

**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 respectiue feare of *your* displeasure, and a  
doubt, that my *Lordship* whom I know owt of *your* worthines to loue yow much,  
would be so compassionate *with* yow, as to add his anger to *yours*, 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 yow  
my self To haue giuen yow truthe, and clearnes of this Matter  
between *your* Daughter and me; and to show to yow plainly the limits  
of *our* fault, by *which* I know *your* wisdome wyll proportion the punishment.  
So long since, as at her being at yorkehouse, this had foundacion and so  
much then of promise and Contract built vpon yt, as *withowt* violence  
to Conscience might not be shaken. At her lyeng in town this last  
parliament, I found meanes to see her twice or thrice we both knew  
the obligacions 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 *which* I protest to yow by my salvation,  
there was not one that <sup>had</sup> any dependence or relation to yow, 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 yow. The reasons, why  
I did not foreacquaint yow with it, (to deale with the same plainnes that I  
have vsd) were these. I knew my present estate lesse then fitt for her; I  
knew, (yet I knew not why) that I stood not right in *your* Opinion; I  
knew that to haue giuen any intimacion of yt had been to impossibilitate  
the whole Matter. And then hauing those <sup>honest</sup> purposes in *our* harts, and those  
fettters in *our* Consciencs, me thinks we should be pardoned, if *our* fault be but  
this, that wee did not by fore-reuealinge of yt, consent to *our* hindrance  
and torment. Sir, I acknowledge my fault to be so great, as I dare scarce  
offer any other prayer to yow in myne own behalf, then this, to beleuee this  
truthe, that I neyther had dishonest end nor meanes. But for her  
whom I tender much more, then my fortunes, or lyfe (els I would I might  
neyther ioy in this lyfe, nor enioy the next) I humbly beg of yow, that she  
may not, to her danger, feele the terror of *your* sodaine anger. I know  
this letter shall find yow full of passion but I know no passion can  
alter *your* reason and wisdome; to *which* I aduenture to commend these  
peticulers; That yt ys irremediably donne; That if yow incense  
my *lordship*, yow Destroy her and me; That yt is <sup>easye</sup> to giue vs happines; And  
that my Endeavors and industrie, if it please yow to prosper them, may  
soone make me somewhat worthyer of her. If any take the

leaf 1 verso

aduantage of *your* displeasure against me, and fill yow with ill

thoughts of me, my Comfort is that yow know, that fayth and  
thanks are due to them onely, that speak when theyr informa-  
tions might do good *which* now yt cannot work towards any party.  
For my Excuse I can say nothing except I knew, what were  
sayd to yow. Sir, I have truly told yow this Matter; and  
I humbly beseeche yow, so to deale in yt, as the persuasions of  
Nature, reason, wisdom, and Christianity shall informe yow;  
And to accept the vowes, of one whom yow may now rayse or  
scatter, *which* are, that as all my love ys directed vnchange-  
ably vpon her, so all my labors shall concur to her con-  
tentment, and <sup>^to</sup> show my humble Obedienc to your selfe.

From my lodginge by *the*  
Sauoy. 2<sup>o</sup> Februarii 160i  
Yours in all Duty and  
humblenes  
*Iohn* Donne

**leaf 2 recto**

**leaf 2 verso**

To the right *worshipful* Sir  
George More *knight*