

Classic Poetry Series

Isaac de Benserade
- poems -

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Isaac de Benserade(1612-1691)

Isaac de Benserade (baptized November 5, 1613 – October 10, 1691) was a French poet.

Born in Lyons-la-Forêt in the Province of Normandy, his family appears to have been connected with Richelieu, who bestowed on him a pension of 600 livres. He began his literary career with the tragedy of Cléopâtre (1635), which was followed by four other pieces. On Richelieu's death Benserade lost his pension, but became more and more a favourite at court, especially with Anne of Austria.

He provided the words for the court ballets, and was, in 1674, admitted to the Academy, where he wielded considerable influence. In 1676 the failure of his *Métamorphoses d'Ovide* in the form of rondeaux gave a blow to his reputation, but by no means destroyed his vogue with his contemporaries. Benserade may be best known for his sonnet on Job (1651). This sonnet, which he sent to a young lady with his paraphrase on Job, having been placed in competition with the *Urania* of Voiture, led to a dispute on their relative merits which long divided the whole court and the wits into two parties, styled respectively the Jobelins and the Uranists. The partisans of Benserade were headed by the prince de Conti and Mlle de Scudéry, while Mme de Montausier and Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac took the side of Voiture.

Some years before his death, Benserade retired to Gentilly, and devoted himself to a translation of the Psalms, which he nearly completed.

Sur Une Coquette

Une foule d'amants, que chez vous on tolère,
De vos facilités cherche à s'avantager;
La patience même en serait en colère,
Etes-vous un butin qu'il faille partager?

N'avez-vous rien à craindre, et rien à ménager?
Quoi! tous également attendent leur salaire
Avez-vous résolu de me faire enrager
A force de vouloir éternellement plaire ?

Enfin, si je suis las de ce que cent rivaux
Se disputent le prix qu'on doit à mes travaux,
Vous devez l'être aussi de ce qu'on en caquette

Votre honneur est en proie aux escrocs, aux filous
Et si vous excellez en l'art d'être coquette,
Je n'excelle pas moins en l'art d'être jaloux.

Isaac de Benserade