

**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

Sir

If a very respective fear of your displeasure, and a doubt, that my Lordship whom I know out of your worthiness to love you much, would be so compassionate with you, as to add his anger to yours, did not so much increase my sickness, as that I cannot stir I had taken the boldness, to have done the Office of this letter, by waiting upon you myself To have given you truth, and clearness of this Matter between your Daughter and me; and to show to you plainly the limits of our fault, by which I know your wisdom will proportion the punishment. So long since, as at her being at York House, this had foundation and so much then of promise and Contract built upon it, as without violence to Conscience might not be shaken. At her lying in town this last parliament, I found means to see her twice or thrice we both knew the obligations that lay upon us, and we adventured equally, and about three weeks before Christmas we married. And as at the doing, there were not used above five persons, of which I protest to you by my salvation, there was not one that had any dependence or relation to you, so in all the passage of it, did I forbear to use any such person, who by furthering of it might violate any trust or duty towards you. The reasons, why I did not foreacquaint you with it, (to deal with the same plainness that I have used) were these. I knew my present estate less then fit for her; I knew, (yet I knew not why) that I stood not right in your Opinion; I knew that to have given any intimation of it had been to impossibilitate the whole Matter. And then having those honest purposes in our hearts, and those fetters in our Consciences, me thinks we should be pardoned, if our fault be but this, that we did not by fore-revealing of it, consent to our hindrance and torment. Sir, I acknowledge my fault to be so great, as I dare scarce offer any other prayer to you in mine own behalf, than this, to believe this truth, that I neither had dishonest end nor means. But for her whom I tender much more, than my fortunes, or life (else I would I might neither joy in this life, nor enjoy the next) I humbly beg of you, that she may not, to her danger, feel the terror of your sudden anger. I know this letter shall find you full of passion but I know no passion can alter your reason and wisdom; to which I adventure to commend these particulars; That it is irremediably done; That if you incense my lordship, you Destroy her and me; That it is easy to give us happiness; And that my Endeavours and industry, if it please you to prosper them, may soon make me somewhat worthier of her. If any take the

leaf 1 verso

advantage of your displeasure against me, and fill you with ill

thoughts of me, my Comfort is that you know, that faith and  
thanks are due to them only, that speak when their informations  
might do good which now it cannot work towards any party.  
For my Excuse I can say nothing except I knew, what were  
said to you. Sir, I have truly told you this Matter; and  
I humbly beseech you, so to deal in it, as the persuasions of  
Nature, reason, wisdom, and Christianity shall inform you;  
And to accept the vows, of one whom you may now raise or  
scatter, which are, that as all my love is directed unchangeably  
upon her, so all my labours shall concur to her contentment,  
and to show my humble Obedience to yourself.

From my lodging by the  
Savoy. 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1601  
Yours in all Duty and  
humbleness  
John Donne

**leaf 2 recto**

**leaf 2 verso**

To the right worshipful Sir  
George More knight