

A RELIC.

LETTER FROM POPE GANGANELLI TO A
YOUNG COUNT.

Since you wish that I should lay down a plan to guide you, I shall simply trace out such a one as my weak understanding but strong friendship inspires. It shall be short. The Commandments of God, these first and sublime laws from whence all others are derived may be reduced to a few words. Precepts that are clear and founded upon reason as well as happiness, have no need of commentary or dissertation. Read every morning the parable of the Prodigal Son,—repeat the Psalm of Miserari, with an humble and contrite heart; that may serve for prayer.

Read some religious books in the course of the day, not like a slave to finish his task, but as a child of God, who returns to his father and hopes every thing from His mercy; and that it may not disgust you, your reading need not be long. Acquire the habit of going to mass as often as you can, but never fail on Sundays and festivals—assist them like a suppliant who beggeth pardon with hopes to obtain it. Make it a duty to scatter some charities every day into the bosoms of the poor, that you may repair the wrongs you have done them, in squandering on common pleasures and superfluities what was due to them. Renounce those companions who have estranged you from God, from yourself, and from your true friends, and from such new connections, as honor, decency and religion may avow.

It is easy to dismiss debauched associates, without affronting them. Speak openly to them of the plan of life you mean to pursue, propose to them to follow it, talk to them only of regretting the past, and forming good resolutions for the future, and they will soon disappear, and if they

return it will be a proof that they have altered their conduct; and then instead of shunning them, receive them with more pleasure than ever. Walk often, lest retirement should make you grow melancholy, and provide if possible some one for a companion. Walk alone as seldom as possible and especially in these beginnings while your resolutions are not well confirmed.

It may happen that by giving way to vague thoughts you may soon grow tired of yourself and again relapse into your former course of life. Read some agreeable but instructive books to entertain you in virtuous cheerfulness.

Melancholy is the wreck of young people who are employed about their conversion. They are always drawing a parallel between the dissipated life they have led, and the serious life, which is presented them, and they end by returning to their former courses. Take an exact account of your debts and your income, and by your economy you will find wherewith to pay your creditors. A man is always rich, when he is in the habit of depriving himself of indulgences, as he is always poor, while he refuses himself nothing. * * *

When opportunities offer of enjoying a little society do not refuse them, because you will be secured from the raillery of the world, which is fond of turning piety into ridicule. Dress like the rest of the world, according to your rank in life, without being either too foppish or too negligent. Free religion shuns extremes, it is only when counterfeited, that men affect a slovenly dress, a declining head, an austere countenance and a whining tone. * * *

You are still young enough to secure your heart with proper guards and fences. With your domestics, whose abilities and fidelity have been properly recommended to you, you should live as a master who knows the duties of humanity, and as a Christian who knows we are all equal