

CHAPTER IV
ORGANIZATION OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL
1603-1645

IN THE earlier part of the seventeenth century the government of England was in normal times vested mostly in the king. He appointed the principal officials, dealt with foreign affairs and with questions of war and peace, he was possessed of the executive and administrative functions, and had much control of the legislative and judicial functions or else large share in such work. The historian has had much to say about parliament in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but, so far as ordinary and non-revolutionary years are concerned, it must always be remembered that in writing of parliament for this period for the most part he recounts the history of what was later on to be the important part of the government of England rather than what had supremacy then. It was not until the Puritan Civil Wars and the period of the Interregnum (1642-60) that the king's power was seriously shaken. Afterwards it was largely restored and in most respects it had supremacy again. Then it was not seriously curtailed until the Revolution of 1688. For a hundred years after that time, while it constantly diminished, and in the hands of uninterested foreigners at times sank very low, it was at various intervals the principal effective power in the state, and it long continued to be far more potent than some have seen well to believe.

During all this time the royal power—as is necessary with a government ruling any considerable number of people—was actually wielded by the king's subordinates

and assistants. The more important of them were the king's counsellors concerning matters upon which he sought for advice, his helpers in executing what was resolved upon, and generally the principal agents and factors in administration. Collectively they were well recognized as his privy council. Government was, indeed, mostly in the power and prerogative of the king. In the handling of his more secret and important affairs there was and long had been—a tendency for the monarch to deal with a small number of his councillors only. None the less it was generally understood that the privy council ruled England under the king, and that its members formed one of the most effective bodies anywhere in the world.

“These Lords of the Council behave like so many kings,” said the Venetian ambassador Scaramelli just before the beginning of the reign of James I.¹ “Wee doe repose so greate Confidence in you, with a representative Power in our absence,” declared James himself a little later, departing on a journey for recreation and rest.² In 1607 Nicoló Molin reported to the Venetian authorities that in the privy council of England were handled innumerable matters, not only affairs of state but business pertaining to individuals, finance and punishments, so that there was no one who did not sooner or later have to deal with this body, whence all strove to win the favor and the protection of some of the council.³ In 1613 the Prince Palatine, then in England, feasted all the members of the privy council.⁴ That year Gondomar wrote to his master that the privy council was the only such body in England; in the privy council all matters were dealt with. In view

¹ *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian, 1592-1603*, p. 567.

² *State Papers Domestic, James I*, xii, 9 January 1604-5.

³ N. Barozzi and G. Berchet, *Relazioni degli Stati Europei Lette al Senato dagli Ambasciatori Veneti nel Secolo Decimosettimo* (1856-78), IV, i. 58.

⁴ *S. P. D., James I*, lxxii, 4 February 1612-13.

of the different practice then prevailing in Spain this was, perhaps, the highest tribute to its potency which he could have paid.⁵ Somewhat later he referred to it as the council of state.⁶ "I yesterday attended the Privy Council," wrote a Venetian in 1618, "where I found the principal ministers and Dignitaries of the Kingdom."⁷

"In all monarchies," says Raleigh, writing some time before 1619, "the senate or privy-council is or ought to be composed of persons of great dignity, or men of approved wisdom or understanding."⁸ "It doth appear," he says elsewhere, "that in all commonwealths, be they monarchies, aristocracies, or popular states, the council-privy is most necessary and often used."⁹ In 1623 eight lords of the council were sent from London to Southampton to meet the infanta of Spain, whose arrival was then expected.¹⁰ A little later, when the negotiations for a marriage between Prince Charles and Henriette Marie were lagging, "the french wold haue the .K. and counsaile all sworne to obserue all articles."¹¹

At the beginning of the reign of Charles I, according to Sir John Coke, secretary of state: "The Councill Table is the soueraigne, & superintendent court under His Ma^{tyes} person, and is to dispute de Omni ente, et ciicumque

⁵ Don Diego Sarmiento to the king of Spain, 6 September 1613 (N. S.): Spanish Transcripts (Public Record Office, London), series II, iii. Englishmen themselves at this time were aware that in some other countries, such as France and Spain, government under the king was carried on by several councils. Sir Walter Raleigh noted, not quite correctly, that there were three central councils in France and seven in Spain: *The Cabinet-Council, Works* (Oxford, 1829), viii. 45.

⁶ "Consejo de Estado": Sarmiento to Señor Cardenal Melino, II. v. 120.

⁷ Letter of Piero Contarini, 25 January 1618 (N. S.): Venetian Transcripts (Public Record Office, London), x. 57.

⁸ *Works*, viii. 146.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁰ The account for their expenses totaled £218.14 s.2 d: S. P. D., James I, cxlvi, 6 June 1623.

¹¹ John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, 26 February 1624-5: S. P. D., James I, clxxxiv.

Rei proposito respondere, watching ouer the boddie of the state, and the partes, and is a maruellous satisfaction to People, that haue so open accesse and so honorable hearing in all causes of grieuance, or reliefe, at so high a seate of Justice, and so neere the sacred person of the King." ¹² A little later that year Sir Julius Caesar, master of the rolls and long in the royal service, in a disquisition on the council, wrote: "ffor the gouernement of that bodie politique, every good kinge hath all wayes used at his entrance into his kingdome, to select out of his greate bodie some fewe servants (more or fewer at his owne pleasure) to be privie Counsell^{rs} unto him in a body of a settled private Counsell, to be as watchmen for the p^rserva^on of his Royall person, Alsoe, for the increase & advancement of his Revenues, dignities, Preheminences, & authorities (to w^{ch} they are specially sworne) & for the p^rserva^on of that great bodie of his wholle kingdome from all oppression from a broade, & from all confusion at home." ¹³ "The greatest councill of state," the lord keeper is said to have called it two years later.¹⁴ In 1628 the Venetian ambassador complained of an insult. The King immediately sent three members of the privy council to apologise and to assure the ambassador once more of his regard for the republic and for himself.¹⁵ Foreigners continued to think of it as the English council of state.¹⁶

¹² "The manner & proceedings of the Councell Table": S. P. D., Charles I, viii, undated, assigned to October 1625.

¹³ "Concerninge the private Counsell of the most high and mighty kinge of greate britaine ffrance, Scotland, Ireland": S. P. D., Charles I, viii, 31 October 1625.

¹⁴ *Autobiography of Sir John Bramston, Written about 1688* (Camden Society, xxxii), p. 42.

¹⁵ Despatch of Amerigo Salvetti to the grand duke of Tuscany, 3 April 1628 (N. S.): *H. M. C.*, 11th report, appendix, i. 144.

¹⁶ "Don Francisco de Cottinton del Consejo de Estado de su Magestad de la Gran Bretaña": *Clarendon State Papers* (Oxford, 1767-86), i. 49.

When about 1646 Clarendon was beginning to write of the causes of the civil wars that had brought so much of the old order to disaster, he asserted that monarchy in England never could be sustained save "by a prudent and steady Council attending upon the virtue and vivacity of the king."¹⁷ The privy council, said a legal writer in 1649 is a "a company of choice men according to the King's bent, unto whom the consideration of all the weighty affairs of the Kingdom is committed."¹⁸ A generation later the compiler of a year book, famous in its day, was wont to describe the privy council before he gave account of parliament, declaring that the council was the most important organ in the governance of the state, the *Primum Mobile*, the watchtower of the nation.¹⁹ And long after his successor continued year by year to describe it in like manner.²⁰

During the first half of the seventeenth century, compared with what it afterwards became, the privy council of England was a body small and select. It is not always easy to ascertain exactly the number of members at a particular time. For some years the all-important records, the registers of the council, are lost; in some cases the registers contain no satisfactory lists of the members; and in other cases where lists are prefixed to the body of the register, a particular list will refer to a considerable number of months, so that the names of some members are inserted as new ones were added, while the names of others are struck through as they were dismissed or dropped out—but it is not certain that this was

¹⁷ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion* (Oxford, 1888), i. 261.

¹⁸ Nathaniel Bacon, *An Historical and Political Discourse of the Laws and Government of England*, etc. (London, 1739), p. 201.

¹⁹ Edward Chamberlayne, *Angliæ Notitia: or the Present State of England* (London, 1679), part ii. pp. 1, 2.

²⁰ John Chamberlayne, *Magnæ Britannicæ Notitia*, etc. (London, 1755), p. 83: "The *Primum Mobile* of the Civil Government of England, from whence all the inferior Orbs derive their Motion."

always done with precision and at once. Generally speaking, it may be said that the number increased from thirteen in 1601²¹ to forty-two in 1630,²² from which number it declined to thirty-five in 1640,²³ and that in the confusion of the ensuing distracted years the membership was rapidly changed at the same time that the council fell into abeyance

In the later years of Elizabeth the council had been small. For 1599 there is a list of eleven members; in 1601 it had at least thirteen.²⁴ In the next reign it grew rapidly, though for the first years detailed information is scanty. A fortnight after Elizabeth's death twenty-six names were appended to a council proclamation.²⁵ At the first meeting of the council under James, 25 April 1603, eleven assembled in the palace at Whitehall, by the king's command, to consider the right of certain others to be privy councillors. Two more were at once admitted; and a few days after in the king's presence at the court at Theobalds was held a council of fifteen.²⁶ A little later it was resolved that the council should consist of not more than twenty-four.²⁷ In 1607 the Venetian ambassador reported that the council contained twenty-five, of whom four were Scots, though the number was indeterminate depending entirely upon the will of the king; and a little later Gondomar reported that the membership was twenty-four, of whom four were Scots.²⁸

During the reign of James the numbers were, so far as the author has been able to ascertain them, approximately the following, respectively at the various times:

²¹ Additional MS., 11402, fo. 84.

²² Privy Council Register, xl. 1, 2.

²³ *Ibid.*, liii. 5.

²⁴ Add. MS. 11402, ff. 72, 84.

²⁵ S. P. D., James I, lxxiii, 8 April 1603.

²⁶ Add. MS. 11402, fos. 87, 88.

²⁷ S. P. D., James I, i, 10 May 1603.

²⁸ Nicoló Molin, *Relazioni degli Stati Europei*, IV. i. 57; letter to the king of Spain, 6 September 1613 (N. S.): Spanish Transcripts II. liii.

1605	16-20 ²⁹
1610	19-20 ³⁰
1613	22 ³¹
1615	22 ³²
1617	28-32 ³³
1618	27 ³⁴
1621	28-33 ³⁵
1623	35 ³⁶

“The counsaile increases still,” wrote John Camberlain, the well-informed correspondent of Sir Dudley Carleton, in 1622; ³⁷ but it may be said that an undated list of councillors, assigned to 1624, gives the number as twenty. ³⁸

The privy council contained the principal officers of state and of the king’s household and such others as convenience, service, or pleasure caused him to add. In 1605 the members of the privy council appear to have been

- The archbishop of Canterbury
- lord chancellor
- lord high treasurer
- duke of Lenox
- lord high admiral
- lord chamberlain
- earl of Northumberland
- earl of Shrewsbury
- master of the horse
- earl of Northampton
- earl of Salisbury

²⁹ According to S. P. D., James I, xiii, April 1605, the number was apparently sixteen: but a copy of an alleged list from the beginning of the lost register for this period embodied in Add. MS. 11402. fo. 99 gives twenty-five, of whom five are marked “mort”.

³⁰ S. P. D., James I, lviii, 27 December 1610.

³¹ P. C. R., xxvii. 1.

³² *Ibid.*, xxix. 1.

³³ P. C. R., xxxi. 5.

³⁴ S. P. D., James I, cxxxii, 1 July 1622.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xx :iii. 1 A.

³⁶ S. P. D., James I, civ. 82.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xxxii. 1, 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, clxxx. 105.

earl of Exeter
 earl of Mar
 Lord Zouche
 Lord Knolles
 Lord Wotton
 Lord Stanhope
 lord of Berwick
 Lord Bruce
 Sir John Herbert

and with these members five more had been associated until their deaths:

The earl of Cumberland
 earl of Devonshire
 lord secretary of Scotland
 lord chief justice
 Sir John Fortescue ³⁹

In 1613 the privy council consisted of ⁴⁰

The archbishop of Canterbury
 lord chancellor Lord Ellesmere
 keeper of the privy seal earl of Northampton
 duke of Lenox
 lord high admiral earl of Nottingham
 lord chamberlain of the
 king's household earl of Suffolk
 earl of Shrewsbury
 master of the horse earl of Worcester
 earl of Pembroke
 earl of Exeter
 earl or Mar
 lord chancellor of Scotland earl of Drumfermline
 Viscount Rochester
 Viscount Fenton
 Lord Zouche
 treasurer of the king's
 household Lord Knolles

³⁹ Add. MS. 11402, fo. 99.

⁴⁰ P. C. R., xxvii. 1.

comptroller of the king's household	Lord Wotton
vice chamberlain and treasurer of the king's chamber	Lord Stanhope
secretary of state	Sir Ralph Winwood
secretary of state	Sir John Herbert
chancellor and under- treasurer of the king's exchequer	Sir Julius Caesar
chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster	Sir Thomas Parry

In 1614 "S^r thomas Lake [was sworn] of the priuie counsell wthout any place or other title." ⁴¹

In 1625 Sir Julius Caesar wrote that it had been the custom for each king of England to retain most of the privy councillors of his predecessor, these councillors taking the oath anew to the new monarch, and he afterwards adding to his council as he pleased.⁴² So it happened on the accession of Charles I. On Sunday, 27 March 1625, about noon, James I died at Theobalds. The lords of the privy council and others presently assembled, "most of all the LL^s of the priuy Councell being there present." The prince had retired into his chamber, so the lord president and the lord marshal were sent to him by the body of the council to inform him of his father's decease, and to ask whether he would care to admit them into his presence. He, in his grief, wished them to forbear until the next morning. Then they held a council and penned and signed a proclamation by which Charles was at the court gate of Theobalds proclaimed king of England. The proclamation was afterwards entered in the register of the council, the signatures appended numbering forty. This done the

⁴¹ John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton: S. P. D., James I, lxxvi, 31 March 1614.

⁴² S. P. D., Charles I, viii, 31 October 1625.

members of the council went to Whitehall and in the council chamber there signed another proclamation. About five o'clock that afternoon they went into London proclaiming King Charles. The new sovereign came that night to St. James. Next morning he signified his pleasure that the lord keeper, the lord treasurer, the lord president, the lord chamberlain, the treasurer of the household, and the comptroller should attend him. All came and rendered up their offices and places to the king. Charles then restored them and willed that the officers execute their places as they had done for his father, and he gave a commission for administering the oath to all the members of the privy council in existence until the death of his father.

To the privy councillors of the late king assembled in the council chamber Lord Conway and Sir Albertus Morton, secretaries of state at the end of James's reign, now brought from the new monarch command that the lord keeper should be sworn of the new privy council, that he should then give the oath of councillor to the lord president of the late council, who then becoming lord president of the privy council of Charles I, "should sweare all the rest of the late King his ffathers priuy Councell to bee of his Ma^{ty} priuy Councell." The remaining members of the former council who were at hand thus became members of the council of Charles I, which as a result of this ceremony contained twenty persons. The council of James I had generally been larger than this. The proclaiming of Charles as king, the day before had been signed by forty: "all the Lords & priuy Councello^{rs} that were present."⁴³ After the first meeting of the new council "the whole priuy Councell attended the King at St James, and there the Lord Keeper in the name of all the rest presented the humble thankes of all the Councello

⁴³ P. C. R., xxxiii. 1, 3.

that it had pleased his Ma^{tie} to have Affiance in those that ha[d] bene Councello^{rs} to his ffather, and to receaue them all to bee of his priuy Councell.”⁴⁴

In 1625 Sir John Coke, secretary of state, noted that the number of councillors was never fixed, but more or less according to the condition of the times; that commonly it never exceeded twenty-four nor was it ever less than ten. The nucleus, he said, should always be the principal officers of the king:

The archbishop of Canterbury
 lord chancellor
 lord treasurer
 lord privy seal
 lord steward
 lord admiral
 lord chamberlain
 treasurer of the household
 comptroller of the household
 secretaries of state
 chancellor of the exchequer
 chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster

who “are by place and office soe interested in the businesses of state as they are of the Councell.” They should sit “together wth such others as the King shall take.”⁴⁵

In addition to those admitted when Charles’s council was first constituted others were sworn during the following months, so that by the end of the year the privy council contained thirty-one members:⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 28 March 1625. The entire account given has been pieced together from two slightly different ones: P. C. R., xxxiii. 1; notes by the secretary of state, Conway, S. P. D., Charles I, dxxi. 2, written about March 1625.

⁴⁵ S. P. D., Charles I, viii, assigned to October 1625.

⁴⁶ P. C. R., xxxiii. 1, also 29 March, 26 April, 5 May, 31 July, 30 October, 12 December 1625. In October Sir Thomas Coventry was made lord keeper, the seal being taken from the bishop of Lincoln, who may not, however, have been dismissed from the council.

The archbishop of Canterbury	
lord keeper of the great seal	Sir Thomas Coventry
lord treasurer	earl of Marlborough
lord president	earl of Manchester
lord keeper of the privy seal	earl of Worcester
lord high admiral	duke of Buckingham
earl marshal	earl of Arundel and Surrey
lord high chamberlain of the king's household	earl of Pembroke
earl of Montgomery	
earl of Carlisle	
earl of Holland	
master of the ordnance	earl of Totnes
lord chancellor of Scotland	Sir George Hay
earl of Mar	
earl of Kellie	
earl of Melrose	
Lord Carew	
Viscount Wallingford	
Viscount Grandison	
Viscount Faulkland	lord deputy of Ireland
bishop of Winchester	
Lord Conway	secretary of state
Lord Brooke	
treasurer of the king's household	Sir Thomas Edmonds
comptroller of the king's household	Sir John Suckling
vice chamberlain of the king's household	Sir Dudley Carleton
master of the wards	Sir Robert Naunton
Sir John Coke	secretary of state

Sir Richard Weston	chancellor of the exchequer
Sir Julius Caesar	master of the rolls
Sir Humphrey May	chancellor of the duchy

During the reign of Charles I the numbers in the privy council at various times were approximately :

1625	31 ⁴⁷
1626	30 ⁴⁸
1628	31-37 ⁴⁹ -40 ⁵⁰
1629	40 ⁵¹
1630	42 ⁵²
1631	34-40 ⁵³
1632	36 ⁵⁴
1633	36 ⁵⁵
1634	36 ⁵⁶
1635	33 ⁵⁷
1636	32 ⁵⁸
1638	33 ⁵⁹
1639	33 ⁶⁰
1639 (October)	34 ⁶¹
1640	31-35 ⁶²

In the troublous years that followed there were rapid changes, members leaving or being dismissed, while nineteen new members were sworn between January 1641 and August 1645.⁶³ In 1628 the Venetian ambassador had

⁴⁷ P. C. R., xxxiii. 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xxxiv. fos. iii, 153.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xxxviii. 1A, 167.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxix. 3, 4.

⁵¹ S. P. D., Charles I, cxlvi, 12 July 1629.

⁵² P. C. R., xl. 1, 2.

⁵³ Rymer, *Fœdera*, xix. 279; P. C. R., xli. 5, 6.

⁵⁴ P. C. R., xlii. 7, 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, xliii. 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xlv. 13.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, xlv. 1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, xlvii. 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xlix. 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, l, January 1638-9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, li. 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, liii. 5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, liii.

reported, with exaggeration, that the number of councillors and titled persons was so constantly multiplied that they were no longer distinguishable from common people.⁶⁴ After the middle of the reign, however, there was constant tendency towards restraint and decrease. "It hath been, and will be, always necessary to admit to those Councils some men of great power who will not take the pains to have great parts, yet the number of the whole should not be too great," and the capacities and qualities of the most should be fit for business, wrote Clarendon in 1646.⁶⁵

In 1634 the privy council contained: ⁶⁶

The archbishop of Canterbury	William Laud
lord keeper of the great seal	Lord Coventry
archbishop of York	Richard Neile
lord high treasurer	earl of Portland
lord keeper of the privy seal	earl of Manchester
duke of Lenox	
lord great chamberlain	earl of Lindsay
master of the horse	marquis of Hamilton
earl marshal	earl of Arundel and Surrey
lord chamberlain	earl of Pembroke and Montgomery
lord warden of the Cinque Ports	earl of Suffolk
lord chamberlain to the queen	earl of Dorset
earl of Salisbury	
lord president of Wales	earl of Bridgewater
earl of Exeter	

⁶⁴ Letter of Alvise Contarini, 29 February 1628 (N. S.): Venetian Transcripts, xv. 967.

⁶⁵ *History of the Rebellion*, i. 261.

⁶⁶ P. C. R., xlv. 13.

groom of the stole	earl of Carlisle
captain of the king's guard	earl of Holland
earl of Danby	
lord chancellor of Scot- land	Lord Dupplin
earl of Morton	
earl of Kellie	
earl of Melrose	
earl of Mar	
Viscount Wimbledon	
lord deputy of Ireland	Viscount Wentworth
Viscount Wilmot	
chancellor of the exchequer	Lord Cottington
chancellor of the duchy	Lord Newburg
secretary of Scotland	Lord Sterling
treasurer of his majesty's household	Sir Thomas Edmonds
comptroller of the king's household	Sir Henry Vane
master of the wards and liveries	Sir Robert Nanton
vice chamberlain to the king	Sir Thomas Jerman
secretary of state	Sir John Coke
secretary of state	Sir Francis Windebank
master of the rolls	Sir Julius Caesar

The personnel of the council was often studied with care by foreign representatives in England, and English observers made frequent comments upon it. In 1613 Gondomar reported that some members of the council were Catholics but most of them schismatics or atheists, and that the majority were men of small property and

little experience in affairs of state and of war.⁶⁷ This unflattering account soon found its way back to England.⁶⁸ The presence of Scots in the council was often noted.⁶⁹ In 1636 the Venetian ambassador wrote that complaint was being made freely about the principal offices and the major authority in the royal council gradually coming into possession of ecclesiastics to the prejudice of the nobility.⁷⁰ Some aspersed them as papists: "I hear of certain Papers scattered lately in *Somerset-House* directed to the Lords of his Majesty's Council, wherein 'tis said, that half of his Majesty's Council are of the Romish Religion already."⁷¹ In 1641 a Venetian observed that the king, in order to gain them, had admitted to his council six nobles who had led the movement against him in the year preceding, and had been most obstinately opposed to his policy.⁷²

The position of a privy councillor was one of eminence and power. Contemporaries agreed that it often brought considerable opportunity for profit. Excepting the four Scots, said the Venetian ambassador in 1607, the council, which he declared was composed of twenty-five members,

⁶⁷ "Y los mas son sujetos de poca experiencia y caudal en materias de estado y guerra." Letter to the king of Spain, 6 September 1613 (N. S.): *Spanish Transcripts*, II, iii.

⁶⁸ John Digby to Charles I: S. P. Foreign, Spain, xx, 22 September 1613.

⁶⁹ "4 sono Scozzesi, ma poco affrontano in alcuna cosa non essendo pari in numero agli altri." Relazione di Marcontonio Correr, *Relazioni degli Stati Europei*, IV. i. 121 (1611).

⁷⁰ Letter of Angelo Correr, 21 March 1636 (N. S.): *Venetian Transcripts*, xviii. 122.

⁷¹ Rev. Mr. Garrard to the Lord Deputy Strafford, 16 December 1637: *Strafford Letters* (London, 1739), ii. 142.

⁷² "A sei soggetti della prima nobiltà principali capi delle rivolte dell' anno passato, e persecutori di lui maggiormente ostinati ha dispensato le cariche più eminenti della Corona e donata loro la marca de consiglieri di Stato; tutto con il solo riguardo di guadagnarli in quest' occasione." Despatch of Giovanni Giustinian, 8 March 1641 (N. S.): *Venetian Transcripts*, xxiii. 203.

consisted of Englishmen, who were all of them of the first and principal lords of the realm, if not for nobility and ancient lineage, at least because they had been made great through the authority and favor of the king, being all of them, as it were, earls.⁷³ In 1620 Chamberlain wrote to Carleton that on the occasion of the king's visit in state to St. Paul's, many absented themselves from the king's train, namely, the secretaries of state, the chancellor of the exchequer, the treasurer and the comptroller of the king's household, and others of the privy council, because the earl marshal had decided that they should come after the sons of earls. Some were saying that privy councillors usurped the title of honorable, "they are but right worshipfull of the honorable counsaile." And a little later Carleton reported that James had decided younger sons of earls had precedence over knights councillors.⁷⁴ In a later age it was noted as an established custom that "A Privy Counsellor, though but a Gentleman, shall have Precedence of all Knights, Baronets, and younger Sons of all Barons and Viscounts."⁷⁵

The position of councillor was much desired not only for its dignity but also for the emolument that it might bring. Great families, as long before in the king's council, were glad to have places in it. In 1611 a Venetian noted that of the House of Howard the earl of Northampton was lord privy seal and lord warden of the Cinque

⁷³ Tutto il resto è di nazione inglese, e sono tutti dei primi e principali signori del regno, se non per nobiltà ed antichità, almeno fatti grandi coll' autorità e favore del re, essendo quasi tutti conti, che in quel regno è cosa stimatissima, portando tutti la corona nelle loro armi, e facendosi servire da suoi in ginocchioni, ancora che il loro dominio come conti son sia di alcun momento, poichè non hanno autorità di giudicare di una causa di un soldo, nè di metter in prigione, non che castigarlo; ma tutto è fumo e vanità della quale è così ripiena la nazione inglese, che certo non ve n'ha alcuna che la superi, e poche che la equaglino." *Relazione di Nicoló Molin, Relazioni degli Stati Europei*, IV, i. 57, 58.

⁷⁴ S. P. D., James I, cxiii, 1 April 1620; cxvi, 8 July, 1620.

⁷⁵ Edward Chamberlayne, *Angliæ Notitia* (1679), part ii, p. 3.

Ports, the earl of Nottingham lord admiral, the earl of Suffolk lord chamberlain.⁷⁶ In 1616 Chamberlain informed Carleton that the queen had long labored to obtain a position in the privy council for Lord Carew, and had now obtained it from the king.⁷⁷ A little later he reported that the world talked somewhat freely "that offices . . . and specially counsaillorships shold passe as y^t werre by bargain and sale."⁷⁸ In 1624 Secretary Calvert affirmed that for a consideration he would be willing to give up his position of secretary of state, but that he would like "to hold still the honour of a Priuie Counsellour."⁷⁹

Molin in his *relazione* of 1607 declared that there were few who sooner or later were not compelled to have recourse to the council, whence it came that everyone strove to acquire the good will or the protection of some one of the councillors, which was not to be done save by gifts.⁸⁰ In 1611 the French ambassador wrote that the council had prevailed on James to reduce his expenses. The retrenchment principally concerned the Scots, who, in their anger, caused to fall into the king's hands a letter which displayed the many things which the principal members of the council had done to the prejudice of his majesty's affairs and for their own profit.⁸¹

⁷⁶ "Sono questi tre soggetti strettamente uniti insieme di parentado." *Relazione di Marcantonio Correr, Relazioni degli Stati Europei, IV, i. 123.*

⁷⁷ S. P. D., James I, lxxxviii, 20 July 1616.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, xcv, 3 January 1617-18.

⁷⁹ S. P. D., James I, clxiv, 3 May 1624.

⁸⁰ "Di qui è che ognuno procura di acquistarsi la grazia e la protezione di alcuno dei consiglieri, il che non si può fare in quel paese con altri mezzi nè con altre vie che con presenti e donativi: li quali sono così ordinarj in quei paesi che chi più riceve è più stimato ed onorato, ricevendo non solo da sudditi ma da stranieri e da ministri di principi ancora, siccome si è veduto in diverse occasioni." *Relazioni degli Stati Europei, IV, i. 58.*

⁸¹ "Une lettre qui descouvre beaucoup de coups qu'ont fait les principaux dud. conseil au desavantage des affaires de Sa Ma^{té}; pour leur profit et maintient. Que la seulle maison des Hauuards, a laquelle est

The influence of Spain over the English government for many years in the time of James I was observed with astonishment by contemporaries and has often been chronicled since. An important cause in sustaining this influence was doubtless the control of many members of the privy council through pensions and bribes paid by Spain. In 1611 the Venetian ambassador believed that the lord privy seal, the lord admiral, and the lord chamberlain, along with some others of the royal council, were annually paid by the Spanish government.⁸² In 1614 Gondomar wrote to the king of Spain a lengthy report concerning previous pensions, how payments in the future might be made with most advantage, and how other officials at the English court might be won to accept them. "Some have advised me," he says, "that we could gain the archbishop and the chancellor, that the means would be to give each of them a large pension." He went on to say that France, so he heard, spent each year eighty thousand ducats on the Scots and other persons.⁸³ Gondo-

attaché le Grand Tresorier, a plus fait de profits extraordinaires en un an, que n'ont tous les Escossois ensemble depuis qu'ilz sont icy." M. de la Broderie to M. de Puisieux, 6 January 1611 (N. S.): Transcripts from Paris, xli.

⁸² "Tutti tre sono stati provisionati annualmente da Spagna, con qualchedun' altro del consiglio regio." Relazione di Correr, *Relazioni degli Stati Europei*, IV, i. 123, 124.

⁸³ "Si el Conde de Somerset quisiese los seis mil ducados que se daban al Conde de Salzueri pareceme que serian muj bien empleados, y dos mill ducados a Don Thomas Lac que es del Consejo de Estado y ha hecho officio de gran Secretario y no esta oy fuera de sello, y todauia conserba la gracia del Rey y muchos papeles de importancia. A los demas se pueden premiar conforme a los seruicios y assi lo hago yo. Algunos me han aconsejado que procurasemos ganar al Arçobispo y al Chanciller y que el camino era dalles a cada vno gruesa pension . . . Escocesas ay algunos que podrian ser de provecho y un Vizconde Fenton que es del Consejo de Estado me han dicho que tomaria pension y seria fiel. Francia me dizen que gasta aqui cada año ochenta mil ducados con los Escocesas y otras personas." Don Diego Sarmiento to the king of Spain, 17 October 1614 (N. S.): Spanish Transcripts, II. viii.

mar stated that he had been disbursing thirty thousand crowns a year, but on the death of some of the pensioners the amount had declined to eleven thousand, and now because of the death of the earl of Northampton four thousand more were falling in. With the passing of this official, however, it was all the more necessary to gain other "confidants" for his master's service.⁸⁴ "The Spanish ambassador usually bribes a great part of the privy council," says a Venetian report in 1618. The first ambassador of Spain in the reign of James I used to distribute among the members of the privy council some twenty-eight thousand crowns annually, which a later ambassador increased to thirty-five thousand. This money was divided among eleven, and at other times, twelve individuals. In this and other ways a million pieces of gold had been expended in thirteen years. In consequence much advantage had come to the Spaniards.⁸⁵ In 1622 a list of the pensions paid by Gondomar in England to those devoted to the service of Spain was again set forth.⁸⁶

The privy council met in various places, where the court happened to be, or where it was the king's pleasure that the council should assemble. Most of the meetings, however, took place in Whitehall. It was afterwards said that in Elizabeth's time the council was wont to meet in the queen's presence chamber in Whitehall; that in James's time another room in the palace had been appointed for its use.⁸⁷ A little later a certain one declared that the privy council always had in every one of the king's residences a fair chamber where they kept the council table, with a little room adjoining, in which the

⁸⁴ Spanish Transcripts, II. viii, 17 October 1614 (N. S.).

⁸⁵ Account of Antonio Foscarini, 19 December 1618 (N. S.): Venetian Transcripts, ix. 149, 163, 164.

⁸⁶ Spanish Transcripts, II, xxvi.

⁸⁷ S. P. D., James I, cxix, 8 January 1620-1.

clerks of the council and their servants sat and wrote.⁸⁸ If the registers of the council be examined at random it is evident that under the earlier Stuarts the vast majority of the meetings were held at Whitehall. From May to December 1613, out of fifty-three meetings held altogether, forty-one were at Whitehall and twelve at various other places.⁸⁹ During the year 1616 eighty-seven meetings of the privy council were held: sixty-seven at Whitehall, twenty in various other places.⁹⁰ In 1622 there were seventy-five meetings, of which all but ten were held at Whitehall.⁹¹ In 1625 thirty-eight meetings were at Whitehall, forty-seven in various other places.⁹² In the period from June 1631 to April 1632 seventy-one meetings were held in the presence of the king at Whitehall, while only three were held in other places.⁹³ In 1638 seventy-one meetings of the council or of some of its members were held at Whitehall; eighty were held in other places, fifty-eight of them in the Star Chamber.⁹⁴

When not at Whitehall the privy council met where the king was holding his court, or else where the convenience of business or of the members dictated. James I loved to be away from London at Greenwich, Hampton Court, Otlands, Theobalds, or Nonesuch. To these places he often went for his hunting or his leisure, and often, withdrawing himself there from most of the routine of business, wished to see as little of his privy council as he could. Sometimes he did not hide his annoyance when councillors desired to come where he was, or wished him to come to a meeting. In 1610 when the earl of Salisbury, apparently, had proposed a meeting of the council in the presence of the king, James's secretary replied that the king was not willing to attend merely about the form of

⁸⁸ S. P. D., Charles I, viii, 31 October 1625.

⁸⁹ P. C. R., xxvii.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xli.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

⁹² *Ibid.*, xxxii.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, xlix.

dissolving parliament, and that he would come only if the council had some reasons to propose why the parliament should not be dissolved. "To have a solemne meeting between him and his Councell and no worthy matter to result of it were as his M. hath alreedy written par-turiunt montes."⁹⁵ In 1623 Secretary Calvert on the back of a paper containing other matters made the following note: "The Lo: President hath signified his Ma^{ties} pleasure to the Lords for their ordinary sitting in Counsell & forbearing to come to Court wthout leaue."⁹⁶ None the less, on numerous occasions the privy council was assembled where the king was holding his court away from London. Molin, the Venetian, says that the councillors ordinarily followed the king, except, as was often the case, when the king went away privately on his pleasure, in which case the councillors remained where the court remained, for the most part at London.⁹⁷

In the spring and summer of 1603 there were meetings at Theobalds, Greenwich, and Hampton Court.⁹⁸ In the time of James I Greenwich was a favorite place, with other meetings at Windsor, Hampton Court, Oatlands, and Theobalds. A council was held "At the Court at Newmarket" in 1618.⁹⁹ That year the French ambassador writes that the king, queen, prince, and all the council are at Greenwich, that it is believed within a fortnight important resolutions will be taken there.¹⁰⁰ Later that year a council was held "At the Court at Salisburie."¹⁰¹ "The King is at Windsor whither he hath summoned all the

⁹⁵ S. P. D., James I, lviii, 26, 27 November 1610.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, cxxxviii, 25 February 1622-3.

⁹⁷ *Relazione di Nicoló Molin (1607): Relazioni degli Stati Europei*, IV, i. 58.

⁹⁸ Add. MS. 11402, fos. 88, 89, 102, 106.

⁹⁹ P. C. R., xxix, 1 February 1617-18.

¹⁰⁰ Transcripts from Paris, lii. 260.

¹⁰¹ P. C. R., xxix, 5 August 1618.

Councill," writes a correspondent in 1622.¹⁰² In 1625 a council was held at Lambeth.¹⁰³ Under Charles I the meetings away from Whitehall were even more widely scattered. In August 1626 a council met at Christ Church, Oxford.¹⁰⁴ A little later one was called at the court at Woodstock.¹⁰⁵ In the following months many councils were held in Southampton, Wilton, Salisbury, and Reading. Thereafter most of the council meetings were either at Whitehall or in Westminster, until the last troubled years of Charles's reign. From October 1640 to August 1645 the records become more and more scanty and the meetings constantly fewer. In January 1642 Charles's last council at Whitehall was held. In August of that year there was a council at Nottingham, and afterwards various meetings at Oxford.¹⁰⁶ Clarendon says that in 1643 the privy council broke into pieces, some of the members remaining in London to support parliament, some of them going away with the king to Oxford.¹⁰⁷ The last meeting recorded for this period was "At the Schooles in Oxford."¹⁰⁸

During all this time also meetings of the privy council were not only held at the court or at Whitehall but in various other places, as suited the convenience of the councillors, apparently, when the king was not to be present. In 1615 there was a meeting of the council at Suffolk House.¹⁰⁹ In the next year there were several meetings at York House.¹¹⁰ In 1621 there was a meeting of the council, or at least of several of the privy councillors, "At S^t Francis Jones his House Lo Maior of the Cittie of London."¹¹¹

¹⁰² Roger Townshend to Sir Roger Townshend, 31 August 1622: *H. M. C.*, 11th report, appendix, iv. 20.

¹⁰³ *P. C. R.*, xxxii, 17 March 1624-5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 10 August 1625.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 14 August 1625.

¹⁰⁶ *P. C. R.*, liii.

¹⁰⁷ *History of the Rebellion*, ii. 527, 537.

¹⁰⁸ *P. C. R.*, liii, 30 August 1645.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, xxviii, 19 June 1615.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxviii, 4, 12 September, 1616. ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 30 July 1621.

Other meetings of this sort were held a little later at the houses of two of the sheriffs of London.¹¹² A meeting of three councillors, including the lord treasurer and one of the secretaries, took place at the lord treasurer's lodgings at the Cockpit in Whitehall¹¹³—the favorite resort of members of the committee of foreign affairs and of the cabinet many years later. In 1622 there was a meeting of eight councillors at the sheriff's house in London.¹¹⁴ Two years later nine of the more important members gathered "At the Lord Mayo^{rs} house in wood streete."¹¹⁵ A little after ten of the most important councillors, including the archbishop of Canterbury, met "At sheriff Molsome's house in London."¹¹⁶

More interesting than the occasional meetings in such unusual places, were the gatherings of the council in Westminster in the Star Chamber, such meetings of the council again becoming frequent during this period. In 1617 and in 1618, when there were numerous meetings of the privy council at Whitehall, there were not a few council meetings also in the Star Chamber.¹¹⁷ During 1620 there were many meetings of privy council there. It might be thought that they were but sessions of the Court of Star Chamber. On one occasion, indeed, when a meeting of eleven members of the council at the Star Chamber is recorded in the privy council register, it is known from another source that on that day a certain one submitted to the king's clemency in the Court of Star

¹¹² P. C. R., xxxi, 6, 9 August 1621.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 28 August 1621. Though the record of the meeting is in the privy council register along with many other meetings that were undoubtedly of the privy council, it is quite possible that this particular gathering and some others like it were of committees of the council, for it is seldom that any distinguishing annotation is made at this time, as was generally the custom later on.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, lxxi, 4 March 1621-2.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xxxii, 19 June 1624.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 July 1624.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xxix, 10, 17, 22 October, 14, 21, 29 November 1617, 28, 30 January 1617-18, 6, 8 May 1618, and others.

Chamber.¹¹⁸ Yet, not only are the records of the meetings in question embodied in the formal record of business of the privy council, with no marginal annotation to distinguish them from council meetings, but the details of the records seem to establish them as meetings of the privy council. These Star Chamber meetings often decided causes, heard complaints, or committed to prison, but so did many meetings elsewhere which were undoubtedly privy councils. Frequently, moreover, the privy councillors meeting in the Star Chamber did much of what is known to be the purely ordinary business of the privy council. In June 1632, and also in October and November, there were numerous meetings of the council in the Star Chamber, to deal with what were undoubtedly privy council matters: all sorts of orders and regulations were issued as well as a proclamation.¹¹⁹

It may be, though perhaps no evidence specifically confirms such contention, that sometimes when sessions of the court of Star Chamber were to be held, the members present, either before or after holding the court, constituted themselves a privy council, and that on occasion it is the record of council business thus transacted that is recorded in the registers of the privy council as of privy councils in the Star Chamber. The facility with which at a single sitting a privy council would be metamorphosed into a committee of council, and the equal facility with which a committee would be transformed at will into a council in the latter part of the century lends probability to this supposition. In any event the meetings of councillors in the Star Chamber during the latter years of James I and the much more frequent gatherings of the same sort in the time of Charles I afford one more illustration of the oft-repeated assertion that coun-

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xxx, 27 October 1620; S. P. D., James I, cxvii [27 October 1620], 35.

¹¹⁹ P. C. R., xlii.

cil and court of Star Chamber were but two aspects or phases of one and the same group of officials.

There were several meetings of privy council in the Star Chamber during 1625.¹²⁰ There was such a meeting in 1632.¹²¹ In 1633 and in 1634 perhaps the larger number of all the meetings recorded were held in the Star Chamber.¹²² Sometimes at such a meeting measures were taken to enforce a decision made apparently in the court of Star Chamber. In 1634 at a meeting in the Star Chamber where ten of the councillors were present, their lordships being informed that the sheriffs had not executed a decree in Star Chamber for demolishing certain buildings ordered the surveyor and the comptroller of his majesty's works to report on the Friday following whether the order had been carried out, the sheriff or the under-sheriff to attend them at the same time.¹²³ In 1635, 1636, 1637 and 1638 there were many meetings in the Star Chamber and many others in the Inner Star Chamber.¹²⁴ Some of these gatherings were apparently committees of the council, and often they dealt with petitions which had been referred to particular members by the king. Sometimes those present listened to complaints. Of such business there was always a vast deal encroaching upon the time of the privy council.

During this period, as in the century preceding, the council was often divided into two parts, when some of the councillors were with the king during his absences from London while others remained at Whitehall. In 1616 the lords of the council with the king at Burley sent a communication about several matters to the lords of the council in London, and a few days later the lords in London sent a missive to "the Lordes and others of his

¹²⁰ P. C. R., xxxiii, 11, 13, 18, 20, 25 May 1625.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, xli, 14 February 1631-2.

¹²² *Ibid.*, xliv, 24 October 1634.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, xlv, xlvii, xlviii, xlix.

Ma^t priuie Councell at Court." ¹²⁵ Next year a letter having come from the councillors with the king, ten of the privy council held a meeting at Whitehall, and so far as they could having done what the councillors with the king had by his order directed, they wrote to that effect "A L^{re} to the Ll^s of the Councell at Courte." ¹²⁶ In 1633 when Charles I went to Scotland to be crowned there, some of the privy council went with him. During this absence the members in England continued to send communications to the lords of the council attendant upon his majesty in Scotland. ¹²⁷ In 1639 when Charles proceeded to the north some of the privy councillors went with him while a part of the council remained in London. ¹²⁸ Such division was not without inconveniences at times. In 1623 some of the councillors were at court with the king, some of them were at London. Those at court, when important business was presented for their consideration, expressed the wish to wait until they knew the opinion of the councillors left behind, or until there could be a meeting of both the groups together. ¹²⁹

Meetings of the council were held with considerable frequency, so that often there was a large number in the course of a year. Attendance at the council if regular must have been an onerous and engrossing duty. In 1605 when James I was about to begin a journey for recreation and rest, he enjoined the council to assemble twice a week regularly, and at such other times as he might direct the secretaries of state to announce. ¹³⁰ In 1629 the Venetian ambassador recorded that the council was sitting every day, for three or four hours, the king always present. ¹³¹

¹²⁵ S. P. D., James I, lxxxviii, 6, 13 August 1616.

¹²⁶ P. C. R., xxix, 13 August 1617.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, cccxiv. 113; cccxv. 43.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, xii, 9 January 1604-5.

¹²⁷ S. P. D., Charles I, ccxli.

¹²⁹ S. P. D., James I, cl. 98.

¹³¹ Letter of Alvise Contarini, 6 April 1629 (N. S.): Venetian Transcripts, xvii. 2323.

During the last six months of 1616 there were thirty-six meetings of the council.¹³² In 1622 there were seventy-five meetings.¹³³ In 1625 the councillors assembled eighty-five times.¹³⁴ In 1638 there were one hundred and sixty-two meetings of the privy council or of committees of the council, the latter being much less frequent than the council meetings so far as distinction can be made from the records preserved in the register.¹³⁵ Furthermore, it should be noted that apparently much council business was done or completed on days when no meeting of the council was held.¹³⁶

About 1625 Secretary Coke noted that the councillors assembled either on days arranged among themselves or upon summons by one of the secretaries of state.¹³⁷ In 1605 James, giving his instructions, directed that the lords of the council should meet once a week "besides the Sunday after the Sermon."¹³⁸ "The Lords of the Council have appointed to meet constantly once a weeke," says the secretary of state in 1641.¹³⁹ Meetings were held on various days, but with marked regularity on particular days. In June 1613 the eight meetings took place respectively on Tuesday, Sunday, Saturday, Sunday, Saturday, Sunday, Thursday, Sunday.¹⁴⁰ Eight meetings in April 1616 were on Wednesday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Sunday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday.¹⁴¹

Sunday was the more usual of the regular days, as it continued to be long afterward for meetings of the committee of foreign affairs, the committee of intelligence, and later of the cabinet or "the committee" of the coun-

¹³² P. C. R., xxviii.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxiii.

¹³⁶ See, for example, *ibid.*, xxvii, 8, 12 March 1613-14, 10 June 1614.

¹³⁷ S. P. D., Charles I, viii, October 1625.

¹³⁸ S. P. D., James I, xii, 9 January 1604-5.

¹³⁹ Sir Edward Nicholas to Sir Henry Vane, 11 August 1641: *Nicholas Papers* (Camden Society, new series, xl), p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ P. C. R., xxvii.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, xlix.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

cil. Certain notes of James I in 1605 are endorsed "Memoriall for Sondaye," and concern business to be taken up "with the counsell."¹⁴² In 1618 a Spanish informant narrates that James returning from Theobalds to London on Saturday ordered one of the secretaries to summon each councillor, and that the king was present at a meeting in the council chamber Sunday morning.¹⁴³ In 1622 the Dutch ambassador wrote that a report was made in a full council held on Sunday.¹⁴⁴ "Sunday next Counsell for the postes & S^t Gregories: the King himselfe wilbe there if both parties can be redy," says Secretary Windebank in 1633, in some minutes of business to be transacted in the privy council.¹⁴⁵ "On *Sunday* the sixth of *March* his Majesty being at Council presently after the Sermon, which in *Lent* is in the Afternoon, sent Mr. Secretary *Windebank* for the Bishop of *London*, to whom he gave the Staff, then was he sworn a Counsellor."¹⁴⁶ Later on Clarendon, writing of the events of 1643, says, apparently referring to certain Puritans, that the lord mayor of London called the common council on Sunday, "on which they before complained the King used to sit in Council."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² S. P. D., James I, xiv, assigned to 21 June 1605.

¹⁴³ "Y sabado 28—deste mes a la tarde vino el Rey desde Tibols donde estaua a esta ciudad, y luego en llegando dio orden a Don Robert Nanton Secretario de estado, que avisase a todos los del consejo a cada uno en particular, que estuviessen el dia siguiente domingo juntos en la sala del consejo a las ocho de la mañana. Vinieron aquella hora, y el Rey se junto con ellos." Deciphered letter of Julian Sanchez de Ulloa to the king of Spain, 31 July 1618 (N.S.): Spanish Transcripts, II, xvii. 210.

¹⁴⁴ "D'heere Weston dede Sondach sijn rapport aen S. M^t in vollen rade, waerinne hij hem soo wel queet, dat ijedereen daerover nam contentement." The Dutch ambassador to the states general, 14 October 1622 (N.S.): Add. MS. 17677 K.

¹⁴⁵ S. P. D., Charles I, dxxxiv. 54.

¹⁴⁶ Rev. Mr. Garrard to the lord deputy, 15 March 1635-6: *Strafford Letters*, i. 523.

¹⁴⁷ *History of the Rebellion*, iii. 138.

It is of some interest, though of slight importance, to note that meetings of the privy council took place indifferently in the morning or the afternoon, and that on the whole it would be difficult to say which was the more usual time. In some months the meetings were almost regularly in the morning; at other times they were generally in the afternoon, the hours doubtless chosen for convenience in the routine of the time.

Probably most meetings of the council were easily dispatched in a few hours, but sometimes members met in the morning and continued the same sitting or held another session that afternoon. In 1610 Lady Arabella Stuart was kept before the council for more than three hours.¹⁴⁸ Next year the Venetian ambassador says that on a June afternoon the king who had been at Greenwich returned to London, and that he and the lords of the council spent all the rest of the day in close consultation.¹⁴⁹ In 1616 a council held at Hampton Court sat morning and afternoon, and "as the same Sessions" the next day.¹⁵⁰ In 1623 there was a meeting of the privy council in the morning and also one following dinner in the afternoon.¹⁵¹ In his account of the meeting of the council in 1618 the Spanish correspondent said that the king and his councillors entered the chamber at nine o'clock of the morning, remained until twelve, then had dinner, resumed business at four, and continued until seven.¹⁵² In 1626 when the lords considered the demands of the French ambassador after the dismissal of the

¹⁴⁸ Transcripts from Paris, xli, 3 January 1610 (N. S.).

¹⁴⁹ Letter of Antonio Foscarini, 15 June 1611 (N. S.): Venetian Transcripts, ix. 28.

¹⁵⁰ P. C. R., xxviii, 26, 27 September 1616.

¹⁵¹ S. P. D., James I, cxxxviii, 20 February 1622-3.

¹⁵² "A las nueve entraron en consejo y estuvieron hasta las doze que el Rey se salio y se fue a comer y los consejeros comieron en la misma sala del consejo despues de comer entraron donde estava el Rey y bolbieron con el a las quatro al Consejo, y se detuvieron hasta las siete de la tarde." Spanish Transcripts, II. xvii. 210.

queen's servants, "the Privy Council sat for three consecutive days, weighing the public interests, the Duke speaking very freely."¹⁵³

With respect to attendance, close inspection of the registers reveals almost infinite variety and differences from which, however, certain important conclusions are to be deduced. Rarely, if ever, did the entire privy council assemble. Some of the members were seldom present. Some others came irregularly, so that the size and personnel of any large number of meetings varied very much.

In 1619 a writer observed, it was taken as a matter of course that a privy council should meet with some of the principal officers present, such as the lord treasurer, the lord chamberlain, and a secretary of state.¹⁵⁴ It may be said that while generally the secretaries of state, who became constantly more important, were among the most constant of all the members in attendance at council, yet in the earlier period, when they were less important, this was not always so. In 1613, at the thirty meetings held from May to September inclusive, neither of the secretaries was present even once.¹⁵⁵ Somewhat later one of the secretaries writing to the other said that the king very much disliked the frequent absence of the notable counsellors. He thought they lost dignity and that the business of the council was hindered. "The reformacon of w^{ch} his Ma^{tie} wills yo^u to presse as a singular pleasure to him."¹⁵⁶ According to Sir Julius Caesar, the lords of the council who were not ordinary great officers of state and those who were not lodging at court were not accustomed to come to meetings of the council, except upon command given either by the lord president of the council or by one

¹⁵³ Letter of Contarini, 23 October 1626 (N.S.): Venetian Transcripts, xiii. 100.

¹⁵⁴ S. P. D., James I, cxi, 20 November 1619.

¹⁵⁵ P. C. R., xxvii.

¹⁵⁶ Secretary Conway to Secretary Calvert: S. P. D., James I, cxlvii, 30 June 1623.

of the secretaries of state, in which case they ought never to fail in coming unless they sent sufficient excuse.¹⁵⁷ In 1629 a French memoir concerning England declared that of the council, which it said contained twenty-five members—at this time it probably contained forty, ordinarily no more than eighteen members were at the court.¹⁵⁸

For the most part certain important and dependable officials seldom stayed away, and they constituted the normal and constant nucleus of the privy councils that were held. It will be shown that it was from this nucleus that the most important of the committees of the council were formed later on, especially that committee which was the original of the cabinet council. In 1613 from May to September inclusive there were thirty meetings of the council. During that time attendance of the principal members was as follows: ¹⁵⁹

The archbishop of Canterbury	27 times
lord chancellor	26
lord chamberlain	24
lord privy seal	29
chancellor of the exchequer	29
chancellor of the duchy	22
earl of Shrewsbury	18
vice chamberlain of the king's household	19
treasurer of the king's household	17
earl of Pembroke	16
comptroller of the king's household	14

Some of the other members never came to a meeting, while some were present once, twice, or thrice. At this time the council contained twenty-three members.

In 1616 the archbishop of Canterbury was absent from only three of the eighty-seven meetings that were held, the lord treasurer, the lord privy seal, the chancellor of the exchequer, the master of the rolls, and the two secre-

¹⁵⁷ S. P. D., Charles I, viii, 31 October 1625.

¹⁵⁸ Transcripts from Paris, lxvi. 234.

¹⁵⁹ P. C. R., xxvii.

taries attended almost as frequently, and a few others, such as the lord privy seal, the lord chamberlain, and the lord steward, came with such fair regularity that a group of nine or ten or twelve may be said to have constituted the effective privy council at this time.¹⁶⁰ Tabulation of attendance in other years chosen at random reveals much the same thing. In 1622 the lord keeper, the lord treasurer, the lord president, the treasurer of the king's household, the master of the rolls, the two secretaries, and the lord steward attended most of the seventy-five meetings, while the lord chamberlain attended the majority, as did the archbishop of Canterbury during the second half of the year.¹⁶¹ In 1638 to the one hundred and fifty-one meetings of the council or its committees, sometimes two sessions on the same day, the archbishop of Canterbury, the lord keeper, the lord treasurer, the lord privy seal, the treasurer and the comptroller of the household, the two secretaries, and one or two of Charles I's confidants among the lords of the council attended nearly all of the meetings. A few others came less frequently yet attended a great many of the gatherings. The others came occasionally or not at all. During this year the privy council meetings were made up of a group of eight or ten who generally came, and half a dozen others who came more often than they were absent.¹⁶²

Beyond these generalizations, however, particular meetings of the council reveal a very great variety with respect to size and composition. In 1608 an order of council was issued by the sixteen who were present.¹⁶³ Two years later a council of eleven consisted of six great officials and five others.¹⁶⁴ A few months after a council of sixteen committed a certain one to prison.¹⁶⁵ In 1616 the king in council with seventeen members considered a case of

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, xlix.

¹⁶³ S. P. D., James I, xxxvii, 27 November 1608.

¹⁶⁴ Add. MS. 11402, fo. 158. ¹⁶⁵ S. P. D., James I, liii, 11 March 1609-10.

commendam; and later that year the king was present at a meeting of eighteen.¹⁶⁶ In 1617 a privy council of seven was held at Newcastle.¹⁶⁷ In 1618, on a Sunday morning at Whitehall, there was a council attended by twenty-one.¹⁶⁸ Later that year, when many large meetings were held, there was a council meeting at Whitehall attended by four of the members.¹⁶⁹ In 1621 nineteen were at a council which appointed a committee to take measures for the recovery of the Palatinate.¹⁷⁰ In 1626, after the disastrous defeat of the king of Denmark, at a time when the privy council contained thirty members, "The King's moste Excellent Maiestie And a full Bodie of Counsell"—twenty-one members were present—considered how aid might be given.¹⁷¹ There were frequently large meetings of the council in the presence of the king at the time of the expedition to Ré.¹⁷² In 1628 there was a council of twenty-six at Whitehall.¹⁷³ Next year the king "in full Councill" was attended by twenty-eight members;¹⁷⁴ and a little later that year he presided over a council of twenty-six.¹⁷⁵ In 1635 twenty-eight out of the thirty-three members of the council attended a meeting.¹⁷⁶ Seven councils were held during June 1636, at which the largest attendance was eighteen and the smallest eight.¹⁷⁷ On the whole, perhaps, it may be said that ten or twelve was the average normal attendance, so far as such a statement can be made at all. On the other hand there are many records of meetings, some of which may have been of committees, attended by two or three or four or five or six. "The Lords have had a meeting this afternoon in Council," the secre-

¹⁶⁶ P. C. R., xxviii, 6 June, 8 November 1616.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, xxix, 4 May 1617.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 February 1617-18.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1618. ¹⁷⁰ S. P. D., James I, cxix, 13 January 1620-1.

¹⁷¹ P. C. R., xxxiv, 14 September 1626.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, xxxvi, November, December 1627.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, xxxviii, 31 October 1628.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxix, 22 February 1628-9.

¹⁷⁵ S. P. D., Charles I, cxlv, 28 June 1629.

¹⁷⁶ P. C. R., xlv, 1 July 1635.

¹⁷⁷ S. P. D., Charles I, cccxxv. 17.

tary writes to the king in 1640, "but the Board being thin, there hath little fallen into consideration of moment concerning the Publick." ¹⁷⁸

The king was often present at meetings of the council, and at times he presided regularly when important business had to be considered. On the whole, however, it may be said that usually the king was not present. It is possible, to be sure, that the king was in council more often than the council record reveals it. In 1625 he is stated to have been present in connection with certain business, but his name is not at the top of the record in the list of those given as present.¹⁷⁹ In 1627 there was a meeting to the council record of which is prefixed a list of the nine members present. The king's name is not in this list. He may, however, have come in during the discussion, which concerned a cause upon which an order of the council was given. At all events, a particular account of the cause was given to the king. Under the entry of this matter is the note: "His Ma^{tie} was present, & was pleased to signifie his royal pleasure for the ensuing Orders."¹⁸⁰ In some places in the margin of the register there is an asterisk. It would seem that this sometimes indicates the presence of the king in council when his being there has not been otherwise noticed. On the other hand, in 1640 the king is put at the head of those given as present at a certain meeting, but after the first item of business a note in the margin says: "The King not present."¹⁸¹

James I disliked the trouble of coming, and for long periods he seldom if ever attended. From May to September 1613 he came to two of the thirty meetings that were held.¹⁸² In 1614 for some months he never came once.¹⁸³ He was present four times in 1616, when there

¹⁷⁸ *Clarendon State Papers*, ii. 120.

¹⁷⁹ P. C. R., xxxiii, 20 December 1625.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxv, 7 January 1626-7.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, xxvii.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, lii, 2 August 1640.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

were eighty-seven meetings of the council.¹⁸⁴ He came only twice during 1618.¹⁸⁵ He came to two of the seventy-five councils held in 1622.¹⁸⁶ At this time Chamberlain wrote to Carleton: "The K. is now at Roiston, and the Prince wth the counsaile consult dayly at whitehall."¹⁸⁷ James came to council not once during the last three months of his reign, and Charles I was present only twice during the nine months of 1625 that followed.¹⁸⁸ When the king was not at the council, accounts of what was done there seem to have been sent to him either by a secretary of state or the lord president.¹⁸⁹

Charles attended the council more and more as his reign progressed. He was frequently present in 1627.¹⁹⁰ In 1629 in council he declared with respect to certain matters that he had for the most part been present in council when they were discussed.¹⁹¹ He attended with increasing frequency during that year. In 1638 he was present at forty-six meetings, when one hundred and fifty-one councils or committees were held in one hundred and sixty-two sessions.¹⁹² From 2 November 1639 to 25 September 1640 he was present also quite frequently, some fifty-five times.¹⁹³ He had been present but seldom, however, in some of the years just preceding, and on the whole it may be doubted whether in all he came to as many as one meeting out of ten.

It may be said that prior to the decease of his father Prince Charles had often gone to meetings of the privy council, even before he became a member.¹⁹⁴ He was sworn a councillor three years before he came to the throne.¹⁹⁵ There appears to be no record of it in the

¹⁸⁴ P. C. R., xxviii.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxi.

¹⁸⁸ P. C. R., xxxii.

¹⁹⁰ P. C. R., xxxvi.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, xlix.

¹⁹⁴ S. P. D., James I, cxxviii, 26 March 1622.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, xxix, xxx.

¹⁸⁷ S. P. D., James I, cxxxiii, 12 October 1622.

¹⁸⁹ S. P. D., James I, cl, 13 August 1623.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, xxxix, 22 February 1628-9.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, li, lii.

¹⁹⁵ "Mijnherre die prince is dese daghen voor ordinaris raedt door S. M^{ts} ordre ontfangen, hebbende den eedt gedaen ende sessie geno-

council register, but this is only one of many important things that the student would expect to find in the record which have been omitted through carelessness, accident, or design. In one of the state papers it is said that the king called together the privy council, and told the members that since the prince had often been present at the board, either with his father or without him, and had well acquainted himself with the manner and proceedings of the table, now for his better knowledge and for his experience in state affairs, he was to be a member of the council; that thereupon James commanded an act to be entered in the register to this effect.¹⁹⁶ A little later the French ambassador wrote that the king had left the prince in London to deliberate with the council concerning all affairs.¹⁹⁷

When present the king presided over the council. In the more numerous meetings when he did not attend direction was in the hands of various officials. From time to time some councillor through high ability or great influence with the king or as a result of his power or his connections dominated and guided the council. In the earlier part of the reign of James the earl of Salisbury held such position. In 1607 the Venetian ambassador asserted that Salisbury moved and turned the council as he wished.¹⁹⁸ Salisbury died in 1612. Six years after this time another Venetian account recalled that he had for so many years kept the pith of council business to himself, and since his time the rest of the ministry were so new

men": the Dutch ambassador to the states general, Add. MS. 17677 K, 18 April 1622 (N. S.). ¹⁹⁶ S. P. D., James I, cxxviii, 26 March 1622.

¹⁹⁷ "Il a laissé le Prince icy en le Conseil pour délibérer de toutes affaires: mais ce sont corps sans âmes, car les résolutions dependans de luy" . . . M. de Tillières to M. de Puyieux, 18 October 1622 (N. S.): Transcripts from Paris, lvi. 130.

¹⁹⁸ "Parte con l'autorità e parte con questo aderenze [several members of the House of Howard in the council], egli move e volta il Consiglio come vuole." *Relazioni degli Stati Europei*, IV, i. 61.

to the business of government, that it was still difficult to get anything settled by the privy council.¹⁹⁹ It was so with Buckingham later on. He was sworn of the council in February 1617.²⁰⁰ In 1624 the Spanish ambassador wrote that Buckingham could carry his wishes against all the council—against the king for that matter.²⁰¹ “All things passe by him,” said Chamberlain about the same time.²⁰² He alone—perhaps more than the king—sustained the burdensome management of the country’s foreign and domestic affairs, was the report sent back to Venice.²⁰³ Much of this, no doubt was through exclusion of the privy council more than through dominance in it. Immediately after Buckingham’s death another foreign correspondent wrote that everything was now being managed by the privy council, and no longer by one head only as in the great man’s time.²⁰⁴

According to a Venetian *relazione* of 1611, in the absence of the king the archbishop of Canterbury had first place in the council, with the lord chancellor second, and next after them the earl of Salisbury, who was lord treasurer and first secretary of state.²⁰⁵ Three years later the Spanish ambassador said that the archbishop of Canterbury was first in the council.²⁰⁶ In 1616, 1617,

¹⁹⁹ Account of Antonio Foscarini, 19 December 1618 (N.S.): Venetian Transcripts, ix. 157.

²⁰⁰ P. C. R., xxviii, 4 February 1616-17.

²⁰¹ “Pues está resuelto el Parlamento . . . Todo esto puede vn ombro solo contra casi todos los demas consejeros y, lo que causa mas admiracion, contra la voluntad de su mismo Rey que lo leuanto del poluo de la tierra.” Don Carlos Colonna to the king of Spain, 9 January 1624 (N.S.): Spanish Transcripts, II. xxxi.

²⁰² S. P. D., Charles I, ii, 6 May 1625.

²⁰³ Letter of Alvise Contarini, 4 September 1626 (N. S.): Venetian Transcripts, xiii. 29.

²⁰⁴ Amerigo Salvetti to the grand duke of Tuscany, 20, 26 October 1628 (N.S.): *H. M. C.*, 11th report, appendix, i. 165, 167.

²⁰⁵ “Primo segretario di Stato”: *Relazioni degli Stati Europei*, IV. i. 121.

²⁰⁶ “Deste que llaman Arçobispo de Cantuaria que . . . es la primera persona deste Consejo de Estado.” Don Diego Sarmiento to Señor Cardenal Melino, 15 May 1614 (N.S.): Spanish Transcripts, II, v. 120.

1618 the lord chancellor almost always heads the list of those whom the register records as present at meetings, and apparently he presided over the council.²⁰⁷ Afterwards in the days of Laud's greatness the importance of the archbishop was maintained in privy council and Star Chamber. In 1617 when one of the secretaries of state, by the king's command, set out for Scotland, the councillors asked that the other should come to them as soon as might be, "for without a secretary they will not willingly assemble."²⁰⁸ In 1627 a rule was laid down that the lord president or else one of the principal secretaries was to make known to the council the purpose of the meeting.²⁰⁹ "The Lo: President," says the register on one occasion, "did this day acquainte the Board that the Lo: Admirall being himselfe indisposed in health, had sent Informaçon to theire L Lopps how greate necessitie ther is, to repaire and supply his ma^{ty}s Castles and fforts in the River of Thames, and the Cinque Ports."²¹⁰ It should be noted that the office of lord president, existent in Tudor times, had been in abeyance until 1621, and that after 1631—except for instances under the commonwealth and the protectorate—it lapsed again until revived by Charles II in 1679 when he reformed the privy council.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ P. C. R., xxvii, xxviii, xxix.

²⁰⁸ S. P. D., James I, xcii, 10 June 1617.

²⁰⁹ P. C. R., liv. 1.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 19 April 1626.

²¹¹ There are references to the lord president in the time of Henry VIII: A. F. Pollard in *English Historical Review*, xxxvii. 354, 355. In 1552 the duke of Northumberland was spoken of as "Presidens Privati Consillii Dni. Regis": *Lords' Journals*, i. 394. Two years later, the Venetian ambassador, enumerating the "principali Ministri," styled the earl of Arundel "presidente del Consiglio": Albèri, I. iii. 65. In 1572 an account of the order of proceeding to parliament, gave "The L. Chancellor, the L. Treasurer, the L. President of the Councell," and others: Harleian MS. 853, fo. 112, cited in John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth* (1805), iii. F. 39, 40. In the earlier Stuart period, apparently, the only lord president was Viscount Mandeville, who held during the years 1621-31.