

In this proceeding we have another change. When Ethelred the Unready displeased his people, the Witan deposed him without asking or receiving his consent; when Richard II. was to be forced off the throne, the form was gone through of requiring him to sign a renunciation of his regal position. When James II., mindful of his father's fate, fled from England to save his life, the Convention called it an abdication. There can be no doubt that nothing was further from the mind of James than to abdicate his throne—and, indeed, the Convention left open for everybody to use his own judgment and as he wished to interpret "abdicate" as a voluntary or an involuntary retirement from the throne.

When, eleven years thereafter, William was dying and Mary was dead without issue, and Anne's many children had died—she had had seventeen altogether and the longest lived attained only twelve years of age—it became necessary to fix the succession anew. So in the year 1701 was passed the Act of Settlement, by which, in case of the death of Anne and William without issue, the Crown was settled on Sophia, wife of the Elector of Hanover, and her lawful heirs. The Electress Sophia was the daughter of Elizabeth, Electress Palatine, sister of Charles I., and consequently she was cousin to Anne's father, James II. She was not at all next in succession to Anne—Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, Anne's aunt, daughter of Charles I., had left descendants, and Sophia had had many older brothers and sisters who had left children—but she was the nearest to the direct line who was a Protestant; and that, as Parliament considered, justified their choice. King James II. died about the same time, leaving his son, James Francis, claimant to the Crown in his stead. When Anne died in 1714, it might well have been that the Stewart cause would come uppermost; but, as it turned out, the Act of Succession was al-