

**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<sup>r</sup>

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

leaf 1 verso

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

From my lodginge by ye  
Sauoy. 2<sup>o</sup> Februa: 160i  
Yo<sup>rs</sup> in all Duty and  
humblenes  
I. Donne

leaf 2 recto

leaf 2 verso

To the right wor: S<sup>r</sup>  
George More kt