CHAPTER XI.

PATRIC PARK AND CELEBRATED MODERN SCULPTORS.

I HAVE since my youth been fond of the art and the society of sculptors. My earliest friend in that high department was Mr. E. H. Bailey, to whom the world owes the graceful statues of "Eve at the Fountain" and "Eve listening to the Voice," two of the noblest examples of the beautiful and pure nude which the chisel and the imagination of man have ever produced. I was also acquainted, at a somewhat later period, with Mr. Lough, whose fine ideal statue of "Satan" excited much admiration, and which, when it temporarily failed to find a purchaser, suggested to the Rev. Sidney Smith the idea that the best thing for the sculptor to do with it would be to present it to the Reform Club, to be set up in its noble hall, for the reason "that the Devil was the first Reformer, and came to grief in Heaven for the too great zeal, indiscre-

tion, and untimeliness with which he agitated the Reform question!"

A third sculptor with whom I was more or less intimate, was Mr. M. Cotes Wyatt, by whose invitation I lunched, with Dr. Richardson, of the *Times*, and eight or nine other gentlemen, at his foundry in Dudley Grove, Paddington, in the capacious belly of the great bronze horse which, with the counterfeit presentment of the Duke of Wellington on its back, was afterwards set up at Hyde Park Corner, on the arch opposite Apsley House, and formed for many years—until so recently as 1883 or 1884—the most prominent and painful monumental eye-sore in the metropolis. The guests on this occasion were somewhat cramped for elbow-room, but the host was all that a host should be; the viands were unexceptionable, the claret and champagne plentiful, the mirth and eloquence abundant.

The much-maligned statue did not really deserve the jibes and jeers that were levelled at it, and, had it been placed on a level with the ground, as I first saw it, or on a pedestal not above three or four feet high, would have been recognised as a fine work of art, which it undoubtedly was. But to place a bronze horse high up in the air was a mistake. The horse is a graceful animal, when seen on a level with the eye of the beholder; but, when seen at a high altitude, when its belly and legs appear to be its most prominent parts, or from

the top of an omnibus, when its back is more conspicuous than the remainder of its body, it does not impress the senses with any idea of beauty of outline. Placed on the summit of the arch, whatever intrinsic beauty the statue possessed was totally lost, and presented, from every point from which it was possible to view it, a spectacle of "hideosity." This word is not yet recognised English, but it expresses my meaning more strongly than any synonymous expression, and I therefore use it, with many apologies to any reader whose severe taste may feel offended at it.

I have paid friendly visits to the studios of Matthew Noble (whose fine busts of Richard Cobden and Oliver Cromwell stand in the hall of the Reform Club), of Foley, the sculptor of "Ino nursing Bacchus," and of Calder Marshall—still among us (1885)—destined, it is to be hoped, still to produce many fine specimens of the art which he adorns. But my two most particular and dearest friends among sculptors were Patric Park and Alexander Munro, both natives of Scotland, with both of whom I lived for many pleasant years in familiar intercourse.

Patric Park was one of the great unappreciated geniuses of his time. He was a man of powerful intellect, as well as powerful frame, a true artist of heroic mould and thought, who dwarfed the poor pygmies of the day in which his lot was cast by

conceptions too grand to find a market. He concealed under a somewhat rude and rough exterior as tender a heart as ever beat in a human bosom. Had he been an ancient Greek his name might have become immortal. Had he been a modern Frenchman, the art in which he excelled would have brought him in not only bread but fortune. But as he was only a portrayer of the heroic in the very prosaic country and time in which his lot was cast, it was as much as he could do to pay his way by the scanty rewards of an art which few people understood and which still fewer appreciated; and to waste upon the marble busts of rich men who had a fancy for that style of portraiture the talents, or rather the genius, which, had encouragement come, might have produced epics in stone to have rivalled the masterpieces of antiquity.

He was born in Glasgow in 1809, and I made his acquaintance in the *Morning Chronicle* office in 1842, when he was in the prime of his early manhood and five years my senior. He came to request the insertion of a modest paragraph in reference to a work of his, which had found a tardy purchaser, to be erected in the cemetery of Stirling. The paragraph was inserted, not as he wrote it, but with a kindly addition in praise of his work and of his genius. He came to the office the next day to know the writer's name; and, when the writer avowed himself, a friendship sprung up between

them which suffered no abatement during the too short life of the grateful man of genius, who for the first time had been publicly recognised by the humble pen of one who could command in these minor matters the columns of a powerful journal.

Park's nature was broad and bold, and scorned conventionalities and false pretence. George Outram, a lawyer, and editor of a Glasgow newspaper, author of several humorous songs and lyrics upon the odds and ends of legal practice, among which the "Annuity" survives in perennial youth in Edinburgh and Glasgow society, and brother of the gallant Sir James Outram of Indian fame, used to say of Park that he liked him because he was not smooth and conventional, and had all his "corners" about him. "There is not in the world," he said to me on one occasion, "another man with so many delightful "corners" in his character as Park. We are all of us much too smooth and rounded off. Give me Park, and genuine nature!"

Park had a very loud voice and sang Scotch songs, perhaps with more vehemence than many people would admire, but with a heart and appreciation that were pleasant to listen to. It is related that a deputation of Glasgow Bailies came up to London, with Provost Lumsden at their head, in reference to the Lock Katrine Water Bill, for the supply of Glasgow with pure water, which was then before Parliament, and that they invited their dis-

tinguished townsmen to dine with them at the Victoria Hotel, Euston Square. After dinner, Park was called upon for a song, and as there was nobody in the large dining-room but one old gentleman, who, according to the waiter, was very deaf, Park consented to sing, and sang, in his very best style, the triumphant Jacobite ballad of "Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye wauking yet?" till, as one of the Bailies said, "he made the rafters ring, and might have been heard at St. Paul's." The deaf gentleman, as soon as the song was concluded, made his way to the table, and, apologising for addressing a company of strangers, turned to Park, and said, with extraordinary fervour and emotion, "May God Almighty bless you, Sir, and pour His choicest blessings upon your head! For thirty years I have been stone deaf and have not heard the sound of the human voice. But I have heard your song, every word of it. God bless you! God bless you!"

Upon one occasion when we were travelling together in the Western Highlands, the captain of one of the Hutcheson steamers was exceedingly courteous and attentive to his passengers, and took great pains to point out all the picturesque objects on the route to those who were making the delightful journey for the first time. At one of the landing-places, the young Earl of Durham was taken on board with his servants, and from that moment the captain had neither eyes nor ears for

any other person in the vessel. He lavished the most obsequious and fulsome attentions upon his Lordship, and when Park asked him a question, cut him short with a rude and snappish reply, and went on with his toadying. Park was disgusted, and expressed his opinion of the captain in a manner more forcible than polite. As there was a break in the navigation in consequence of some repairs that were being effected in one of the locks, the passengers had to disembark and proceed by omnibus to another steamer that awaited their arrival at Loch Lochy.

Park mounted on the box by the side of the driver, and was immediately addressed by the captain, "Come down out of that, you Sir! That seat 's reserved for his Lordship!"

Park's anger flashed forth like an electric spark. "And who are *you*, Sir, that dare address a gentleman in that manner?"

"I am the captain of the boat, Sir, and I order you to come down out of that."

"Captain be hanged!" said Park. "The coachman might as well call himself a captain as you. The only difference between you is that he is the driver of a land omnibus and that you're the driver of an aquatic omnibus."

The young Earl laughed, and quietly took his place in the interior of the vehicle, leaving Park in undisputed possession of the box-seat.

His contempt for toadyism in all its shapes and manifestations was extreme. There was an eminent engineer of some repute in his day, with whom he had often come into acrimonious contact, and whom he especially disliked for his slavish subservience to rank and title. This gentleman, meeting Park one day in the street, said, "Mr. Park, I wish you not to talk about me. I am told that you said I was 'not worth a damn.' Is it true?"

"Well," replied Park, "it may be; but if I said so, I underrated you. I think you are worth two damns; and I damn you twice!"

On another occasion, when attending a soirée at Lady Byron's, he was so annoyed at finding no other refreshment than tea, which he did not care for, and very weak port-wine negus, which he detested as an unmanly and unheroic drink, that he took his departure, resolved to go in search of a stronger potation.

The footman in the hall, addressing him deferentially, said, "Shall I call your carriage, my Lord?"

"I'm not a lord," said Park.

"I beg pardon, Sir. Shall I call your carriage?"

"I have not got a carriage. Give me my walking-stick. And now," he added, slipping a shilling into the man's hand, "can you tell me of any decent public-house in the neighbour-

hood where I can get a glass of hot brandy and water?"

Park resided for a year or two in Edinburgh, and procured several commissions for the busts of medical, legal, literary, and other notabilities of the place, and, what was in a higher degree in accordance with his tastes, for a few life-size statues of characters in the poems and novels of Sir Walter Scott to complete the Scott Monument in Princes Street. But funds were wanting to pay the artist for all the statues that were required, and the work ceased. Park's statuettes, though worthy of the honour, were never erected, for what reason I have never thoroughly understood, though I believe that in after years, when funds were forthcoming, new artists were employed who wanted all the money for their own works.

Park also executed, without a commission, a gigantic model of a statue of Sir William Wallace, for whose name and fame he had the most enthusiastic veneration, with the idea that the patriotic feelings of the Scottish nation, would be so far excited by his work, as to justify an appeal to the public to set it up in bronze or marble [he preferred bronze], on the Calton Hill, amid other monuments to the memory of illustrious Scotsmen. But the deeds of Wallace were too far back in the gloom of bygone ages to excite much contemporary interest. The model was a noble work,

eighteen feet high, and wholly nude. Some of his friends, especially Mr. Alexander Russel of the *Scotsman*, suggested to him that a little drapery would be more in accordance with Scottish ideas than a figure so nude that it dispensed even with the customary fig-leaf. Park revolted at the notion of the fig-leaf. "A cowardly obscene subterfuge," he said. "To the pure all things are pure." There is nothing impure in nature, but only in the mind of man. Rather than disgrace my statue with the fig-leaf, I would dash the model to pieces." "But the drapery?" said his friends. "What I have done I have done, and I will not spoil my own design. Wallace was once a man, and if he had lived in the last century, and I had to model his statue, I would have draped it or put it in armour as if he had been the Duke of Marlborough or Prince Eugene. But the memory of Wallace is scarcely the memory of a man, but of a demi-god. Wallace is a myth, and as a myth he does not require clothes." "Yes, true," said the good-natured friend; "but you are anxious to procure the public support and the public guineas, and you 'll never get them for a naked giant." "Then I'll smash the model," said the indignant and dis-spirited artist. And he did so; and a great and beautiful work was lost to the world for ever.

At the time of our first acquaintance Park was somewhat smitten by the charms of a beautiful

young woman in Greenock, the daughter of one of his oldest and best friends. The lady had no knowledge of art, and scarcely knew what was meant by the word sculptor. She asked him one day whether he cut marble chimney-pieces. This was too much. He was *desillusionné*, and the amatory flame flickered out, no more to be lighted.

Park and I and the late Alexander Mackay, and three or four friends, were once together on the top of Ben Lomond, on a fine clear day in August 1846. The weather was lovely, but oppressively hot, and the fatigue of climbing was great, but not excessive. At the summit, so pure was the atmosphere, that, looking eastward, we could distinctly see Arthur's Seat that overlooks Edinburgh, and the Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth, twenty miles beyond. Looking westward, we could distinctly see Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde, and the whole diameter of Scotland. By a strange effect of the atmosphere, the peak of Goatfell in Arran, separated optically from the mountain by a belt of thick white cloud, seemed to be preternaturally raised to a height of at least 20,000 feet above the sea. I pointed it out to Park. "Nonsense!" he said; 'why Arran would be higher than the Himalayas if your notion were correct." "But I know the shape of the peak," I replied. "I have been on the top of Goatfell at least half-a-dozen times,

and would swear to it, as to the nose on your face." And as we were speaking the white cloud was dissipated, and the Himalayan peak seemed to descend slowly and take its place on the body of Goatfell, from which it had appeared to have been dissevered. "Well," he said, "things are not what they seem; and I maintain that it was as high as the Himalayas or Chimborazo while the appearance lasted."

The sun was at this time in its noon-tide glory, and Park, inspired by the grandeur of the scene, preached us a very eloquent little sermon, addressing himself to the sun, on the inherent dignity and beauty of Sun worship, as practised by the modern Parsees and the ancient Druids. He concluded by a lament that his own art was powerless to represent or personify the grand forces of Nature, as the Greeks had attempted to do. "The Apollo Belvidere," he said, "is the representation of a beautiful, a divine young man. But it is not Apollo. Art can represent Venus, the perfection of female beauty, and Mars, the perfection of manly vigour; but Apollo, no! Yet I think I would have tried Apollo myself, if I had lived in Athens two thousand years ago."

"A living dog is better than a dead lion."

"True," said Park, "I am a living dog. Phidias is a dead lion. I have to model the ugly faces of cheesemongers, or grocers, or ironmasters, and put

dignity into them, if I can, which is difficult. And when I put the dignity, they complain of the bad likeness; so that I often think I 'd rather be a rich cheesemonger than a poor sculptor."

Park modelled a bust of myself, for which he would not accept payment. He found it a very difficult task to perform, and I had to sit to him at least twenty times or oftener, before he could please himself with his work. On one occasion he lost all patience, and swearing lustily *more suo*, dashed the clay into a shapeless mass with his fist. "D——n you," he said, "why don't you keep to one face? You seem to have fifty faces in a minute, and all different! I never but once had another face that gave me half the trouble."

"And whose was the other?" I inquired.

"Sir Charles Barry's (architect of the Houses of Parliament at Westminster). He drove me well-nigh to despair with his sudden changes of expression. He was a very Proteus, as far as his face was concerned. And you 're another! Why don't you keep thinking of one thing while I am modelling, and why can't you retain one expression, for at least two minutes?"

It was not till fully three months after this outburst that he took courage to begin again, growling [illegible] at his work; but determining, he would not be beaten, either by Sir Charles Barry [illegible] Poets and architects, and painters and

musicians, and novelists," he said, "are all difficult subjects for the sculptor. Give me the face of a soldier," he added. "Such a face as that of the Emperor Napoleon. There is no mistake about *that*; or, better still, Sir Charles James Napier! If there is not very much variable soul, so called in the faces of such men, there is a very great deal of body!"

Park was commissioned by the Duke of Hamilton to model a bust of Napoleon III., and produced, perhaps, the very finest of all the fine portrait busts which ever proceeded from his chisel. The Emperor impressed Park in the most favourable manner, and he always spoke of him in terms of enthusiastic admiration, for the innate heroism and tenderness of his character. "All true heroes," he said, "are tender-hearted; and the man who can fight most bravely has always the readiest drop of moisture in his eye, when a noble deed is mentioned or a chord of sympathy is touched."

The bust of Napoleon was lost in the wreck of the vessel that conveyed it from Dover to Calais; but the Duke of Hamilton commissioned the sculptor to execute a second copy from the clay model, which duly reached its destination, and is now in the South Kensington Museum.

I called at Park's studio one morning, and was informed that he every minute expected a visit from the great General Sir Charles James Napier, for

whose character and achievements he had the highest admiration. He considered him by far the greatest soldier of modern times, and had prevailed upon the General to sit to him for his bust. Park asked me to stay and be introduced to him, and, nothing loth, I readily consented. I had not long to wait. The General had a nose like the beak of an eagle, larger and more conspicuous on his leonine and intellectual face, than that of the Duke of Wellington, whose nose was familiar in the purlieus of the Horse Guards, and procured for him the title of "Conkey" from the street urchins. I recognised him at a glance as soon as he entered. On his taking a seat, for Park to model his face in clay, the sculptor asked him not to think of too many things at a time, but to keep his mind fixed on one subject. The General did his best to comply with the request, with the result that his face soon assumed a fixed and sleepy expression, without a trace of intellectual animation. Park suddenly startled him by inquiring, "Is it true, General, that you gave way, retreated in fact, at the battle of ——?" (naming the place, which I have forgotten). The General's eyes flashed sudden fire, and he was about to reply indignantly, when Park quietly remarked, plying his modelling tool on the face at the time, "That 'll do, General. The expression is admirable." The General saw through the manœuvre, and laughed heartily.

The General's statue in Trafalgar Square is an admirable likeness. Park was much disappointed at not receiving the commission to execute it.

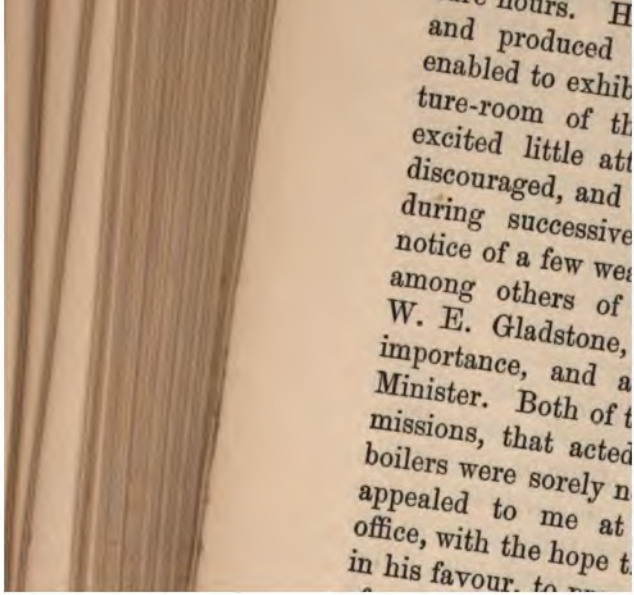
Patric Park died before he was fifty, and when to all appearance there were many happy and prosperous years before him, when, having surmounted his early difficulties, he might have looked forward to the study and completion of the many noble works, to which he pined to devote his mature energies, after emancipation from the slavery of what he called "busting" the effigies of cheesemongers. He had been for some months in Manchester, plying his vocation among the rich notabilities of that prosperous city; when one day, emerging from a carriage at the railway station, he observed a porter with a huge basket of ice upon his head, staggering under the load, and ready to fall. Park rushed forward to the man's assistance, prevented him from falling, steadied the load upon his head by a great muscular exertion, and suddenly found his mouth full of blood. He had broken a blood-vessel! and stretching forth his hand, took a lump of ice from the basket and held it in his mouth to stop the bleeding. He proceeded to the nearest chemist's shop for advice and relief, and was forthwith conveyed to his hotel, delirious. A neighbouring doctor was called in, Park beseeching him for brandy, which was refused, but ought to have been given according to

to the opinion of his own medical attendant in London, who had been summoned by telegraph and came down by the next train. But he arrived too late. The noble, the generous, the gifted Park, was no more, and his attached young wife and family and hundreds of friends were left lamenting.

Park married Robina, the daughter of Dr. Robert Carruthers, of the *Inverness Courier*. He met the lady first at my house, and the marriage was one of unalloyed happiness. A small and beautiful bust of Mrs. Park, executed by her husband, adorns the collection of the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh, where it appears under the title of "A Highland Lassie."

Alexander Munro was of less heroic genius than Patric Park; but his works were of an equally high order in a softer mood. He was of frail build and delicate organization. But the spirit was strong though the flesh was weak. The sword within the scabbard was finely tempered, and of the truest metal. He was a native of Inverness, and while in his early teens, during my frequent visits to the Highlands, I was often shown by Dr., then Mr., Carruthers, little miniature heads, exquisitely carved out of slate pencils by the clever boy, whose skill was the admiration of all the teachers and pupils at the Inverness Academy, as well as of most of the intelligent inhabitants of the town. His future fame as an artist was fondly

predicted, and it was thought highly desirable that the promising boy should be sent to London to study art. But poverty's "unconquerable bar" prevented, and it was not until his twentieth or twenty-first year that the means were found, with great difficulty, among his many humble friends and admirers, to pay his expenses to London, with a small sum in his pocket to enable him to wait and look about him for a chance of bettering his fortune. He arrived, armed with two letters of introduction, one to the late Duchess of Sutherland, mother of the present Duke, and the other to myself at the *Morning Chronicle* office. The letter to the Duchess was fruitless of good results, but that to myself proved ultimately to be of service. I introduced the ambitious young man to Mr. E. H. Bailey, the sculptor, whom I have already mentioned, who received him kindly, praised his slate-pencil heads, gave his good advice in his art, and allowed him to frequent his studio, to familiarise himself with the mechanism of the profession to which he had resolved to devote his life. Mr. Bailey afterwards introduced him to Sir Charles Barry, the architect of the new Houses of Parliament, the exteriors of which were at that time not wholly completed. He was soon employed by that gentleman at mechanic's wages, to carve in stone many of the small heads, which are to be seen by those who care to look, or have patience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have been excited in vain. It happened that Mr. Ingram, the proprietor of that influential journal, which had not then degenerated into a mere picture-sheet, without political, literary, artistic, or any other authority, asked me to accompany him to the private view. We had gone the round of the pictures of the year, and proceeded to the sculpture-room, when Mr. Ingram's attention was attracted by a group of nude children, very beautifully executed, when he turned to me and said, "I think we must have this for the paper. Who is the sculptor?" I turned to the catalogue and found it was by Munro. As fate, or luck, or predestination would have it, I caught sight of the artist himself at no great distance from us, watching our movements, preparatory to addressing me. I beckoned to him to come forward, and then and there introduced him to Mr. Ingram. Mr. Ingram expressed his approbation of the work, and, with the instantaneous decision which was a principal feature of his character, gave the delighted sculptor, before we left the room, a commission to execute in marble a group of his three infant children. He paid him on the following day half the stipulated honorarium for the work, according to the usual custom, and Munro thought that his fortune was made. And such ultimately became the fact. Mr. Ingram was

so pleased with the work when completed, that he became a fast friend of the artist, and never lost sight of an opportunity to advance his interests. Munro's career from that time forward was a continuous and steady if not a brilliant advance, and he rose by slow but sure degrees to a high rank in his profession. Mr. Ingram was twice elected to Parliament for his native town of Boston in Lincolnshire, which he represented until his untimely death by accident in Lake Michigan in America, which I have already recorded. The sudden close of his promising career excited much feeling in the country, especially in Boston, where he was so highly esteemed, and the prosperity and amenity of which his ungrudging munificence and public spirit had done so much to promote. It was resolved by the grateful citizens to erect a statue to his honour in the market-place by public subscription. His widow, however, determined to erect the monument at her own expense, and commissioned Munro to execute the work in bronze. This was the most lucrative commission with which he had ever been entrusted, and the grateful sculptor wrote me a letter on the occasion, though I had no direct concern in the business, in which he quoted a line from a well-known poem of Leigh Hunt—

This also do I owe to thee.

The statue is not only an excellent likeness of the man whom it commemorates, but a fine specimen

of the sculptor's art, and was erected at a cost, I believe, of upwards of three thousand pounds.

Munro, like Patric Park, married a daughter of Mr. Carruthers, of Inverness. He died when he was a little above forty, to the great grief of those who esteemed him most and loved him best, and who knew but too well the delicacy of his constitution, and how frail was the thread that held him to life. His devoted wife, who nursed him during his long illness, did not long survive him. The late Mr. Tom Taylor, the well-known dramatist and editor of *Punch*, the executor of his will, reported him to have died worth ten thousand pounds—a considerable fortune to have acquired in so short a career in art, and which was a proof, not only of the public appreciation which he enjoyed, but of his careful and economic management of his resources.