

the fact that the election of burgesses to parliament would be controlled by the leet jury, which, in its turn, could be easily made to respond to the wishes of the Crown. Hence we find that in the year 1295 writs were issued to the sheriffs directing the return to parliament of two knights from each county, two citizens from each city, and two burgesses from each borough, "*ad faciendum quod tunc de communi consilio ordinabitur in praemissis*"(a). Thus by one sovereign act municipal institutions were given a definite place in the polity of the Kingdom, and the British Parliament, "the archetype of all the representative assemblies which now meet, either in the old or new world"(b) was created. But while posterity's meed of praise is undoubtedly due to Edward I. for his great constitutional achievements, we must not allow the eulogies of historians to obscure the fact that they were motivated by the exigencies of the royal purse rather than by any grand and deliberate scheme of constitution-building(c). That he had the wit to measure the political bearings of his experiment, and the courage to crystallize into a basic principle of statecraft that which he had tentatively exploited as a mere scheme of finance, stamps him as one of the world's greatest men.

How amenable the boroughs were to the Crown's will is best described by the historian Green: "It was easy indeed to control them, for the selection of boroughs to be represented remained wholly in the King's hands, and their numbers could be increased or diminished at the King's pleasure. The determination was left to the sheriff, and at a hint from the royal council a sheriff of Wilts could cut down the number of represented boroughs in his shire from eleven to three, or a sheriff of Bucks declare he could only find a single borough, that of Wycombe, within the bounds of his county"(d).

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(a) Taswell-Langmead Const. Hist. Eng., 4th ed., p. 261.

(b) Macaulay's Hist. Eng. i., c. i.

(c) Compare in this connection, Stubbs' Const. Hist., 2nd ed., ii., 306, and Green's Hist. Eng. People, iii., c. iv., p. 152, with S. R. Gardiner's Hist. Eng., i., p. 21.

(d) Hist. Eng. People, iii., c. iv.