

**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.