

Our country houses should embody such ideas of order, beauty and truth as shall elevate and purify the mind. A building may completely answer the

useful requirements of man, and yet not give a ray of pleasure or satisfaction to the heart or understanding.—*Agriculturalist.*

Origin of Parliaments.

The origin, or first institution of Parliaments, is so far hidden in the dark ages of antiquity, as not to be very easily or distinctly traced. The word *Parliament*, was first applied to general assemblies by King Pepin of France, in the year 706. In the reigns of the first kings of France, justice was generally administered by the king in person, assisted by counselors of his own selection and appointment. Pepin being obliged to go to Italy, and apprehensive that his subjects might suffer for want of justice in his absence, instituted a *Parliament*, composed of several of the wisest and greatest persons of the kingdom, who were appointed to meet twice a year for the decision of all suits which might be brought before them. Although designed but for a temporary purpose, this institution was found of so much public convenience, that it was adopted as part of the permanent frame of government; and subsisted under various modifications down to the great revolution of 1789. Its functions were always, however, strictly of an executive order; nor had it otherwise than by a very indirect operation, the power of legislation. What gave it this power, and rendered it in some sense a barrier betwixt the prerogatives of the crown and the liberties of the people, was a rule of great antiquity, that every edict, ordinance, or declaration of the king and council, must be enrolled in this court, before it could have the force of a law; so that though it could not originate good laws, it had at least the power of putting a negative on bad ones.

In England, too, where the appellation of Parliament is considered as so peculiarly applicable to the legislature of the country, it was long exclusively applied to an assembly of select persons, who met at stated periods, and acted as council, or assessors to the king in the administration of justice. As far as legislative powers were allowed to the crown, without the assent

of a more general assembly, the king, in his Parliament or council, seems to have assumed such powers; but its chief functions were still strictly executive. The legislature of England, as it has existed in later times, arose out of occasional communings between the king and council; and certain persons invited to represent the people, for the purpose of treating of the common weal. The king summoned the latter to *meet him in his Parliament*; and when such meetings, in the process of time, expanded into a complete representative system, the name of *Parliament* naturally attached itself to the whole united body of king, lords, (or council) and Commons.

In order to be in full possession of the legislative history of England, we must, however, go farther back than the introduction of the term *Parliament*, in either the one sense or the other. It was an imposition of the Norman conquest; and long before that period, the nation had its great councils, in which all matters of importance were debated and settled; a practice which seems to have been universal among the northern nations, particularly the Germans; and carried by them into all the countries of Europe, which they overran at the dissolution of the Roman Empire. In England, this general council had been held immemorially under the several names of *michel synoth*, or "great council;" *michel gemote*, or "great meeting;" and more frequently *wittenagemote*, or "the meeting of the wise men." It was regularly convened at the festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun-tide, and occasionally at other times, as difficult circumstances in other exigences might require. Who were the constituted members of this supreme tribunal, has long been a subject of debate; and the dissertations to which it has given rise, have only contributed to involve it in greater obscurity. It has been pretended, that not only the military