

On the death of Elizabeth another innovation took place on the ground of expediency. In the reign of Henry VIII, that monarch was empowered by Act of Parliament to devise the crown by will, and acting on the power, he bequeathed it to the line of his younger sister, ignoring that of the elder, the Queen of Scotland. One would suppose that right and justice would have enforced this will in favor of the devisees; but expediency again was the most powerful, and James of Scotland was made King of England. According to this king, owing, as he said, to his combining in his own person the rights of every possible claimant that ever wore the crown, he obtained it by the special interposition of Providence; but even this supreme right was of no avail, as his son was dethroned and beheaded in the next reign. Again, during the reign of Charles II, we find expediency attempting to set aside right in the Exclusion Bill, and although it then failed when that expediency became more manifest in the next reign it was completely successful. Historians, as a general thing, attempt to reconcile the most of the changes of government in England, with the exception of the Commonwealth, previous to the revolution of 1688, to their notions of right as held by their respective parties or religions, but nearly all agree in ascribing this latter great event purely to expediency. In this instance we see not only a king but his whole family set aside, contrary to the plainest rules of right and justice, to answer the purpose of expediency in government. Again, by the Act of Settlement, expediency took the place of right, and, indeed, it would be difficult to determine what great act of the English people has not been inspired by this great principle. Nothing seems to have been effective in lessening its influence. The revolution of 1688 was only successful in one of its objects, the preservation of the Protestant religion. The arbitrary acts of William were equal, if not greater, than those of James, while he troubled the expenses of the government; but, notwithstanding this, in view of the domineering influence of Louis IV, it was expedient to keep him upon the Throne.