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A YOUNG MAN'S CREATION

From a recent Baccalaureate Sermon by
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YOUNG MEN! Life is before you. What will you create from it? * * * In Europe, among many others, there are six sculptures of celebrity. But they are not equally fascinating. Six artists faced uncut blocks of stone. They all had equal opportunities to win immortality of renown by the production of masterpieces of beauty. Three made repulsive and ingenious creations. These others won fame by winsome works of art. In fancy I watch them at their tasks. * * *

The sculptor of Rhodes chisels. He presents to art his Florentine group, known as "Laocoon and His Sons." Serpents entwine around the agonized victims to crush them. * * *

Sir Francis cuts his stone. He transfigures it into "The Athlete Struggling with the Python." It is artistically magnificent and repellent. * * *

Alfred Wolff confronts his marble. He produces "The Lion Leaping on the Horseman." Only the hand of a master of the chisel could produce this sculpture, but about this group the human affections never linger. * * *

Three others step to the front. Their imaginations have revelled in a realm of high artistic conceptions. * * *

Michael Angelo looks on a great cube of stone. From it he cuts his famous "Twin Cherubs," worthy of the admiration of men and angels. * * *

Pilon lavishes on a splendid specimen of marble his genius. It is transfigured into the radiant creation known as "The Three Graces, Bearing in Their Urn the Heart of the Second Henry." * * *

Canova applies his sharp tools to an impressive rock. From it he gives to the world his three graces, "Faith, Hope, and Love." * * *

Before you, young men, I stand in the sunset hours of a ministerial career covering more than half a century. In each one of you I behold a sculptor—a sculptor for time and a sculptor for eternity. Before each of you is the block that we call life. You are divinely directed to cut from it the priceless product of Character. Your tools are thoughts, words and deeds. What kind of characters will you carve for the vision of men and the verdict of God? What will you create—Serpents or Angels, Pythons or Cherubs, something repulsive or what the poet Keats calls "a thing of beauty and a joy forever?" You cannot shape character rightly unless the hand of God steadies your arm and guides each stroke of the chisel. Try patiently to shape character after the divine model placed before you in the ethics and example of the divine Teacher to whom Nicodemus came. So carve the block of Life that the progressive evolution may daily gain in symmetry and attractiveness. Then the figure of character will, in the after life, be invested with immortal beauty. * * *

My prayer for each of you is Charles Wesley's sublime invocation—

O that each in the day of His coming may say

"I have fought my way through,

I have finished the work Thou didst give me to do."

O that each from his Lord may receive the glad word,

"Well and faithfully done!

Enter into My joy and sit down on My throne!"