

**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 ^{had} 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 ^{honest} 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 ^{easye} 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 ^{^to} show my humble Obedienc to your selfe.

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

leaf 2 recto

leaf 2 verso

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