



ROYAL JOUST Tournaments remained a form of display and entertainment well into the seventeenth century. In this encounter at Westminster in 1511, Henry VIII jousts before Catherine of Aragon to celebrate the birth of their son Henry. The young prince died ten days later. Though kings usually did well in tournaments, accidents were possible. Henry himself had a narrow escape in March 1524 when jousting with his visor open, and in 1559 Henry II of France was killed in a tournament when his opponent's lance splintered.

foreign affairs remained something of a family matter right up until 1918. Henry's wife was Spanish, his eldest sister Margaret had been married to James IV of Scotland since 1503, and his other sister Mary married Louis XII of France in 1514. Marriage alliances were an essential arm of diplomacy, even if they rarely produced the benefits expected of them.

Henry's early decision to marry Catherine may have been prompted, to some extent, by strategic considerations. All commentators stress, at the outset of his reign, Henry's antagonism towards the French and his ambition to rekindle the glories of Henry V. A Spanish marriage could be the foundation for a firm understanding with his father-in-law, Ferdinand of Aragon. The pleasant task of dismembering France could then begin.

In fact, Henry's first taste of diplomacy and warfare was humiliating and highly educative. Ferdinand was persuaded to fall in with Henry's plans with gratifying ease. A joint Anglo-Spanish force was to invade France from the south and reconquer Gascony and Aquitaine for England. In the summer of 1512 a very large English army was duly landed in northern Spain and waited only the signal from Ferdinand to attack. It did not come. Ferdinand merely made use of the presence of English troops to protect his flank in an occupation of the independent kingdom of Navarre. Struck down by heavy rain, dysentery, and shortage of beer, Henry's troops mutinied. Ferdinand then complained bitterly to