

workmen, who toiled as if conscious they were under the eye of their sovereign. The tower trembled under the fury of the flames; and the upper portion of it threatened every moment to fall in ruins. Great fears were entertained that it would crush the hospital, situated in that part of the monastery. Fortunately, it fell in an opposite direction, carrying with it a splendid chime of bells that was lodged in it, but doing no injury to the spectators. The loss which bore most heavily on the royal heart was that of sundry inestimable relics which perished in the flames. But Philip's sorrow was mitigated when he learned that a bit of the true cross, and the right arm of St. Lawrence, the martyred patron of the Escorial, were rescued from the flames. At length, by incredible efforts, the fire, which had lasted till six in the morning, was happily extinguished, and Philip withdrew to his chamber, where his first act, we are told, was to return thanks to the Almighty for the preservation of the building consecrated to his service.²⁴

The king was desirous that as many of the materials as possible for the structure should be collected from his own dominions. These were so vast, and so various in their productions, that they furnished nearly every article required for the construction of the edifice, as well as for its interior decoration. The gray stone of which its walls were formed was drawn from a neighboring quarry. It was called *berroqueña*,—a stone bearing a resemblance to granite, though not so hard. The blocks hewn from the quarries, and dressed there,

²⁴ *Memorias de Fray Juan de San Geronimo, Documentos inéditos*, tom. vii. p. 201.