

INSTANCES of conventions of the peers, to advise the king, have been in former times very frequent; though now fallen into disuse, by reason of the more regular meetings of parliament. Sir Edward Coke^d gives us an extract of a record, 5 Hen. IV, concerning an exchange of lands between the king and the earl of Northumberland, wherein the value of each was agreed to be settled by advice of parliament (if any should be called before the feast of St Lucia) or otherwise by advice of the grand council (of peers) which the king promises to assemble before the said feast, in case no parliament shall be called. Many other instances of this kind of meeting are to be found under our antient kings: though the formal method of convoking them had been so long left off, that when king Charles I in 1640 issued out writs under the great seal to call a great council of all the peers of England to meet and attend his majesty at York, previous to the meeting of the long parliament, the earl of Clarendon^e mentions it as a new invention, not before heard of; that is, as he explains himself, so old, that it had not been practiced in some hundreds of years. But, though there had not so long before been an instance, nor has there been any since, of assembling them in so solemn a manner, yet, in cases of emergency, our princes have at several times thought proper to call for and consult as many of the nobility as could easily be got together: as was particularly the case with king James the second, after the landing of the prince of Orange; and with the prince of Orange himself, before he called that convention parliament, which afterwards called him to the throne.

BESIDES this general meeting, it is usually looked upon to be the right of each particular peer of the realm, to demand an audience of the king, and to lay before him, with decency and respect, such matters as he shall judge of importance to the public weal. And therefore, in the reign of Edward II, it was made an article of impeachment in parliament against the two Hugh

^d 1 Inst. 110.

^e Hist. b. 2.