

of eminence, the Council. And this, according to Sir Edward Coke's description of it, is a noble, honourable and reverend assembly of the king, and such as he wills to be of his Privy Council, in the king's court or palace. The sovereign's will is the sole constituent of a Privy Councillor; and this also regulates their number, which of ancient time was twelve or thereabout.

The duty of a Privy Councillor appears from the oath of office, which consists of seven articles:—1. To advise the king according to the best of his cunning and discretion. 2. To advise for the king's honour and good of the public, without partiality through affection, love, meed, doubt or dread. 3. To keep the king's council secret. 4. To avoid corruption. 5. To help and strengthen the execution of what shall be there resolved. 6. To withstand all persons who would attempt the contrary. And lastly, in general, 7. To observe, keep and do all that a good and true councillor ought to do to his sovereign lord."

"The council was nothing more than an assembly of royal officials. It made no claim to independent authority. Its very existence was derived from the king's pleasure and hence it was dissolved, ipso facto, by his demise. The council at all times acted in the king's name, with a scrupulosity which reaches the height of pedantic absurdity, when Henry VI. (at the age of five years) is made to assure the chancellor that if we are negligent in learning, or commit any fault, we give our cousin (Earl of Warwick) full power, authority, license and direction to chastise us, from time to time, according to his discretion, without being impeded or molested by us or any other person, in future, for so doing." Dicey's *Privy Council*, p. 29. It is not until the reign of Henry VI. that the term "Privy Council" makes its appearance, applied to a select body distinct from and a development from the general or "ordinary" council: Dicey, p. 45.

It may be noted in passing that the number of Privy Councillors is now indefinite. No inconvenience arises from this as, with the exception of such of them as are called Cabinet Ministers, the Privy Councillors are not in modern practice ordinarily summoned to advise the sovereign on affairs of state. The cabinet ministers (or cabinet council) are those Privy Councillors who, being more immediately honoured with the sovereign's confidence, actually conduct the business of Government. It is this body that is understood when mention is made of the "King's Administration,"