

were indeed great,—far beyond the reach of any financial skill of his ministers to remove. His various expedients for relieving himself from the burden, which, as he truly said, was becoming heavier every day, form a curious chapter in the history of finance. But we have not yet reached the period at which they can be most effectively presented to the reader.

The commons strongly urged the king to complete the great work he had early undertaken, of embodying in one code the municipal law of Castile.⁵⁵ They gave careful attention to the administration of justice, showed their desire for the reform of various abuses, especially for quickening the despatch of business, proverbially slow in Spain, and, in short, for relieving suitors as far as possible from the manifold vexations to which they were daily exposed in the tribunals. With a wise liberality, they recommended that, in order to secure the services of competent persons in judicial offices, their salaries—in many cases wholly inadequate—should be greatly increased.⁵⁶

The cortes watched with a truly parental care over the great interests of the state,—its commerce, its husbandry, and its manufactures. They raised a loud, and, as it would seem, not an ineffectual, note of remonstrance against the tyrannical practice of the crown in seizing for its own use the bullion which, as elsewhere stated, had been imported from the New World on their own account by the merchants of Seville.

Some of the petitions of the cortes show what would be thought at the present day a strange ignorance of the

⁵⁵ Cortes of Valladolid of 1558, pet. 12.

⁵⁶ Lafuente, *Historia de España*, tom. xiii. p. 125.