

other. It became still more firmly established as the result showed that his rival's mission was a failure. So it continued, after Alva's return, till the favorite's death. Even then his well-organized party was so deeply rooted that for several years longer it maintained an ascendancy in the cabinet, while the duke languished in disgrace.

Philip, unlike most of his predecessors, rarely took his seat in the council of state. It was his maxim that his ministers would more freely discuss measures in the absence of their master than when he was there to overawe them. The course he adopted was for a *consulta*, or a committee of two or three members, to wait on him in his cabinet and report to him the proceedings of the council.¹⁷ He more commonly, especially in the later years of his reign, preferred to receive a full report of the discussion, written so as to leave an ample margin for his own commentaries. These were eminently characteristic of the man, and were so minute as usually to cover several sheets of paper. Philip had a reserved and unsocial temper. He preferred to work alone, in the seclusion of his closet, rather than in the presence of others. This may explain the reason, in part, why he seemed so much to prefer writing to talking. Even with his private secretaries, who were always near at hand, he chose to communicate by writing; and they had as large a mass of his autograph notes in their possession as if the correspondence had been

¹⁷ "Non si trova mai S. M. presente alle deliberationi ne i consigli, ma deliberato chiama una delle tre consulte . . . alla qual sempre si ritrova, onde sono lette le risoluzioni del consiglio." Relazione di Tiepolo, MS.