

worship than their old weather-beaten hovel; and with this he combined a comfortable apartment for himself. In these new quarters he passed still more of his time in cloistered seclusion than he had done before. Far from confining his attention to a supervision of the Escorial, he brought his secretaries and his papers along with him, read here his despatches from abroad, and kept up a busy correspondence with all parts of his dominions. He did four times the amount of work here, says a Jeronymite, that he did in the same number of days in the capital.²² He used to boast that, thus hidden from the world, with a little bit of paper, he ruled over both hemispheres. That he did not always wisely rule is proved by more than one of his despatches relating to the affairs of Flanders, which issued from this consecrated place. Here he received accounts of the proceedings of his heretic subjects in the Netherlands, and of the Morisco insurgents in Granada. And as he pondered on their demolition of church and convent, and their desecration of the most holy symbols of the Catholic faith, he doubtless felt a proud satisfaction in proving his own piety to the world by the erection of the most sumptuous edifice ever dedicated to the Cross.

In 1577 the Escorial was so far advanced towards completion as to afford accommodations not merely for Philip and his personal attendants, but for many of the court, who were in the habit of spending some time there with the king during the summer. On one of

²² "Sabese de cierto que se negociava aqui mas en un dia que en Madrid en quatro." Siguença, *Hist. de la Orden de San Geronimo*, tom. iii. p. 575.