

**A LITTLE BOOK OF  
ENGLISH SONNETS**

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A Little Book of English Sonnets by Bowyer Nichols

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**BOWYER NICHOLS**

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ENGLISH SONNETS**





*Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey.  
From a drawing by Holbein.*



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A LITTLE BOOK  
OF 12476  
ENGLISH  
SONNETS

*WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION*

By BOWYER NICHOLS

*WITH A PORTRAIT FROM A DRAWING*

By HOLBEIN

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"Un sonnet demande un plan comme un poème épique,  
et ce qu'il y a de plus difficile à composer, en poésie comme  
en peinture, c'est une figure seule."

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.



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## INTRODUCTION

It is not proposed here to enter into the vexed question of the sonnet's origin. The matter often and learnedly treated still offers scope for conjecture and research, though it may be doubted whether the theory which would attribute it like other ingenious and complicated forms of verse to Provençal invention can ever be more than a pious opinion, permissible to French sentiment. The early Italian poets believed their art to have been derived from Sicily, and modern writers have attempted to trace it thence a step further back to the Arabs, by whom the island was occupied in the tenth century. It is to the Italians at any rate that the sonnet owes its consecration as a literary form. In Italy it had been practised with assiduity and precision for several generations before Petrarch, and its use by Dante would have secured its immortality. But it is in reality to one poet alone that its universal currency is due. The father and patron of all sonneteers is Francesco Petrarca, and 'hither as to their fountain' they have repaired ever since. In the sonnet Petrarch found ready to his hand an instrument which exactly suited his genius. During a