did not regard them as conflicting with his own. Even when he did, the strenuous support of their own views by the commons might compel him to modify his measures. However absolute the monarch, he would naturally shrink from pursuing a policy so odious to the people that, if persevered in, it might convert remonstrance into downright resistance.

The freedom of discussion among the deputies is attested by the independent tone with which in their petitions they denounce the manifold abuses in the state. It is honorable to Philip that he should not have attempted to stifle this freedom of debate; though perhaps this may be more correctly referred to his policy, which made him willing to leave this safety-