

Sir Richard Empson d 1510

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EMPSON, SIR RICHARD (d. 1510), minister of Henry VII., king of England, was a son of Peter Empson, an influential inhabitant of Towcester. Educated as a lawyer he soon attained considerable success in his profession, and in 1491 was one of the members of parliament for Northamptonshire and speaker of the House of Commons. Early in the reign of Henry VII. he became associated with Edmund Dudley (qv.) in carrying out the king's rigorous and arbitrary system of taxation, and in consequence he became very unpopular.

Retaining the royal favour, however, he was made a knight in 1504, and was soon high steward of the university of Cambridge, and chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster; but his official career ended with Henry's death in April 1509. Thrown into prison by order of the new king, Henry VIII., he was charged, like Dudley, with the crime of constructive treason, and was convicted at Northampton in October 1509. His attainder by the parliament followed, and he was beheaded on the 17th or 18th of August 1510. Empson left, so far as is known, a family of two sons and four daughters, and about 1513 his estates were restored to his elder son, Thomas.