

**Letter from John Donne to Sir Thomas Egerton, 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.533, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.**

leaf 1 recto

That offence which was to God in this Matter, his Mercy hath assured
my Conscience, is pardoned. The Commissioners who minister his Anger
and Mercy incline also to remit it. Sir George More, of
whose learning and wisdom, I have good knowledge, and therefore
good hope of his Moderation, hath said, before his last going, that
he was so far from being any Cause or Mover of my punishment
or disgrace that if it fitted his reputation, he would be a suitor
to your Lordship for my restoring. All these Irons are knowed of; yet
I perish in as heavy fetters, as ever, whilst I languish under your
Lordship's Anger. How soon my History is dispatched! I was carefully
and honestly bred; enjoyed an indifferent fortune; I had,
(and I had understanding enough to value it) the sweetness
and security of a freedom and independency; without marking
out to my hopes, any place of profit, I had a desire to be your
Lordship's servant; by the favor which your good Son's love to me, obtained,
I was 4 years your Lordship's Secretary, not dishonest, nor greedy.
The sickness of which I died, is, that I begone in your Lordship's house, this
love. Where I shall be buried, I know not. It is late now, for me
(but that Necessity, as it hath continually an Autumn and a withering,
so it hath ever a spring, and must put forth) to begin that
Course, which some years past, I proposed, to travail; though I could
now do it, not much disadvantageably. But I have some bridle
upon me now, more then then, by my Marriage of this
gentlewoman: in providing for whom, I can and will show myself
very honest, though not so fortunate. To seek preferment
here, with any but your Lordship were a Madness. Every great Man, to
whom I shall address any such suite, will silently dispute the
Case, and say, would my Lordship's keeper so disgracefully have imprisoned
him, and flung him away, if he had not done some other
great fault, of which we hear not? So that to the burden of
my true weaknesses, I shall have this Addition, of a very prejudicial
suspicion, that I am worse, then, I hope, your Lordship doth
think me, or would that the world should think. I have

leaf 1 verso

therefore no way before me; but must turn back to your Lordship, who
knows, that Redemption was no less work then Creation. I know
my fault so well, and so well acknowledge it, that I protest
I have not so much as inwardly grudged, nor startled at the
punishment. I know your Lordship's disposition so well, as though in course
of Justice, it be of proof against clamours of Offenders, yet it
is not strong enough to resist itself, and I know itself
naturally inclines it to pity. I know mine own necessity

out of which I humbly beg, that your Lordship will so much entender your heart towards me, as to give me leave to come into your presence. Affliction, Misery, and destruction are not there; and every where else, where I am, they are.

1st March 1601.

Your Lordship's
most poor and
most penitent
servant
John Donne.

leaf 2 recto

leaf 2 verso

To the right honorable
my very good Lord and
Master, Sir Thomas Egerton
knight, Lord keeper of
the great Seal of
England.