Sir Benjamin Rudyerd Biography

Sir Benjamin Rudyerd

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Biography

Although his poems were not printed until after his death, Rudyerd's contemporary reputation as poet and critic brought him association with Ben Jonson, John Hoskyns, John Owen, and William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke. Epigrams 121, 122, and 123 in Jonson's 1616 *Workes* are addressed to Rudyerd and praise his virtues, friendship, and "learned muse." A poem written on seeing Rudyerd's portrait has been attributed to John Owen and Sir Henry Wotton. The canon of Rudyerd's poems is uncertain, mixed as his poems are with those of William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, and others in *Le Prince d'Amour* (1660) and *Poems* (1660); however, the poems in these collections are witty lyrics.

Rudyerd was the son of James Rudyerd of Hartley, Hampshire, by Margaret, daughter and heiress of Lawrence Kidwelly of Winchfield. He was educated at Winchester school and matriculated as a member of St. John's College, Oxford, on 15 January 1588 but may not have graduated. Anthony Wood dates his matriculation as 4 August 1587. On 18 April 1600 he was admitted to the Inner Temple; on 24 October 1600 he was called to the bar. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Henry Harington and a kinswoman of William Herbert. They had one son, William. Rudyerd was knighted on 30 March 1618 and granted on 17 April 1618 the post of surveyor of the court of wards for life. In 1647 he was granted six thousand pounds to compensate for the abolition of the post by the Long Parliament. In Parliament Rudyerd represented the boroughs of Portsmouth in 1620, 1624, and 1625, Old Sarum in 1626, Downton in 1628, and Wilton in 1640. Generally Rudyerd supported Charles I, but he occasionally supported the rights of the individual against the monarchy. On 4 December 1630 he was one of the original incorporators of the Providence Company, one of many companies which financed colonization in America. His support for the Presbyterians led to his arrest and brief imprisonment on 6 December 1648. He was buried in the church of West Woodhey in Berkshire. He wrote his own epitaph, which begins "Fond world leave off this foolish trick / Of making epitaphs upon the dead; / Rather go write them on the quick."