

sympathies for humanity which elsewhere seem to have been denied him. He would linger for hours while he watched the labors of the artist, making occasional criticisms, and laying his hand familiarly on his shoulder.²⁷ He seemed to put off the coldness and reserve which formed so essential a part of his character. On one occasion, it is said, a stranger, having come into the Escorial when the king was there, mistook him for one of the officials, and asked him some questions about the pictures. Philip, without undeceiving the man, humored his mistake, and good-naturedly undertook the part of *cicerone*, by answering his inquiries and showing him some of the objects most worth seeing.²⁸ Similar anecdotes have been told of others. What is strange is that Philip should have acted the part of the good-natured man.

In 1584 the masonry of the Escorial was completed. Twenty-one years had elapsed since the first stone of the monastery was laid. This certainly must be regarded as a short period for the erection of so stupendous a pile. St. Peter's church, with which one naturally compares it as the building nearest in size and magnificence, occupied more than a century in its erection, which spread over the reigns of at least eighteen popes. But the Escorial, with the exception of the subterraneous chapel constructed by Philip the Fourth for the burial-place of the Spanish princes, was executed in the reign of one monarch. That monarch held in his hands the revenues of both the Old World and the New; and, as he gave in some sort a personal

²⁷ Stirling, *Annals of the Artists of Spain*, tom. i. p. 203.

²⁸ *Dichos y Hechos de Phelipe II.*, p. 81.