It would seem, at the present moment, when all eyes rest upon the “Spanish Question,” peculiarly appropriate to devote some space to a short history of the ex-sovereign whose “counterfeit presentment” is given with this article.

To make a proper commencement to this account of the ex-Queen’s life, it will be necessary to turn our steps backward to ascertain her origin. In the year 1813, Ferdinand VII., reputed son of Charles IV., ascended the Spanish throne. His first wife was his cousin Maria, a princess of Naples. After five years of wedded misery, this amiable princess died — poisoned, it was asserted, by her husband. After remaining a widower eight years, he took for his second wife his own niece, daughter of the King of Portugal, who, fortunately for herself, died after a year, childless. A few months after her death, Ferdinand, unable to remain single, married Maria Josephine Amelia, niece of the Elector of Saxony. For ten years this unfortunate lady endured her beastly husband, and then sank childless into the welcome grave.

Ferdinand was now forty-five years of age, a miserable, worn-out debauchee. His great anxiety was that he would probably die childless, and the sceptre would be passed into the hands of his hated brother Carlos.

He therefore sought out a fourth bride — Christina, a daughter of the King of Naples. She was a giddy girl, twenty years of age, without conscience. It having been found that this union would probably prove childless like the former ones, it is reported that the ministers of Ferdinand suggested to Christina that a law higher than the claims of ordinary morality required that she produce an heir to the throne.

It would appear that Christina readily acceded to this advice, for she at once adopted as her favorite a private of the King’s guard, Munuz, by the name, the son of a tobacconist of Madrid. The King’s friends exulted greatly, while the Carlists were in the depths of despair, when it was announced that the Queen was in an interesting condition. At this time there existed a law excluding females from the Spanish throne. In a moment of weakness the old King was influenced by his father confessor and the Queen to promulgate an edict transmitting the throne to females as well as males. At length, on the 10th of October, 1830, a daughter was born, Isabella, the present ex-Queen of Spain. Carlos and his friends were determined to deluge Spain with blood rather than submit to this child, soon to be their sovereign. Christina, in the mean time, had been appointed regent, and had raised an army to put down the Carlist party. In a short time she again became a mother, a daughter being born named Louisa. When Isabella was only three years of age, Ferdinand assembled the Cortes to take their oath of
allegiance to her. They assembled June 30th, 1833, and the festival was one of barbaric grandeur. Shortly after this the old King died, and Isabella was proclaimed Queen, Christina, her mother, being regent. Year after year the land was deluged with blood, and everything in the country was neglected. At length it became necessary to find a husband for the Queen, and after much persuasion and violence, even, it is said, she consented to accept Francisco, a son of her father’s brother, an imbecile, worthless young man. It is said the Court of France urged this marriage from state reasons, as they desired Louisa, wife of Montpensier, to ascend the throne of Spain. Not a year had passed, when all Europe had heard of the quarrels of Isabella with her husband, and it was stated that a divorce was thought of on account of Francisco’s well known physical incompetency. It is not to be wondered at that Isabella, reared as she had been, should develop a repulsive character, and, imitating her mother and grandmother, gain for her Court the reputation of the most corrupt in Europe. Isabella has had several children. In 1850 she gave birth to a son, who died almost immediately. A year after, Maria Isabella, wife of Count Girgenti, was born, and she has also a son living, Alfonso, eleven years of age. Without possessing the mental attributes of the Russian Messalina, Catharine, her passions have carried her farther, and her pursuit of dissolute pleasure has been systematic and unblushing.

Marfori, her best favorite, is described as a man of low origin, but pleasing manners. Many of my readers will remember that some years ago the American Minister of Madrid was supposed to be particularly favored, and a duel was the consequence.

Isabella is now living in Paris, surrounded by every luxury, and no doubt enjoys herself better than when at Madrid, oppressed by the cares of state. With commendable foresight, some years ago she purchased a large estate near Williamsburgh, Penn., and it may be that she will use it before long, as a retreat for herself and favorites.