

## *A Music Tutor in Love*

Thomas Whythorne, *The Autobiography*, ed. James M. Osborn (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 63–72.



portrait of Thomas Whythorne, c.1590

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NB. The events narrated by Whythorne took place about 1556–1557, some eight years before the birth of William Shakespeare.

I hoped to become a married man, with the rest of that holy estate. For my hap, at that time, was to be acquainted with a young gentlewoman who, not only for her gifts of nature, was man's meet; but also for her gifts of the mind, and possibility of living, was worthy to be looked on and sued to for marriage.

At this time, lo, if the former good opinion that I had of myself had not been, as it were, augmented by the knowledge that I had got by my travel beyond the seas and experience at home, my courage would have been marvelously daunted and abated in this enterprise, because that my ability and wealth was so small in comparison of hers. Yet, after I had considered a little while with myself, and calling to mind how a great many that I did know had achieved as great enterprises as that, and that faint heart never got fair lady, I determined with myself to give the assault, whatsoever became in the end thereof.

And, upon that resolution, after that I had furnished myself with convenient apparel and jewels so well as I could (with the glorious show of the which, among other things, a young maiden must be wooed), I took on me this foresaid conquest and enterprise.

About this time, I had read a pretty saying, the which to follow I thought should be very expedient for me to do, not only at all times else, but chiefly at this time. The which saying thus beginneth: 'Fair speech in presence, with good report in absence, and like manners in fellowship, obtaineth great friendship.' And because I would print the substance of this saying the deeper in my remembrance, I made it thus in meter:

*The pleasant and the gentle speech, where countenance like doth show,  
 Courteous behavior and gesture, where manners mild do grow,  
 Of all things in absence to make the best with good report,  
 Doth win and keep faithful friendship, where reason doth resort.*

At this time I had gotten two or three pretty ditties made of love, the which, because I durst not deliver to her in writing for fear of afterclaps, I would sing them oftentimes unto her on the virginals or lute; by the which I made my first entrance into my suit unto her. And as I saw how she liked to hear them, then would I enter into talk of the same matter in such sort as I did see that time and place was convenient for the purpose.

Then, instead of giving of rich gifts, I did supply the want of the same (according to my skill, and as time served) with all other kinds of favors, ceremonies, and dutifulness, appertaining to a lover's services. In the which I did observe the disposition and delight of my love, because that that service which is acceptable to one, will not be so to another.

Nevertheless, I determined with myself that, if I did not obtain my suit (whatsoever I did or said that I would do for her sake), that I would not become a right Cupidian in heart. In this sort of suit, when I had spent a certain time, my hap was to have this or the like answer of her:

*I thank you for your good will, but I pray you be content, and speak no more unto me of your suit. For that possibility of living, which I have, is not so certain but that it dependeth wholly upon the good will and pleasure of my parents. And therefore, if I should not be ruled by them in giving my consent in marriage, I should have nothing of them to live by hereafter.*

This answer of hers neither pleased me nor greatly displeased me, for I am never greatly troubled with anything that I would come to pass, longer than I am in doubt thereof. And I, being thus friendly said nay, replied to her again and said,

*I do thank you for your gentle answer and nay to my request. Now ye must give me leave to withdraw, by little and little as I may, some of the great affection which hitherto I have unfeignedly borne unto you; lest that the burden thereof, not being somewhat by you eased, it might turn me to more grief than I shall be well able to bear.*

Upon the which words of mine, I did perceive, by some words of hers, that she was not willing that I should withdraw any part of the good will which I seemed to bear her. For the holding of the which, whether it was counterfeit or earnest, she used such friendship and good countenance towards me then, as I began to doubt of her former answer: whether it was to try me how much I loved her, or as the property of some women is to refuse that which is offered them, and are willing to take hold of that which is going from them (as I was then from her).

And therefore I, not willing to lose her good will if I might have it, partly for the present commodity that I had by her (for she was my scholar), but chiefly in hope to have her such a scholar (as I should have had still), I seemed to gratify every jot of her friendship which she used toward me; and made her believe that, whatsoever I had said before, my love should continue always firm toward her.

But woe was me! This fire could not be kept so close but that some sparks were perceived to fly abroad, whereby, at length, this love of ours was detected and known to divers in the house where we were. Wherefore there was secret means found, not only to hinder our loves, but also to separate them.

Among the which was one: it was told my love that I had reported something of her, the which did sound very ill unto her. Whereupon (not charging me with my fault unto her, whereby I might have answered and satisfied her), she grew into a sudden strangeness and glumming countenance towards me; and also would take occasions, before the party who had so incensed her, to give me overthwart language. When I perceived this and had learned the cause thereof, I grew into some perplexity therewith, because she would conceive such a great displeasure against me, and would not put me to my purgation.

Yet I took it to be but the part of a shrew, and that a shrew profitable may be borne withal of a man reasonable. Wherefore, to ease my mind, I made this sonnet following:

*Shall I this woe sustain,  
Which is come by mischance,  
And have no ease again,  
But still to have grievance?*

*Then patience great the salve must be,  
Wherewith to heal this sore,  
Till that my God will send to me  
A remedy therefore.*

After that my shrewish love had miscognized me a certain [number] of times, as partly is aforesaid, at length I took heart agrace, and told her when she did misuse me, that if she would not leave those jibes and taunts, she would drive me to do that which I was very loath to do. But these words would not help one jot, and she not so satisfied, did not let to blast out despitefully unto me such secret words as I had told her in counsel.

Whereupon I fell out with her (before her counsellor) in such sort as, if I had not had some hold in her heart, she would never have been friends with me again. For, the longer I do bear injuries, the greater is my fury when I do let it slip. (I am not ignorant of the opinion which two sorts of people have of me: that is to say, those whose wills do surmount their reasons, and such whose reasons rule their wills. The first sort do say I will be soon angry; and the second sort say that, as I am no common giver of occasions of offences to others, and as I like not to offend, so I am loath to bear many offences. Assuredly the second sort be not so much deceived in me as the first.)

But again to my purpose. By this aforesaid, ye may perceive that, when friends in falling out do bewray the secrets that hath passed between them in the time of their friendliness, how easy a matter it is to make them fall at a jar; and how hard a matter it is to reconcile them together again. Jesus Sirach saith, in Chapter 22:

*Whoso casteth a stone at the birds frayeth them away, and he that blasphemeth his friend breaketh friendship. Though [thou] drewest a sword at thy friend, yet despair not; if he speaketh sourly, fear not; for ye may be agreed together again, except it be that thou blaspheme*

*him, disdain him, open his secrets, and wound him traitorously, for all such things shall drive away friendship.*

Here will I begin where I left afore, touching the ages of mankind, what humors have most dominion in every age. For, as the blood reigneth chiefly in the *juventute* [youth], the which is from the twenty-fifth until forty years of age, which is called the second and last part of the young man's age; so the humor named choler doth chief reign in this second and last part of the young man's age. And at this time was I entered three or four years into this age. Wherefore, as anger and raging is a common matter with them in whom this choler doth abound, so ought all such as be troubled and oppressed with it to correct it by the rules of physic, and to bridle the fiery effects that it worketh with the strong bit of reason.

Now when I had bethought me a little while of that which was of late passed, I did somewhat mislike with the same. Yet rather for that I could not then temper myself better than I did, whereby I might have hindered the state of my health and also have purchased me some trouble, than for that I fell out with her, who, although I gave her warning afore, would needs give me cause to break my patience. A consideration of the harm, that might be gotten by this anger aforesaid, caused me to write this sonnet following, to put me in mind to beware of the like hereafter:

*In weal and woe be patient,  
Let not fury thy heart possess:  
For she always the same doth rent,  
And brings it oft in great distress.  
Wherefore, if thou wilt live in rest,  
In no wise harbour such a guest.*

After that I had made this foresaid sonnet, I made these two sonnets following in the commendation of patience, because it is a virtue that a great many have need of:

*To overcome by patience, where wrongs have been offered,  
Or to be stayed therewith from will that would be revenged,*

*To find out such, in this said sort possessed with this virtue,  
Is hard to do, so as the same have always perfect show.*

Otherwise of the same:

*For to reclaim to friend a forward foe,  
Or bring to pass affairs weighty and great,  
If patience chiefly doth work it so,  
As Virtue rare it may be throned in seat.  
For such in whom that thing is so to find,  
Though thick be sown, yet most spring out of kind.*

In the meanwhile that I was debating with myself of the passions past and devising upon patience (of the which an ounce and half might hardly have been found in us both at that instant of our foresaid brawl), this foresaid broil was a little overblown; and my gentle-woman had so well considered of the matter, that she acknowledged to have given a little too much credit to the makebate aforesaid. Wherefore she seemed to repent her for that she had so misused me; and I made semblant likewise to accept the same in good part. So that after this reconciliation (for a short time), the falling out of lovers was the renewal of love.

The which being espied, there was always means found to hinder the same. And that it might be the surer put out of doubt, and my nose out of joint, there was secret means wrought to bring an heir of great living to be a suitor unto her for marriage.

Her father was a lawyer, and therefore I had the less hope to have gotten his good will in this enterprise, if I had sued unto him for it. The proverb saith that like will to like. And then how should I have brought his good will on my side? For as the livings of those of my profession be gotten of them that do delight in concord, so do the lawyers live chiefly by those who do delight in discord. I may say well enough that they do delight in discord who, rather than they will yield to a reasonable agreement in causes of lawing, will, for the furthering of their self-wills, by lawing fill the lawyers' purses and make themselves beggars.

This aforesaid touching lawyers bringeth to my remembrance how that one said to me, on a time after this said broil between my

love and me, that and if he had been in my case and place when time was, that there was neither gentleman nor lawyer should have feared him for doing of that which I might have done.

“Why,” quoth I to him, “do you know that matter?”

“Yea,” quoth he, “that I do.”

“Then keep counsel,” quoth I.

When I had somewhat considered of the premisses, and perceived that I should never bring my loving purpose to a better pass; being also persuaded that the proverb is true which saith that, *Be it far or be it nigh, marriage is always destiny*, and that my destiny was not to have her to my wife, I forced my will to yield to reason, seeming to set the foregoing of that light, which I could come by and enjoy. Whereupon I made this sonnet following:

*In friends of each estate,  
Look for equality to be always  
Of mind, of wealth, and honours eke,  
Else soon they swerve and part away.*

The better to pass quietly away with this said trouble, I called to my remembrance a pretty persuasion that a gentleman once used unto a friend of his, whom he perceived to be troubled in mind for that he could not obtain and possess his love. To whom he said that he, in his days, had been a suitor to above twenty women, and the forgoing of them all did not so much grieve and vex him, as did the present possessing of her whom he then had.

And so, peradventure, might I have had a cause to say also. For goods and possessions be not always permanent and abiding with some; and also we may see many times that young saints do prove to be old devils. Also, to further my conceit and help me now at a pinch, I called to my remembrance an old proverb, which saith that *Absence causeth forgetfulness*, which saying is to be embraced among those lovers which cannot enjoy their loves.