

would escape from them altogether, by taking refuge in some one of his country places. His favorite retreat was his palace-monastery of the Escorial, then slowly rising under his patronage and affording him an occupation congenial with his taste. He seems, however, to have sought the country not so much from the love of its beauties as for the retreat it afforded him from the town. When in the latter, he rarely showed himself to the public eye, going abroad chiefly in a close carriage, and driving late so as to return to the city after dark.²⁴

Thus he lived in solitude even in the heart of his capital, knowing much less of men from his own observation than from the reports that were made to him. In availing himself of these sources of information he was indefatigable. He caused a statistical survey of Spain to be prepared for his own use. It was a work of immense labor, embracing a vast amount of curious details, such as were rarely brought together in those days.²⁵ He kept his spies at the principal European courts, who furnished him with intelligence; and he was as well acquainted with what was passing in England and in France as if he had resided on the spot. We have seen how well he knew the smallest details of the proceedings in the Netherlands, sometimes even better than Margaret herself. He employed

²⁴ "Quando esce di Palazzo, suole montare in un cocchio coperto di tela incerata, et serrata a modo che non si vede. . . . Suole quando va in villa ritornare la sera per le porte del Parco, senza esser veduto da alcuno." *Relazione di Pigafetta*, MS.

²⁵ Ranke, *Ottoman and Spanish Empires*, p. 32.—Ingliš speaks of seeing this work in the library when he visited the Escorial. Spain in 1830, vol. i. p. 348.