

**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 w<sup>ch</sup> was to god in this Matter, his Mercy hath assurd  
my Conscience, ys pardoned. The Commission<sup>ers</sup> who minister his An=  
ger and Mercy encline also to remitt yt. Sr George More, of  
whose learning and wisdom, I haue good knowledge, and therefore  
good hope of his Modera<sup>con</sup>, hath sayd, before his last goinge, y<sup>t</sup>  
he was so far from being any Cause or Mouer of my punishment  
or disgrace that if yt fitted his reputa<sup>con</sup>, he would be a sutor  
to y<sup>r</sup> lp for my restoringe. All these Irons are knoed of; yett  
I perish in as heavy fetters, as euer, whilst I languish vnder y<sup>r</sup>  
lps Anger. How soone my History is dispatchd! I was care=  
fully and honestly bred; enioyd an indifferent fortune; I had,  
(and I had vnderstandinge inough to valew yt) the sweetnes  
and security of a freedome and indepency; w<sup>th</sup>owt markinge  
owt to my hopes, any place of profitt, I had a desire to be y<sup>r</sup>  
lps seruant; by the fauor which y<sup>r</sup> good Sonns loue to me, ob=  
teind, I was 4 years yo<sup>r</sup> lps Secretary, not dishonest, nor gredy.  
The sicknes of w<sup>ch</sup> I dyed, ys, that I begonne in yo<sup>r</sup> lps house, y<sup>is</sup>  
loue. Wher I shalbe buried, I know not. It ys late now, for me  
(but y<sup>t</sup> Necessity, as yt hath continually an Autumne and a wytheringe,  
so yt hath euer a springe, and must put forthe) to beginne that  
Course, w<sup>ch</sup> some years past, I purposd, to trauaile; though I could  
now do yt, not much disaduantadgeably. But I haue some bri=  
dle vpon me now, more then then, by my Marriadge of this  
gentlewoman: in prouiding for whom, I can and wyll show mymy  
self very honest, though not so fortunate. To seek p<sup>r</sup>ferm<sup>t</sup>  
here, w<sup>th</sup> any but yo<sup>r</sup> lps were a Madnes. Euery great Man, to  
whom I shall address any such suite, wyll silently dispute the  
Case, and say, would my L: keeper so disgraciously haue impri=  
sond him, and flung him away, if he had not donne some other  
great fault, of w<sup>ch</sup> wee hear not? So that to the burden of  
my true weaknesses, I shall haue this Addi<sup>con</sup>, of a very p<sup>r</sup>iudi=  
ciall suspicion, that I ame worse, then, I hope, yo<sup>r</sup> lps dothe  
think me, or would that the world should thinke. I haue

leaf 1 verso

therefore no way before me; but must turn back to yo<sup>r</sup> lps, who  
knowes, that Redemtion was no less worke then Creation. I know  
my fault so well, and so well acknowledge yt, that I protest  
I haue not so much as inwardly grudgd, nor startled at the  
punishm<sup>t</sup>. I know yo<sup>r</sup> lps disposi<sup>con</sup> so well, as though in course  
of Iustice, yt be of proofe against clamors of Offendors, yet yt  
ys not strong inough to resist yt selfe, and I know yt selfe

naturally enclines yt to pittie. I know myne own necessity  
owt of w<sup>ch</sup> I humbly beg, that yo<sup>r</sup> Ip̄ wyll so much entender yo<sup>r</sup>  
hart towards me, as to giue me leaue to come into yo<sup>r</sup> p<sup>r</sup>sence.  
Affliction, Misery, and destruction are not there; and euery  
where els, wher I ame, they are.

1<sup>o</sup> Martii 160i.

Yo<sup>r</sup> Ip̄s

most poore and

most penitent

serunt

I: Donne.

**leaf 2 recto**

**leaf 2 verso**

To the right honorable  
my very good L: and  
Master, S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Eger=  
ton knight, L keeper of  
the great Seal of En=  
gland.