



John of Gaunt

Sydney Armitage-Smith

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As younger brother of the Black Prince, and fourth son of Edward III, John of Gaunt was not destined to play an important role in the Plantagenet dynasty's fortunes.

Yet the Black Prince and Edward died before their time, and John found his influence increased with the accession of his young nephew, Richard II.

Throughout Richard's reign he would face accusations of seeking to usurp the throne, and as a result fluctuated in and out of favour for the rest of his life.

Never enjoying military successes as his brother or father had, John found his form in the dynastic games governing Europe, even claiming kingship of Castile and Leon by marriage.

When Richard exiled his eldest son and heir, Henry of Bolingbroke, it would prove a fatal blow for John.

Upon his death in 1399, Richard cancelled the legal documents of Henry's inheritance; Henry would soon return, and Richard's days as King would be numbered.

First published in 1904, Armitage-Smith's authoritative biography of John of Gaunt has set the mark for all those that have followed.

Sir Sydney Armitage-Smith (1876-1932) was a Scholar of New College, Oxford, and a Fellow of University College, London.

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