

natural scenery. The vast sweep of barren moor in front of it stretches into the distance in almost endless undulations. A range of hills of noble height and form, dark and savage in the foreground, but as they recede into the distance melting into tender, delicious blue, lie behind it. The snow-clad peaks of the Sierra de Guadarrama stand like so many mighty sentinels along the northern horizon.

Such are the vast proportions of the Escorial that even in this situation, where everything around it is on such a scale as to necessarily dwarf by comparison the mightiest products of human skill and power, it looks massive and imposing. Then the stern and severe simplicity of its architecture, almost entirely without decoration or ornamentation of any kind, is in harmony with the scene, and adds

to its impressiveness.

The original design of Philip II., by whom it was built, was that it might be a magnificent burial-place for the Spanish sovereigns. His plan was, however, afterward so enlarged as to

combine the two ideas of a mausoleum and a palace—a residence for the monarchs while living, and a resting-place for them when dead. Nor was the Church forgotten; this magnificent architectural pile embraced a monastery capable of receiving a number of monks. Of the chapel, one writes as follows:

“Instead of entering it by stately portals, as is usually the case, this sacred edifice is approached from a dark passage. As we emerge from it and stand at the arched entrance, it is impossible to describe the effect produced by its simple majesty. After a while we begin to wonder what it is that has produced this startling impression. There is no ornament of any kind—nothing to interfere with the solemn feeling that one stands in a building consecrated to the worship of the Almighty; there is nothing to diminish the grandeur of the idea. All is solemn and imposing; everything trifling seems banished. One can hardly understand how a Roman Catholic chapel can have preserved such severe simplicity in everything belonging to it.



THE ESCORIAL.