

Clearly therefore these princes were successively in possession of the crown by a title different from the usual course of descent.

IT was towards the end of king William's reign, when all hopes of any surviving issue from any of these princes died with the duke of Gloucester, that the king and parliament thought it necessary again to exert their power of limiting and appointing the succession, in order to prevent another vacancy of the throne; which must have ensued upon their deaths, as no farther provision was made at the revolution, than for the issue of king William, queen Mary, and queen Anne. The parliament had previously by the statute of 1 W. & M. ft. 2. c. 2. enacted, that every person who should be reconciled to, or hold communion with, the see of Rome, should profess the popish religion, or should marry a papist, should be excluded and for ever incapable to inherit, possess, or enjoy, the crown; and that in such case the people should be absolved from their allegiance, and the crown should descend to such persons, being protestants, as would have inherited the same, in case the person so reconciled, holding communion, professing, or marrying, were naturally dead. To act therefore consistently with themselves, and at the same time pay as much regard to the old hereditary line as their former resolutions would admit, they turned their eyes on the princess Sophia, electress and duchess dowager of Hanover, the most accomplished princess of her age^c. For, upon the impending extinction of the protestant posterity of Charles the first, the old law of regal descent directed them to recur to the descendants of James the first; and the princess Sophia, being the youngest daughter of Elizabeth queen of Bohemia, who was the daughter of James the first, was the nearest of the antient blood royal, who was not incapacitated by professing the popish religion. On her therefore, and the heirs of her body, being protestants, the remainder of the

^c Sandford, in his genealogical history, published A.D. 1677, speaking (page 535) of the princesses Elizabeth, Louisa, and Sophia, daughters of the queen of Bohemia, says, the first was reputed the most learned, the second the greatest artist, and the last one of the most accomplished ladies in Europe.

crown,