

the Escorial,—so many paintings and sculptures by the greatest masters,—so many articles of exquisite workmanship, composed of the most precious materials. It would be a mistake to suppose that when the building was finished the labors of Philip were at an end. One might almost say they were but begun. The casket was completed; but the remainder of his days was to be passed in filling it with the rarest and richest gems. This was a labor never to be completed. It was to be bequeathed to his successors, who, with more or less taste, but with the revenues of the Indies at their disposal, continued to lavish them on the embellishment of the Escorial.³²

Philip the Second set the example. He omitted nothing which could give a value, real or imaginary, to his museum. He gathered at an immense cost several hundred cases of the bones of saints and martyrs, depositing them in rich silver shrines of elaborate workmanship. He collected four thousand volumes, in various languages, especially the Oriental, as the basis of the fine library of the Escorial.

The care of successive princes, who continued to

³² The enthusiasm of Fray Alonso de San Geronimo carries him so far that he does not hesitate to declare that the Almighty owes a debt of gratitude to Philip the Second for the dedication of so glorious a structure to the Christian worship! "Este Templo, Señor, deve á Filipino Segundo vuestra Grandeza; con que gratitud le estará mirando, en el Impireo, vuestra Divinidad!"—This language, so near akin to blasphemy as it would be thought in our day, occurs in a panegyric delivered at the Escorial on the occasion of a solemn festival in honor of the hundredth anniversary of its foundation. A volume compiled by Fray Luis de Santa Maria is filled with a particular account of the ceremonies, under the title of "Octava sagradamente culta, celebrada en la Octava Maravilla," etc. (Madrid, 1664, folio).