

Classic Poetry Series

Jean-Francois Sarasin
- poems -

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Jean-Francois Sarasin(1614 - 5 December 1654)

Jean François Sarrazin or Sarasin, was a French author.

Biography

Sarrazin was born at Hermanville, near Caen, the son of Roger Sarasin, treasurer-general at Caen.

He was educated at Caen, and later settled in Paris. As a writer of vers de société he rivalled Voiture, but he was never admitted to the inner circle of the hotel de Rambouillet. He was on terms of intimate friendship with Scarron, with whom he exchanged verses, with Ménage, and with Pellisson. In 1639 he supported Georges de Scudéry in his attack on Corneille with a Discours de la tragedie. He accompanied Léon Bouthillier, comte de Chavigny, secretary of state for foreign affairs, on various diplomatic errands. He was to have been sent on an embassy to Rome, but spent the money allotted for the purpose in Paris. This weakened his position with Chavigny, from whom he parted in the winter of 1643-1644.

To restore his fallen fortunes he married a rich widow, but the alliance was of short duration. He joined in the pamphlet war against Pierre de Montmaur, against whom he directed his satire, Bellum parasiticum (1644). He was accused of writing satires on Mazarin, and for a short time gave up the practice of verse. In 1648, supported by the cardinal de Retz and Madame de Longueville, he entered the household of Armand de Bourbon, prince de Conti, whose marriage with Mazarin's niece he helped to negotiate. He died of fever at Pézénas, in Languedoc on 5 December 1654.

His biographers have variously stated on inadequate evidence that his death was caused by the prince de Conti in a moment of passion, or that he was poisoned by a jealous husband. The most considerable of his poems were the epic fragments of Rollon conquérant, la guerre espagnole, with Dulot vaincu and the Pompe funèbre in honour of Voiture. As a poet he was overrated, but he was the author of two excellent pieces of prose narration, the Histoire du siège de Dunkerque (1649) and the unfinished Conspiralion de Waistein (1651). The Waistein has been compared for elegance and simplicity of style to Voltaire's Charles XII.

His Œuvres appeared in 1656, Nouvelles Œuvres (2 vols.) in 1674. His Poésies were edited in 1877 by Octave Uzanne with an introductory note. Much of his correspondence is preserved in the library of the Arsenal, Paris.

La Beauté Que Je Sers...

La beauté que je sers, et qui m'est si cruelle,
Se peut bien appeler un miracle des cieux,
C'est la peine du coeur, c'est le plaisir des yeux,
Et le divin objet d'une flamme immortelle.

La mère des amours ne fut jamais si belle,
Ses regards sont partout des vainqueurs glorieux ;
Et sa bouche qui forme un parler gracieux,
A l'éclat et l'odeur d'une rose nouvelle.

Un excès de beauté me force à l'adorer ;
Un excès de rigueur me défend d'espérer,
Sa beauté veut mon coeur, sa rigueur veut ma vie.

Ainsi le seul trépas a droit de me guérir,
Et je ne puis jamais, ayant connu Sylvie,
Ni la voir sans l'aimer, ni l'aimer sans mourir.

Jean-Francois Sarasin