

and Jacobites, its secret or avowed opponents. It was but natural that the Whigs should have the confidence of the Protestant successors to the crown, and more especially that of the early Hanoverian princes, and that places of power and profit should fall into their hands. Prior to 1714, as is well known to every reader of English history, our Kings and Queens had been the prime movers of their individual policy. If not always susceptible of advice, most of them were sufficiently acquainted with the details of government to be well able to act without it. An important change, however, in the administration had gradually been developed between the Restoration and the close of the reign of William III. From the accession of William I. the King had always had his Privy Council, composed of the great officers of State, and of such other persons as he thought fit to summon to it. With these privy councillors, who were sworn to fidelity and secrecy, he discussed matters of State policy, and in most instances adopted the course approved of by the majority. In this body, always more or less numerous, it was natural that the King should find certain members in whom he reposed special confidence, and with whom he privately discussed matters before submitting them to the general council. We find the term "Cabinet Council" applied to those special confidants as early as the reign of Charles I. It was not, however, till the Restoration, in fact till the fall of Clarendon, that the King with his Cabinet Council finally determined matters without discussing them with the Privy Council, simply submitting their decisions to that body for formal ratification; and it was not till the reign of William III. that this course of proceeding became the settled practice. In that reign the two bodies became distinct, the Privy Council being practi-

cally excluded from all business of State. Royal proclamations and orders still emanate, however, as the law requires, from the Privy Council.

On the accession of George I. the personal superintendence of the Crown came to an end. His Majesty could not speak the English language. He was neither familiar with English politics nor with English character. He therefore wisely entrusted to his ministers the entire management of his new kingdom. To a large extent his son followed his example. The consequence was that for about forty years the personal authority of the Crown was practically imperceptible. During the reigns of the first two Georges nine different ministers directed the affairs of the State. "It became," says Hallam, "the point of honour among public men to fight uniformly under the same banner, though not perhaps for the same cause, if indeed there was any cause really fought for but the advancement of a party." All England—peers and commons were thus divided into two parties. Every man was assumed to be either Whig or Tory. The administration was in the hands of the Ministry. Lord Macaulay says:—"The Ministry is in fact a committee of the leading members of the two Houses. It is nominated by the crown, but it consists exclusively of statesmen, whose opinion on the pressing questions of the time agree, in the main, with the opinion of the majority of the House of Commons. Among the members of this committee are distributed the great departments of the administration. Each minister conducts the ordinary business of his own office without reference to his colleagues. But the most important business of every office, and especially such business as is likely to be the subject of discussion in Parliament, is brought under the consideration of the whole Ministry.