

Letter from John Donne to Sir George More, 1601/1602 March 1: autograph manuscript signed, Papers of the More family of Loseley Park, Surrey. Transcription by Early Modern Manuscripts Online (EMMO). MS L.b.532, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.

leaf 1 recto

Sir

If I could fear, that in so much worthiness as is in you, there were no Mercy, or if these weights oppressed only my shoulders, and my fortunes, and not my conscience, and hers, whose good is dearer to me by much than my life, I should not thus trouble you with my letters. But when I see that this storm hath shaken me at root, in my lords favor, where I was well planted, and have just reason to fear, that those ill reports which Malice hath raised of me, may have troubled her, I can leave no honest way untried to remedy these miseries, nor find any way more honest then this, out of an humble and repentant heart, for the fault done to you, to beg both your pardon and assistance in my suite to my lord. I should wrong you as much again, as I did, if I should think you sought to destroy me. But though I be not hedlongly destroyed, I languish, and rust dangerously. From seeking preferments abroad, my love and Conscience restrains me. From hoping for them here, my lords disgracings cut me of. My Imprisonments, and theirs whose love to me brought them to it, hath already cost me 40^l. And the love of my friends, though it be not utterly grounded upon my fortunes, yet I know suffers somewhat, in these long and uncertain disgraces of mine. I therefore humbly beseech you, to have so charitable a pity, of what I have, and do, and must suffer, as to take to yourself the Comfort, of having saved from such destruction, as your just Anger might have laid upon him a sorrowful and honest man. I was bold in my last letter to beg leave of you, that I might write to your Daughter. Though I understood thereupon, that after the Thursday you were not displeased that I should, yet I have not nor will not without your knowledge do it. But now I beseech you that I may; since I protest before god, it is the greatest of my afflictions, not to do it. In all the world is not more true sorrow, then in my heart, nor more understanding of true repentance then in yours; And therefore God, whose pardon in such cases is never denied, gives me leave to hope, that you will favorably consider my necessities. To his merciful guiding, and protection I commend you, and cease to trouble you. 1st March 1601.

Yours in all humbleness
and dutiful obedience
John Donne

leaf 1 verso || leaf 2 recto

leaf 2 verso

To the right worshipful
Sir George More knight.