

lous immobility of expression, and could listen absolutely unmoved to the news of the glorious victory at Lepants and of the irretrievable disaster of the Armada. In his short hours of leisure Philip was a kind husband and fond father. Of the sincerity and depth of his piety there can be no doubt. He had very considerable powers of mind, a strong sense of justice (except where his absolute authority was at stake), and worked ceaselessly at the business of governing. He very rarely found fault with his ministers, so rarely that when he did, the reproof proved too much for the delinquent who usually died of a broken heart the same day—there are certainly three or four prominent instances of this occurrence. Yet Philip failed ignominiously.

### System of Philip II

Much of the blame for this ignominious failure must be laid on Philip's method of government. He developed to a fatal degree that system of centralization which was in the long run to choke Spanish administration. From all parts of his dominions, viceroys, governors, ministers and spies sent their contribution of papers to Madrid. Everything came under the eyes of the king, who toiled early and late at his work in his cabinet at the Escorial, his stately palace on the heights outside Madrid. And here comes into play that utter lack of any sense of proportion that was the curse of Philip's manifold activities. He would keep ambassadors waiting and important despatches unanswered while he spent hours in deciding on the wording of a sentence or on the details of a religious procession. Though Spain produced many men of first-class ability in his reign, Philip regarded all of them with veiled suspicion, gave his full confidence to none of them, and in the end broke their spirits by his monumental slowness. Nothing could be done without his express sanction; his ambassadors and generals alike must sink their independent judgment and let slip many a golden opportunity because they cannot get definite instructions from Philip in time to be of use.

### The Domestic Policy of Philip II Spain

#### (a) Political—

We have already seen that the political unity of Spain had been achieved by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella and the re-conquest of Granada by Ferdinand. The wily Ferdinand also introduced a series of measures which aimed at increasing the power of the crown at the expense of the nobles, towns and church. His efforts in this direction met with very considerable success, and his policy was further developed by Philip II. For centuries representative institutions, called the Cortes, had existed in Spain, drawn from the nobles, clergy and towns. But the Cortes had never any legislative power and Philip ceased to keep up the pretence of consulting them in issuing his laws. The sole function of the Cortes was to grant money; and, since the nobles and clergy (being exempt from taxation) had no vote, the power to grant taxes was vested in the representatives of the towns. Owing to the widespread indifference of the Spanish citizens, only 18 towns sent representatives, and even these were appointed by the town councils and paid by the crown; certainly they were in no position to act as a check on the royal power. In financial matters Philip established the rule that, until new taxes had been granted, the old should be considered as having been granted forever and as forming the fixed revenue of the crown. The nobles were excluded from all share in the administration which was in the hands of boards (*juntas*) of lawyers and men of the middle class. On one occasion (in 1588) the feudal nobles of Aragon supported one of Philip's ministers, who had escaped to Aragon from prison, and claimed the right to be tried in the courts of that province. The nobles were in this action defending an ancient legal right of their province. Philip said nothing about taking away their privilege, but he inflicted so fierce a punishment on the ringleaders of the movement that this right was never again made use of in his reign.