
Spain and Portugal, Volume 1

Dunham Samuel Astley

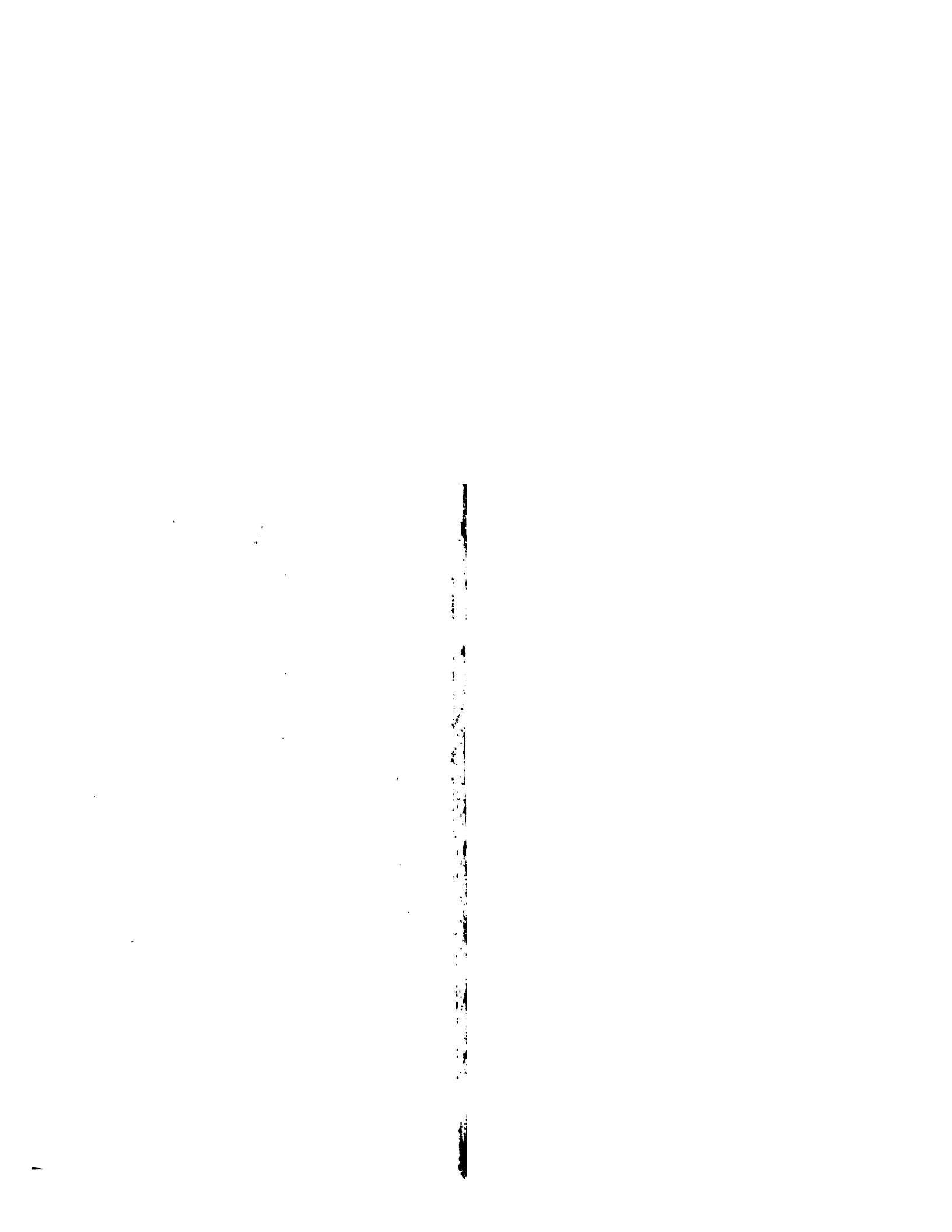
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THE HISTORY OF
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Vol. I.



H. B. Woodcut.

E. F. Pinckney sculp.

Maza shrinks with horror on beholding the head of his son.

p. 179

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PREFACE.

THE present is an attempt — the first that has been made in our language — to compose, from the interminable mass of original authorities, a general history of the Spanish and Portuguese Peninsula.

That such an attempt has not been made before now, will surprise no one fully aware of the difficulties attending it. Even with the advantages of a long and intimate acquaintance with Spain, — an acquaintance not merely literary, but personal; not confined to one city, but extending over a great part of the country, — we could not foresee their precise extent. The number of authorities, many of great rarity; the trouble and expense of procuring them; the labour of forming a clear and connected narrative from materials generally confused, often obscure and contradictory; above all, the more than Egyptian darkness which at every period involves the political, civil, and ecclesiastical institutions, no less than the social condition, of the Peninsula — subjects, however interesting and important, unaccountably neglected by the national historians — are obstacles formidable enough to intimidate the most resolute student. Could any thing short of actual experience have shown them in their true magnitude, we should

assuredly have recoiled from the present task. It is now executed — in what manner remains for the public to decide.

In stating these difficulties, we do not wish either to claim merit for diligent research, or to disarm criticism. We have sometimes spoken strongly of others, and we cannot reasonably object to the same treatment in return. We can only expect that the critics who may honour this compendium with their notice, will exhibit the same impartiality, and use the same diligence towards forming a correct opinion, as, we hope, have guided us.

In the arrangement adopted in regard to the co-existing kingdoms during the Mohammedan domination — their histories being here written *consecutively* instead of *simultaneously* — we have aimed at greater perspicuity than could be attained by the usual method. Hitherto, by relating the events of all in chronological order, and by being compelled to pass continually from one sovereignty to another, historians have confounded events and persons, so that no attention in the reader, however undivided and painful, could follow the chain of each particular history. Let any one peruse a single book of Morales, Mariana, Ferreras, or Masdeu, and he will find that, unless he form an abstract as he proceeds of the general history, classing the transactions of each kingdom under their proper head, his memory will retain no distinct impression; nothing will remain in his mind but a mass of confusion, — a poor return for his toil.

In this separate arrangement, the first place has been assigned to the Mohammedan sovereignty, —