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Dr. Donne & Sir Edmund Gosse

by [Jeremy Bernstein](#)

Exploring the meeting of two dissimilar men

In 1917 Albert Einstein published a paper on cosmology—indeed the first significant modern paper on the subject—that was sufficiently implausible that he felt compelled at one point to write, “In the present paragraph I shall conduct the reader over the road I have myself traveled, rather a rough and winding road, because otherwise I cannot hope that he will take much interest in the result at the end of the journey.” When it comes to the principal subject of this essay, Sir Edmund Gosse, I know what he meant, and for this reason I shall conduct the “reader over the road” that led me to that rather unlikely figure. In 1983 I was sent for review Daniel Boorstin’s *Discoverers* —a book that gave a kaleidoscopic and not always accurate tour of the entire history of scientific discovery in 745 pages. On page 316, I came across the following laconic sentence: “In 1619, when Donne visited the Conti ...

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