

**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 assur'd
my Conscience, ys pardoned. The Commissioners who minister his An=
ger and Mercy encline also to remitt yt. Sir George More, of
whose learning and wisdom, I haue good knowledge, and therefore
good hope of his Moderacion, hath sayd, before his last goinge, *that*
he was so far from being any Cause or Mouer of my punishment
or disgrace that if yt fitted his reputacion, he would be a sutor
to *your lordship* for my restoringe. All these Irons are knoed of; yett
I perish in as heavy fetters, as euer, whilst I languish vnder *your*
lordships 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 independency; *withowt* markinge
owt to my hopes, any place of profitt, I had a desire to be *your*
lordships seruant; by the fauor which *your* good Sonns loue to me, ob=
teind, I was 4 years *your lordships* Secretary, not dishonest, nor gredy.
The sicknes of *which* I dyed, ys, that I begonned in *your lordships* house, *this*
loue. Wher I shalbe buried, I know not. It ys late now, for me
(but *that* Necessity, as yt hath continually an Autumne and a wytheringe,
so yt hath euer a springe, and must put forthe) to beginne that
Course, *which* 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 preferment
here, with any but *your lordship* were a Madnes. Euery great Man, to
whom I shall address any such suite, wyll silently dispute the
Case, and say, would my *Lordship* keeper so disgraciously haue impri=
sond him, and flung him away, if he had not donne some other
great fault, of *which* wee hear not? So that to the burden of
my true weaknesses, I shall haue this Addicion, of a very preiudi=
ciall suspicion, that I ame worse, then, I hope, *your lordship* 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 *your lordship*, who
knowes, that Redemption 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
punishment. I know *your lordships* disposicion so well, as though in course
of Iustice, yt be of prooffe against clamors of Offendors, yet yt
ys not strong inough to resist yt selfe, and I know yt selfe
naturally enclines yt to pitty. I know myne own necessity

owt of *which* I humbly beg, that *your lordship* wyll so much entender your
hart towards me, as to giue me leaue to come into *your* presence.
Affliction, Misery, and destruction are not there; and euery
where els, wher I ame, they are.

1^o Martii 160i.

Your *lordships*
most poore and
most penitent
serunt
Iohn Donne.

leaf 2 recto

leaf 2 verso

To the right honorable
my very good *Lord* and
Master, Sir Thomas Eger=
ton knight, *Lord* keeper of
the great Seal of En=
gland.