

**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 assurd  
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 wisdome, 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 begonne 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 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 *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<sup>o</sup> 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.