

life ; it reflects in a peculiar manner his tastes and the austere character of his mind ; and, whatever criticism may be passed on it as a work of art, it cannot be denied that, if every other vestige of his reign were to be swept away, that wonderful structure would of itself suffice to show the grandeur of his plans and the extent of his resources.

The common tradition that Philip built the Escorial in pursuance of a vow which he made at the time of the great battle of St. Quentin, the tenth of August, 1557, has been rejected by modern critics, on the ground that contemporary writers, and among them the historians of the convent, make no mention of the fact. But a recently discovered document leaves little doubt that such a vow was actually made.¹¹ However this may have been, it is certain that the king designed to commemorate the event by this structure, as is intimated by its dedication to St. Lawrence, the martyr on whose day the victory was gained. The name given to the place was *El Sitio de San Lorenzo el Real*. But the monastery was better known from the hamlet near which it stood,—*El Escorial*, or *El Escorial*,—which latter soon became the orthography generally adopted by the Castilians.¹²

¹¹ The document alluded to is a letter, without date or signature, but in the handwriting of the sixteenth century, and purporting to be written by a person intrusted with the task of drafting the necessary legal instruments for the foundation of the convent. He inquires whether in the preamble he shall make mention of his majesty's vow. "*El voto que S. M. hijo, si S. M. no lo quiere poner ni declarar, bien puede, porque no hay para que ; pero si S. M. quisiere que se declare en las escrituras, avísemelo v. m.*" Documentos inéditos, tom. xxviii. p. 567.

¹² Examples equally ancient of both forms of spelling the name may Philip.—VOL. III.—s 35