

granted. At first, these petitions were largely concerned with abuses of power by royal officials; and the King would often promise to prohibit such abuses in the future. But, as the result was not always satisfactory, Parliament gradually acquired the habit (about the beginning of the fifteenth century) of sending up 'Bills,'¹ agreed to by both Houses, in the exact form in which the remedy was desired; and these 'Bills' gradually, in their turn, became more comprehensive or general in character, more, in fact, like true laws. Often the process was reversed, and the King's counsellors submitted to Parliament 'Bills' which the King desired to enact, and requested the consent of the Houses to them. This was the origin of what is now known as 'Government legislation,' as opposed to 'private members' legislation,' which must not be confused with the distinction between 'public' and 'private' Bills (p. 156). Of course, until a comparatively late date, the King could, and often did, refuse his assent to Parliamentary Bills, in the polite form—*le roy s'avisera*; but if he assented (*le roy le veult*), the Bill became a statute, or Act of Parliament. And thus it came to be held, that the agreement both of Crown and Parliament was necessary to legislation, and that, as we have seen, the King still 'enacts,' but only with the 'advice and consent' of Parliament.

ORDERS IN COUNCIL

Meanwhile, it was obvious, that a little straining of the admitted power of the Crown to make 'ordinances,' or Orders in Council, could be used with dangerous effect to undermine this right of Parliament to share in all legislation; for if Parliament declined to concur in a Bill proposed by the Crown, what more easy

¹ Like the word 'code' (p. 15), the word 'bill' originally had a very simple meaning, i.e. that of any written note or demand. This meaning survives in such expressions as 'bill of the play,' 'bill of costs,' 'bill of lading,' etc.