

**Letter from John Donne, The Savoy, London, to Sir George More, 1601/1602
February 2: autograph manuscript signed, Papers of the More family of
Loseley Park, Surrey. Transcription by Early Modern Manuscripts Online
(EMMO). MS L.b.526, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.**

leaf 1 recto

S^r

If a very respectiue feare of y^r displeasure, and a doubt, that my L: whom I know owt of yo^r worthines to loue yo^w much, would be so compassionate wth yo^w, as to add his anger to y^{rs}, did not so much increase my sicknes, as that I cannot stir I had taken the boldnes, to haue donne the Office of this letter, by wayting vpon yo^w my self To haue giuen yo^w truthe, and clearnes of this Matter between yo^r Daughter and me; and to show to yo^w plainly the limits of o^r fault, by w^{ch} I know y^r wisdome wyll proportion the punishm^t. So long since, as at her being at yorkehouse, this had founda^{co}n and so much then of promise and Contract built vpon yt, as wthowt violence to Conscience might not be shaken. At her lyeng in town this last parliam^t, I found meanes to see her twice or thrice we both knew the obliga^{co}ns that lay vpon vs, and wee adventurd equally, and about three weeks before Christmas we married. And as at the doinge, there were not vsd aboue fyue persons, of w^{ch} I protest to yo^w by my salvation, there was not one that ^{had} any dependence or relation to yo^w, so in all the passage of it, did I forbear to vse any such person, who by furtheringe of yt might violate any trust or duty towards yo^w. The reasons, why I did not foreacquaint yo^w wth it, (to deale wth the same plainnes that I have vsd) were these. I knew my p^rsent estate lesse then fitt for her; I knew, (yet I knew not why) that I stood not right in y^r Opinion; I knew that to haue giuen any intima^{co}n of yt had been to impossibilitate the whole Matt^r. And then hauing those ^{honest} purposes in o^r harts, and those fetters in o^r Consciences, me thinks we should be pardoned, if o^r fault be but this, that wee did not by fore-reuealinge of yt, consent to o^r hindrance and torment. S^t, I acknowledge my fault to be so great, as I dare scarce offer any other prayer to yo^w in myne own behalf, then this, to beleuee this truthe, that I neyth^r had dishonest end nor meanes. But for her whom I tender much more, then my fortunes, or lyfe (els I would I might neyth^r ioy in this lyfe, nor enioy the next) I humbly beg of yo^w, that she may not, to her danger, feele the terror of yo^r sodaine anger. I know this letter shall find yo^w full of passion but I know no passion can alter yo^r reason and wisdome; to w^{ch} I aduenture to comend these perticulers; That yt ys irremediably donne; That if yo^w incense my l, yo^w Destroy her and me; That yt is ^{easye} to giue vs happines; And that my Endevors and industrie, if it please yo^w to prosper them, may soone make me somewhat worthyer of her. If any take the

leaf 1 verso

aduantage of yo^r displeasure against me, and fill yo^w wth ill thoughts of me, my Comfort is that yo^w know, that fayth and thanks are due to them onely, that speak when theyr informacōns might do good w^{ch} now yt cannot work towards any party. For my Excuse I can say nothing except I knew, what were sayd to yo^w. S^r, I have truly told yo^w this Matt^r; and I humbly beseeche yo^w, so to deale in yt, as the persuasions of Nature, reason, wisdom, and Christianity shall informe yo^w; And to accept the vowes, of one whom yo^w may now rayse or scatter, w^{ch} are, that as all my love ys directed vnchangeably vpon her, so all my labors shall concur to her contentment, and [^]to show my humble Obedienc to yo^r selfe.

From my lodginge by ye
Sauoy. 2^o Februa: 160i
Yo^{rs} in all Duty and
humblenes
I. Donne

leaf 2 recto

leaf 2 verso

To the right wor: S^r
George More kt