

these occasions an accident occurred which had nearly been attended with most disastrous consequences to the building.

A violent thunder-storm was raging in the mountains, and the lightning struck one of the great towers of the monastery. In a short time the upper portion of the building was in a blaze. So much of it, fortunately, was of solid materials that the fire made slow progress. But the difficulty of bringing water to bear on it was extreme. It was eleven o'clock at night when the fire broke out, and in the orderly household of Philip all had retired to rest. They were soon roused by the noise. The king took his station on the opposite tower, and watched with deep anxiety the progress of the flames. The duke of Alva was one among the guests. Though sorely afflicted with the gout at the time, he wrapped his dressing-gown about him and climbed to a spot which afforded a still nearer view of the conflagration. Here the "good duke" at once assumed the command, and gave his orders with as much promptness and decision as on the field of battle.²³

All the workmen, as well as the neighboring peasantry, were assembled there. The men showed the same spirit of subordination which they had shown throughout the erection of the building. The duke's orders were implicitly obeyed; and more than one instance is recorded of daring self-devotion among the

²³ "El buen Duque de Alba, aunque su vejez y gota no le daban lugar, se subió á lo alto de la torre á dar ánimo y esfuerzo á los oficiales y gente; . . . y esto lo hacia S. E. como diestro capitan y como quien se habia visto en otros mayores peligros en la guerra." *Memorias de Fray Juan de San Geronimo, Documentos inéditos*, tom. vii. p. 197.