

AN  
HISTORICAL ENQUIRY  
RESPECTING  
THE PERFORMANCE ON THE HARP  
IN  
*THE HIGHLANDS, &c.*



*Drawn and Engraved by Daniel Somerville 1867.*

## QUEEN MARY'S HARP.

*Published by A. Constable & Co. Edinburgh April 1867.*

AN  
HISTORICAL ENQUIRY  
RESPECTING  
THE PERFORMANCE  
ON THE  
HARP

IN  
THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND;  
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES, UNTIL IT WAS DISCONTINUED, ABOUT  
THE YEAR 1754.

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TO WHICH IS PREFIXED  
AN ACCOUNT OF A VERY ANCIENT CALEDONIAN HARP,  
AND OF  
THE HARP OF QUEEN MARY.

*ILLUSTRATED BY THREE ELEGANT ENGRAVINGS.*

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DRAWN UP  
BY DESIRE OF THE HIGHLAND SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND,  
AND PUBLISHED UNDER ITS PATRONAGE,  
BY  
JOHN GUNN, F. A. S. E.

AUTHOR OF A TREATISE ON THE ORIGIN AND IMPROVEMENT OF STRINGED INSTRUMENTS;  
AND AN ESSAY ON THOUGH BASS, ADAPTED TO THE VIOLONCELLO, &c.

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EDINBURGH :

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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*THE Highland Society of Scotland having been informed, that there were two old Harps in the house of Lude, in the Highlands of Perthshire, which had been for several centuries in that family, applied to General ROBERTSON, the proprietor, by letter, dated 17th May, 1805, for a description of their construction, and other particulars concerning them. To this request General ROBERTSON not only returned an immediate answer, but most obligingly offered to send both the Harps to Edinburgh, in order to have Drawings made of them,*

*and to be examined in any way the Society might judge proper.*

*The Harps were accordingly presented to the Society, who appointed a sub-committee for the investigation of the subject. An eminent artist was employed to take exact Drawings of the Harps, and I was requested to draw up a particular description of them, accompanied by an Essay on the Nature, the Powers, and the Use of the Harp among the Ancient Highlanders. The Drawings were executed with the most scrupulous attention to accuracy, and even to actual measurement, in so far as the laws of perspective would permit; not only in the number and length of the strings, but in the minutest ornaments in the workmanship, and accidental cracks the Harps had received, and every means that had been taken to mend them. From these Drawings the present Engravings have been executed*

*by the same ingenious artist. My Essay was originally intended to have been published in the third volume of the Society's prize Essays and Transactions ; but as it proved to be too bulky for that purpose, it was judged more expedient to be published as a separate work, which is now respectfully submitted to a candid Public.*

Edinburgh, 12th May, 1807.

AN  
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INTO THE  
PERFORMANCE ON THE HARP.

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I. A DESCRIPTION  
OF  
**The Caledonian Harp.**

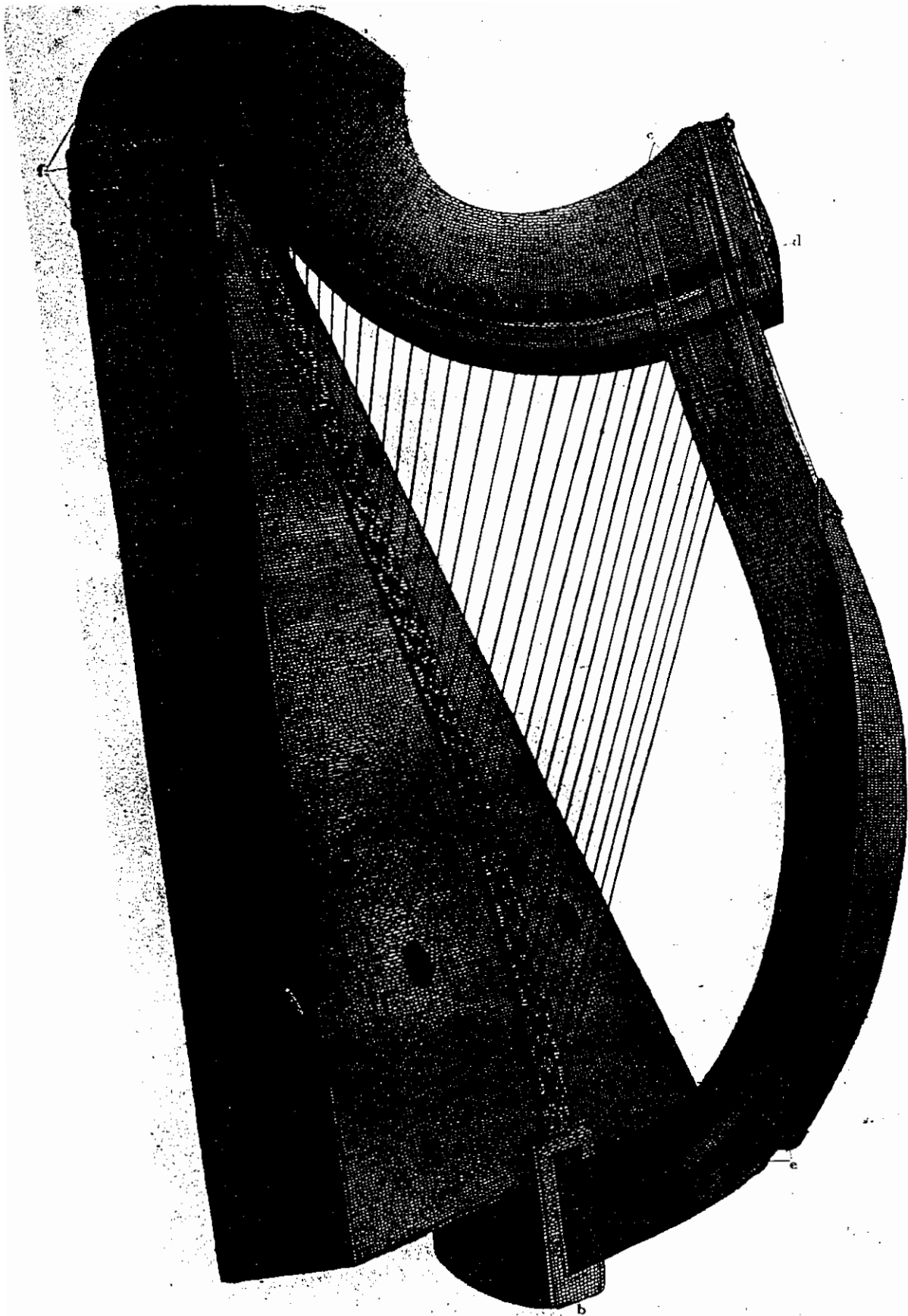
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THE oldest of the two Harps, which I have called the CALEDONIAN HARP, was brought from Argyleshire about the year 1460, by a Lady of the family of Lamont, to the House of Lude, upon her marriage into the family of Robertson of Lude, where it has ever since remained. The

workmanship of this Harp is very good; and the instrument being evidently intended for durability and great strength, it is constructed on a simple plan, without any affectation of ornament, but the work is perfectly smooth, and well finished.

It is thirty-eight inches and a half in height, (from *a* to *b*, Plate I.), and sixteen inches broad, at the lowest part of the sounding board, (from *a* to *b*, Plate II.) The greatest projection of the fore arm, from the sounding board, is nearly thirteen inches. The upper arm, or comb, as well as the front arm, is of plane-tree, stained red; and where both arms are joined, two very neatly made brass plates, seven inches long, and three quarters of an inch broad, are fastened by eight brass nails, for the purposes of strengthening each arm, and keeping them firmly joined together. (See Plate I. *c*.) The end, or front





*Drawn and Engraved by Daniel Somerville 1801.*

THE CALDONIAN HARP

of the upper arm, is capt with a plain plate of brass.

The strings are fixed, as they are done at present, to the end (which is out of view in the engraving,) of thirty very strong pins, of nearly four inches in length (Plate I. *d.*); all of which were originally of brass, but three have been afterwards replaced by iron pins. These strings are, likewise in the present manner, fixed, at the opposite end, into thirty holes along the middle of the sounding board. The string holes appear to have all been originally ornamented, with an equal number of very neatly wrought escutcheons of brass, carved and gilt; but of these small separate escutcheons, there are only five now remaining; two round the two lowest, and three round the three uppermost string holes. The most distinct view of the two lowest escutcheons will be seen in the front view of this Harp, Plate II. and of the three uppermost, in Plate I.

This appears to have been the state in which the Harp was originally manufactured. It exhibits, however, several marks and proofs of its having suffered considerable violence, and of its having, at different periods, received very severe blows, which it is much more likely to have received in traversing different parts of the Highlands, and Western Islands, both by land and sea, than in having been constantly in the possession of a single family; so that these marks indicate, not very equivocally, its having been, in all probability for several centuries, the Harp of a succession of Highland Bards, before it came into the possession of the family of Lamont.\*

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\* I have been favoured with a copy of an ancient Gaelic poem, together with the music to which it is still sung in the Highlands, in which the Poet personifies and addresses a *very old Harp*, by asking what had become of its former lustre? The Harp replies—that it had belonged to a king of Ireland, and had been present at many

The proofs of such a great age, and of such violent blows having been received, exist in the wearing out of the original brass escutcheons, which were fixed separately into the sounding board, and in their having been supplanted successively, by twelve larger, but far less elegant, escutcheons, also fixed separately into the sounding board; four at the upper end, and eight at the lower. The remaining fifteen escutcheons are of this larger kind, but, instead of being inserted into the wood, they are fixed into three plates of brass; the lowest, one inch and three quarters long (from *c* to *d*, Plate II.); the second, three inches and a quarter long (from *d*

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a royal banquet; that it had afterwards been successively in the possession of Dargo, *son of the Druid of Baul*—of Gaul—of Filan—of Oscar—of O Duine—of Diarmid—of a Physician—of a Bard—and, lastly, of a Priest, “who, in a secluded corner, was meditating on a white book.”—This song, and music, will appear in a subsequent publication.

to *e*, Plate II.); and the third, about seven inches long (from *e* to *f*, Plate II.); these three pieces of brass are also distinctly marked on Plate I. by four cross lines. Into these three pieces of brass, fixed into the sounding board, fifteen string holes are made, and the escutcheons inserted into the brass plates; and these different substitutions of escutcheons to the original more elegant ones, appear to have been made at two or three different periods of time.

Two very strong plates of iron, (at *e*, Plate I. and the opposite side) fixed in by two large nails, or screws, and three plates of iron at the joining of the upper arm to the narrow or uppermost part of the sounding board, (at *f*, Plate I.) all evince the instrument to have received very severe blows, at different periods.

In comparing the enumeration of the pins to which the strings are fixed, with that of the string holes and escutcheons round each; some

may have concluded, that there are thirty-two string holes mentioned, and but thirty strings. The fact is, that there never appears to have been strings put into the two uppermost string-holes; they would have been of very difficult access to the thumb, and have been quite unnecessary; the next string to these being only two inches in length: whereas the shortest string of the other Harp (Queen Mary's) is full two inches and a half long, notwithstanding that instrument is altogether on a scale rather smaller, and of less dimensions, than the Caledonian Harp.

It may be proper here to remark, that the shortest string, or C, the highest note of the modern piano-forte with additional keys, is two inches and three quarters of an inch in length; that this was the pitch of tune, given to the shortest string of Queen Mary's Harp; and that the string, which has a corresponding pitch in

the modern Harp, now in use, is three inches and seven eighths of an inch long.

The most remarkable circumstance in the construction of the Caledonian Harp, and which distinguishes it from the structure of Queen Mary's, and the modern Harps, is, that the front arm is not perpendicular to the sounding board, but that its upper part, together with the top arm, are turned considerably towards the left, in order to leave a greater opening (*g, h*, Plate II.) for the voice of the performer to extend more freely, in all directions, to his audience, and that it might be obstructed as little as possible by the front arm of the instrument. After this opening, the remaining part of the front arm crosses the sounding board towards the right. The Harp was held by the Caledonian, Irish, and Welsh Harpers, on their left side, that is, the upper strings were struck by the fingers of their left hand. This peculiarity of construction evi-

dently shows, that the instrument was manufactured at a period when the accompaniment of the voice was considered as the chief, if not the sole, province and excellence of the Harp. The front view of the Caledonian Harp, Plate II., is given, chiefly to exhibit this singularity in its structure.

The great age and antiquity ascribed to this Harp, is further proved, by comparing it with the Harp, now in the Museum of the University of Dublin, of Brian Boromh, sole monarch of Ireland, who was killed at the battle of Clontarf, A. D. 1014. An engraving and description of this Harp may be seen in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Article *Harp*). Another engraving of it, on a larger scale, with the original description, may be seen in the fourth volume of the *Collectanea de rebus Hibernicis*; and a fine engraving of it, on a scale still nearer to that given



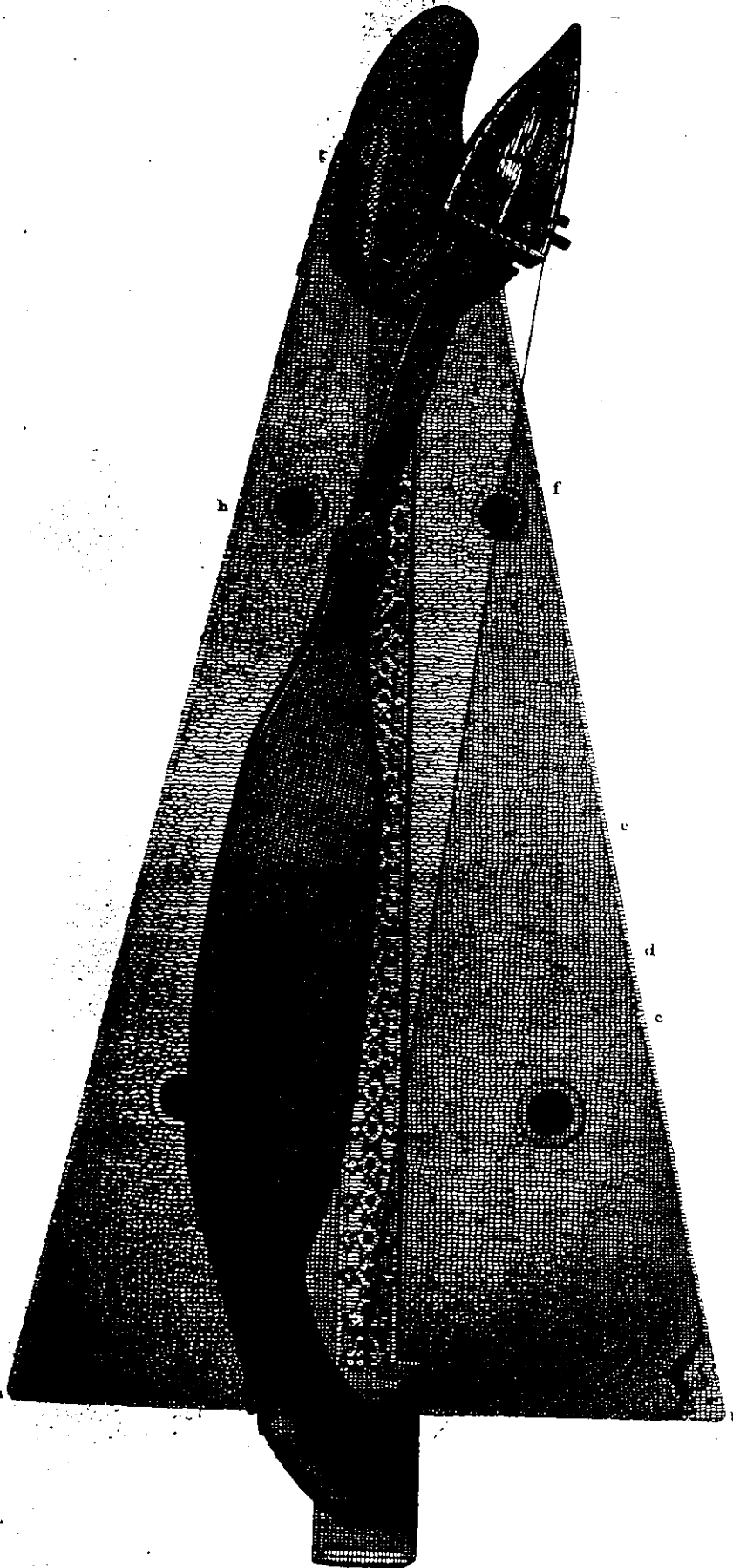
to our Caledonian Harp, may be seen in the third volume of Gough's late edition of Camden's *Britannia*.

The Harp of Brian Boromh was taken by his son Donagh, together with his father's crown and other regalia, to Rome, where he fled, after having murdered his brother Teige; and were all presented to the Pope, in order to obtain absolution. Adrian the Fourth alleged this circumstance as one of his principal titles to the sovereignty of Ireland, in his bull, transferring that kingdom to King Henry the Second. These regalia were kept in the Vatican, until the Pope sent the Harp to King Henry the Eighth, with the title of "Defender of the Faith;" but kept the crown, which was of massive gold. Henry gave the Harp to the first Earl of Clanricard, in whose family it remained till within the last hundred years; afterwards it passed into the possession of several others, until it was at length

presented to Trinity College, in the year 1782, by the Right Honourable William Conyngham.

The Harp of Brian Boromh has a striking resemblance to the Caledonian Harp in its general contour, especially in that of its upper arm. It has escutcheons of brass, carved and gilt round the string holes, greatly resembling the original escutcheons of the Caledonian Harp. In its dimensions, however, it is nearer to those of the Harp of Queen Mary; the latter being thirty-one inches in height, and having twenty-eight strings; and the Harp of Brian Boromh being thirty-two inches high, and having also twenty-eight string holes. A young Irish nobleman of distinguished abilities and accurate observation, who had recently left the University of Dublin, and had frequently seen and examined Brian Boromh's Harp, was much interested in seeing the Caledonian Harp; which, with the exception of the carving and ornaments of the former,

he assured me, did perfectly resemble that of Brian Boromh, and that the Caledonian Harp appeared to him to be fully as old, if not older, than that of the monarch of Ireland.



## II. A DESCRIPTION

OF

### Queen Mary's Harp.

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QUEEN MARY, in a hunting excursion in the highlands of Perthshire, had taken with her the Harp; of which the engraving, Plate III., is an exact representation, and had made a present of it to Miss Beatrix Gardyn, daughter of Mr Gardyn of Banchory, whose family is now represented by Mr Garden of Troup. This lady having been also married into the family of Lude, the Harp has remained in its possession until the present time. It had, in front of the upper arm,

the queen's portrait, and the arms of Scotland, both in gold. On the right side, which is the view given in the annexed Plate, in the circular space near the upper end of the fore arm, was placed a jewel of considerable value, and on the opposite side, in a similar circular space, was fixed another precious stone; of all which it was despoiled in the rebellion 1745, either by the persons to whose care the Harp had been at that time confided; or, as these people asserted, had been taken away by the soldiery during the existence of these troubles.\*

This Harp is thirty-one inches in height, (from *a* to *b*, Plate III.) and the breadth of the lowest part of the sounding board is only eleven inches and a half. The sounding board itself is not

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\* General Robertson's Letter to the Secretary of the Highland Society, accompanying the two Harps, October 1805.

quite flat, like that of the Caledonian Harp, but has a gentle rise from the edge of each side towards the middle, more in the manner of the Harps of the present day. It is altogether of a much lighter fabric than that of the Caledonian Harp, being little more than one half of the weight of the latter.

This Harp has twenty-eight string holes, and the like number of pins, or keys, to which the strings are fixed at the upper end; but there are no brass escutcheons, nor any ornament whatever, round the string holes at the sounding board. On the upper part of each side of the front arm, round the circular spaces in which the jewels were placed, and for a considerable way down that part of the fore arm, is some very minute, and neatly executed, inlaid work, which is very accurately represented in the engraving. The upper part of the fore arm is carved into the figure of a snake, below which are four small me-

tal knobs, or buttons, as in the engraving. On the surface of the sounding board, as well as on both sides of the top arm, are carved a number of figures, or lines, which discover but little taste; and the workmanship, upon the whole, excepting the inlaid work, and shape of the fore arm, although very good, cannot be said to excel, or perhaps to equal, that of the old Caledonian Harp.

There is, however, this very essential difference in the present condition of both these instruments, that Queen Mary's Harp, not having been liable to the casualties I have supposed the Caledonian Harp to have undergone, has been kept in a state of good preservation, and is still so complete and sound in all its parts, that one, ignorant of its history, and judging merely from the present state of the wood, would be apt to pronounce its age not to exceed seventy or eigh-



ty years ; and it was accordingly, without much difficulty, put into a proper condition of performance, by proceeding upon the following principles.

### III.

*The Mode in which QUEEN MARY'S HARP was strung and performed upon ; its Scale and Compass ascertained.*

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IN the process of adjusting strings of suitable dimensions to this Harp, I consulted with Mr Wood, an ingenious and experienced mechanic, and a manufacturer of the Harp, and other musical instruments, in this city, upon the principles by which we should proceed in tuning this instrument. It seemed to be the general wish of the Members of the Society, to have it strung with brass wire, which had been, for many cen-

turies, the strings used by the Irish and Highland Harpers; and it was accordingly at first strung in that manner. It did not, however, then occur to us, that these Harpers had a peculiar manner of producing the tone from brass strings by their nails, which they allowed to grow to a certain length and form for that purpose.\* The touch, or manner of producing the

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\* Galileo, father of the celebrated mathematician, in his "Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music," 1582, says, the performer on the Harp suffered his nails to grow to a considerable length, trimming them with great care, and forming them somewhat like the quills on the jacks of a harpsichord.

O'Kane, a celebrated Irish harper,—who had travelled, with his Harp, into Spain, and other parts of the continent, had visited Scotland more than once, and was, within the last twenty years, for some time in the Highlands,—valued himself on having his nails nicely trimmed in this manner. Being naturally rude, and low bred, he was frequently apt to forget himself, and to insult his superiors, even ladies of quality, with the grossest and most abusive language. On these occasions, the gentlemen of the Highlands found the best method of punishing him was, to order his nails to be cut quite short, and then send him away; being thus rendered incapable of playing on his Harp until they grew again to their former length.

vibration of the strings, by the modern performers, is on a different principle altogether, and can only be effected on strings made of the intestines of animals. By the advice, and under the direction, of Mr Elouis, the celebrated performer on the Pedal Harp, this instrument was therefore again fitted with other strings of the present fabric, and I heard him perform a number of different airs upon it in presence of several Members of the Society, and other Gentlemen. The instrument, as was to have been expected, was much more remarkable for sweetness and delicacy, than for power or strength of tone. Its greatest perfection lay in the upper notes, from the highest to about the middle of its scale, or compass ; after which, its sounds, as they approached to the lowest, became gradually more and more imperfect. This falling off in power and tone towards the bass, is the necessary consequence of the small size of the instru-

ment, which does not admit of sufficient length and tension in the lower strings.

All this had been considered and foreseen in adapting the strings to the instrument; but it was impossible for us to take more precaution than we actually did, nor could we think of better principles than those upon which we proceeded. The length of every string is necessarily fixed and determined by the frame and size of the instrument, and its scale and compass is limited by the number of its strings. There remains only to ascertain, what shall be the pitch or tune of any sound or string in this scale, to determine those of all the rest. Strings of a given length and thickness, will only produce their clearest and best vibrations by a certain degree of tension, which can be only known by experiment. We gave what we judged on trial to be the proper degree of tension on this principle, first to strings about the middle compass

of the instrument, and afterwards proceeding to the shorter strings on the one hand, and to the longer strings on the other; the following pitch and compass of notes, tuned according to the present diatonic scale, was the result:—

The shortest string, or highest note, of Queen Mary's Harp, we found to be the upper C, or highest note of the modern piano forte, with additional keys; and proceeding by the descending scale, it has exactly a compass of four complete octaves, terminating in C, the notation of which, in our music, is placed on the second space of the bass staff. \*

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\* If it should be doubted, that the old harpers of Caledonia and Ireland did actually tune Harps, of the above number of strings, by the diatonic scale, which contains only two intervals of semitone in the compass of an octave, it may be answered, that if they did not tune them upon that system, how can we possibly ascertain in what degree or respect their scale differed from it? All the music still extant in Ireland and the Highlands is reducible to that scale.—O'Kane, the last Irish harper that has been heard in Scotland, is said

It is evident, that we had given to the whole scale of this instrument, taken in general, as low a pitch as it was capable of receiving, insomuch that its lower strings are deficient in tension and power. The experience of modern times has ascertained forty inches to be the best length for

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to have had his Harp tuned exactly on that system ; and Mr Bunting, who has harmonized and published a well known collection of the ancient Irish music, which was taken down by him from the performance of a number of itinerant harpers, who were assembled by the gentlemen of Belfast on the 12th of July, 1792, informs us, that " these harpers were collected from parts far distant from each other, and were taught by different masters, and that they all tuned their instruments on the same principle, yet totally ignorant of the principle itself, and without being able to assign any reason for this mode of tuning, or of their playing the bass."

This diatonic scale appears, in reality, to have been produced by what Mr Kollman, in his " New Theory of Musical Harmony," 1806, calls the lucky chance of transposing the ancient tetrachord of the Greeks, which was taught in the universities of Europe. In what way the Irish and Caledonian harpers came to the knowledge of such a tetrachord, and had the same lucky chance of transposing it into a regular diatonic octave, does not fall within the limits of the present enquiry.

sounding this degree of the scale ; whereas the longest string of Queen Mary's Harp, by which this sound was produced, is only twenty-four inches in length ; and the corresponding string of the Caledonian Harp measures only twenty-one inches and a half ; yet the lower compass of an ordinary bass voice extends four or five notes, or degrees, of the scale, below the pitch given to this string.



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WHAT is above stated, may suffice to give an idea of the structure, compass, and powers, of these two Harps; but I am well aware it will be said, that, even admitting these instruments to have been for the last three or four centuries in the Highlands of Scotland, they afford

no conclusive evidence that the Harp was in general use in the country ; as it may be objected, that not only the least of the two Harps had probably been brought by Queen Mary from France, but that the Harp called the Caledonian Harp, might have been the Harp of an itinerant Irish Harper, which had become the property of the family of Lamont. The following statement must remove every doubt that can be entertained on that subject.

The ancient Gauls and Britons were the only nations to whom the Greek and Roman writers ascribe the singular institution of Druidism. Among the Britons must be understood to be comprehended, the Caledonians and Irish ; who, it can be proved, introduced this institution into Britain and Gaul. It consisted of a priesthood of three principal members ; the Druid, Vates, and Bard. The Bard, however he may have been in earlier times more employed in the rites of re-

ligious worship, is described by the ancient historians, as the composer of the heroic poems, celebrating the warlike exploits of their nation, and singing these to the accompaniment of the Harp. Thus Diodorus Siculus, a writer contemporary with Julius Cæsar and Augustus, says, “The Gauls have among them composers of melodies, whom they call Bards; these sing to instruments not unlike lyres, songs of praise or invective;” \* and Ammianus Marcellinus, a writer of the fourth century, relates, in nearly the same terms, that “the Bards of the Celts celebrated the actions of illustrious men in heroic poems, which they sung to the sweet sounds of the lyre.” †

Such were the Bards of the ancient British or

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\* Ἐπι καὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ποιηταὶ μελῶν, ὅς Βαρδοὺς ὀνομαζοῦσιν, οὗτοι δὲ μετ' ἑργαίων, ταῖς λυραῖς ὁμιῶν, ἀδοῦντες, οὐς μετ' ἤμουσι, ὅς δὲ βλασφημοῦσι.—*Diod. Siculus*, Ed. H. Stephens, L. V. p. 213.

† *Bardi etiam facta virorum illustrium, heroicis composita versibus, cum dulcibus lyrae modulis, cantitarunt.*—*Amm. Marcel.* L. xv. c. 9.

Welsh, the Irish, and the Caledonians, before the arrival of the Romans in Britain, and for many centuries afterwards. Among the Welsh, the profession of a bard was highly respected; inso-much, that the chief bard of Wales was in rank the eighth officer in the king's household, and enjoyed many distinguishing privileges. By the laws of Wales, none could pretend to the character of a gentleman or freeman, who had not a Harp, or could not play upon it; and it was forbidden to teach, or permit, slaves to play upon that instrument. \*

The Harp has also ever been the favourite instrument of the Irish. In the beginning of the twelfth century, the Harpers of Ireland so far surpassed those of Wales, in the knowledge and practice of music, that Gryffith ap Conan, Prince

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\* *Leges Wallicæ*, and JONES'S *History of the Welsh Bards*.

of North Wales, brought over musicians with him from Ireland, who reformed the musical instruments, tunes, and measures of the Welsh. This is admitted by Cardoc, a Welsh author of the twelfth century, and is further confirmed by the learned Selden, as well as by Powel, another Welsh author of the sixteenth century. There is still a more detailed and decided evidence of the excellence of the Irish Harpers in the twelfth century, by Giraldus Cambrensis, which will be given below in its proper place, as it affords an equally convincing proof of the superior attainments of the Highland Harpers of that period.

It is indeed true, that there are still remaining a few native Harpers, both in Wales and Ireland, who have been taught by Harpers of their own country, and those again by their predecessors, in an uninterrupted succession, from remote ages; whilst in the Highlands there is not at present

one Harper to be found. It therefore becomes necessary to state the following evidence, to shew that the Harp has been as early known, and has been as successfully cultivated, in the Highlands of Scotland, as it has been in Ireland and Wales.\*

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\* Whatever light the facts which will now be established may throw on the antiquities and dark periods of the history of the Caledonians, it is most certain, that had not these two Harps been produced, and the present enquiry instituted, such facts were on the eve of being for ever consigned to oblivion. They were, for the most part, only traditionally known to a few individuals residing on the spot, and were generally unknown to, or denied by, the rest of Scotland. The writer of this enquiry, although born himself in the Highlands, when treating professedly on the knowledge of the Harp among the different nations of Europe, did not entertain the least suspicion that this instrument had ever been known in his own country. He can make no better apology for so apparently gross a deficiency of information, than by observing, that his professional studies were chiefly pursued on the Continent; that he had been twenty-eight years absent from Scotland, at a period of life when information of this nature is generally acquired; and that he wrote and published his treatise in England eighteen years ago. On his having undertaken the present enquiry, he applied to one of his most valued friends, who is well acquainted with the old and modern Highland music, and is an editor of ancient and modern Scot-

The name of the Harp in Gaelic has a direct reference to its fabric. The word *clar*, a Harp, means also a table, a stave; a board, fashioned and smoothed to a certain shape, and is expressive of the proper form and materials of which the frame of the Harp must be made. Besides *clar*, and *clarsach*, it has also been expressed for many ages in the Gaelic poetry, by what the poets have generally considered, (as it might best answer the versification,) a synonymous term, the *cruit*, which is an oriental word for

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tish poetry, in hopes of obtaining some information on the subject. This gentleman laughed at what he conceived to be the absurdity of the attempt; being firmly persuaded, that our two Harps were only accidentally brought into the Highlands, and had no connection whatever with the manners or usages of the natives. Lastly, after the author had drawn up his report on this subject, a nobleman, the chieftain of one of our most celebrated clans, in whose family an established Harper had been maintained, did him the honour of perusing it; and extremely well informed as his lordship certainly is on every other subject, he candidly confessed, that he had never before known that the Harp had been cultivated by the native Highlanders.

an instrument of this species, made on a smaller scale, and probably on different principles; and in some ancient poems, they are mentioned as separate instruments, *both* “going round, with the song and the shell,” at the festive board of their heroes. \*

The Harp is also frequently mentioned in old Gaelic poems by a poetical phrase expressive of its nature and powers, as *Teud ciuil*, “the strings of melody or music;” † and this figura-

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\* *Am bu lionmhor cruit is clar,  
'S ioma bard a sheinneadh sgeul,  
B' ioma slige doll mun cuairt,  
'S dana nua' ga luadh le cheil—*

Literally—“Where many were our *Cruits* and *Harps*—and many were the bards to sing the tale—Many a shell went round—Many were the new songs which were sung together.”—*Poem of Bas Oisiain, in Kennedy's Collection.—Report of the Committee of the Highland Society, Appendix, No. 20, p. 314.*

† “*Budh bhinne na teud ciuil a ghuth.*”

“Sweeter than the *strings* of melody was his voice.—*Gaelic Poem of Bas Fraoich. 28 Stanza of Jerome Stone's copy.*



tive expression for the Harp has its perfect synonyma of like syntax, in the phrase *Teud luin*, which is pronounced *Telin*, the letter *d* being quiescent. That the word *luin* is a melody or air, is evident from its diminutive *luin-ag*, a short melody, and well known species of air, still much used throughout the Highlands; and *loin* is a blackbird, the *melodist*, of which *luin* is the oblique or genitive case.

The Welsh name of the Harp is this very word, or rather phrase *Te-lin*, which, in its composition, is not expressive, in that language, of any idea, and of which no etymology can, I believe, be given, excepting that of the Gaelic just mentioned. The plain inference to be drawn from which is, that the Welsh have derived this instrument, together with its name, from the nation who had given to it that expressive appellation; and that this was really the case, can be supported by various ar-

guments of great force, which will be given in a future work.

There is scarcely one poem of considerable length, of the great number which are still *sung*, or rehearsed, throughout the Highlands of Scotland, in which particular mention is not made of the Harp. Not only the Bards, but the heroes themselves, their wives, their young women, are represented as performing upon this instrument.\* Even the children, when they can get at it, are represented as eagerly endeavouring, with their little fingers "sweeping along the strings," to bring out the sweet sounds with which their mother had delighted their ears. In the poem of *Trathal*, "His spouse had remained at home.

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\* *Bha ol is ceol air uigh gach fir,*

*Is Clar an laimh gach filidh 's og mnaoi."*

"And the shell went round, the Bards sung, and the soft hand of virgins trembled on the string of the Harp."—*Original, and Dr Smith's translation of the poem of Tiomna Ghuil*, p. 25, and 153.

Two children rose with their fair locks about her knees—They bend their ears above the Harp, as she touched with her white hand the trembling strings—She stops—They take the Harp themselves, but cannot find the sound they admired.—‘Why,’ they said, ‘does it not answer us? Shew us the string where dwells the song.’—She bids them search for it till she returns—Their little fingers wander among the wires.”\*

The very hills, the fields, the old castles of the Highlands, still exhibit lively traces of this ancient and favourite instrument. The summit of a steep hill near Moy Castle, the seat of the

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\* “*Dh' fag e 'leannan na tigh,  
S dithis leanabh r'a glun,  
An cluas fo chiabhan òir,  
A' cromadh an còail a chiuil.  
Tha'n clar na lamha fein  
S' iad fo ioghna gu d'threig an fhuaim,  
Tha am meoir a' sguaba na cruit.*”

*Poem of Trathal, in DR SMITH'S Ancient Gaelic  
Poems, p. 109.*

Macleans of Lochbuy, in the island of Mull, is called *Madhm na Tiompan*, or the Harper's Pass, and was so named from a remarkable incident that happened on that summit, which the natives relate to the following purpose :

“ In former times, there lived in this island a celebrated Harper, married to a young woman of exquisite beauty, whom he tenderly loved. The musician excelled all others in taste and execution ; but it was said he owed part of his fame to an instrument, so admirably constructed, that no artist could hope to equal, much less surpass it. Next to his wife, it was the pride and joy of his heart, and his companion where ever he went.

“ This pair went to visit a relation, who was sick on the opposite coast. It was winter ; and those who are acquainted with this rugged island, will not wonder that a woman should sink under the cold and fatigue of the journey.

The wind blew keen and cold ; they struggled against the blast, and at last reached the top of a high hill, which they could not avoid passing. Here, being quite exhausted, she fainted away. The husband, with the utmost tenderness, exerted himself for the preservation of a life so dear to him ; and perceiving some symptoms of recovery, he hastened to kindle a fire to warm her. He struck a flint, and received the sparks among a little dry heath, which he had collected with difficulty ; for the place was too high and exposed, to produce even this plant in abundance, though a native of barren soils. In this penury of fuel, the good man scrupled not to sacrifice his beloved Harp, breaking it in pieces, and feeding the flames with its fragments.

“ While he was thus occupied, a young gentleman happened to be hunting at no great distance ; and seeing the smoke, made towards it. He appeared to be greatly struck, at seeing in that

situation, a beautiful woman in distress; who she was so much disordered at the sight of the stranger, that the husband dreaded another. The youth made many professions of sympathy and concern; and offered them some spirits and provisions which he had with him. This was accepted with gratitude; for they had set out in a hurry, and were ill provided for the accident, and without the aid of some cordial, it was scarcely possible for the wife to hold out till they had reached some habitation.

“ Her agitation, however, subsided by degrees, and she was prevailed on, with some intreaty, to partake of the repast. In a little time her spirits revived, and she seemed to make light of her disaster. The joy of the husband was excessive, nor did he once regret the loss of his favourite Harp. He was pleased to see his wife exert herself with so much alacrity, to entertain the youth to whom they were so highly indebted.

ed. The conversation became soon so animated and particular, that a less happy husband, with the slightest tincture of jealousy in his temper, would have suspected, that this was not their first meeting. The fact was, they were old acquaintances, though, as the young man saw her not disposed to recognise him, he chose to behave as a stranger.

“The woman had been brought up by a grandmother, whose name she bore, and from whom her family had expectations. Her grandmother’s house was in another island, and very near that of the youth’s father. They had been companions from early infancy; and in all the little pursuits of childhood, had ever chosen each other as associates: as they advanced in years, this fondness

“Grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength;”

and was not a little increased by the pasto-

ral life then led by young Highlanders of both sexes ; for at that period,—when in our times boys of his age would have been at school,—his chief employment was hunting, fishing, or listening to the Gaelic songs and tales, which were the delight of all ranks of people. This way of life gave him frequent opportunities of seeing his fair one, whose beauty daily increased. Their friendship was fast ripening into love, when her grandmother died, and she returned to her native island, and to her father's house. From that time till the present, they had never met, or heard of each other, and there was but little intercourse between the different islands.

“They were both much afflicted at the separation ; not that they thought of marriage, for besides that he was too young, there was an unsurmountable bar to their union. He was born a *duine-uasal*, or gentleman, she, a vassal, or commoner of an inferior rank ; and whilst an-



cient manners and customs were religiously adhered to, by a primitive people, the two classes kept perfectly unmixed in their alliances. In those times, a gentleman of no fortune, or, as Dr Johnson would have said, a beggar of high birth, was respected by his countrymen, and addressed in the plural number; whereas a commoner, though possessed of considerable property, was saluted with *thou* or *thee*, and, however rich, could not pretend to ask the hand of the poorest gentlewoman.

“ This, however, had been no bar to their friendship; for in every age and country, boys and girls, when left to themselves, pay little regard to these accidental circumstances, in the choice of their companions; spirit, generosity, and pleasing manners, being the qualities that bind young hearts together.

“ Her marriage did not take place till two years after their separation, and was what might be

called, on her side, a prudential one. She had no objection to the musician, who was a man of property, and respected ; she gave him her hand, when he had no interest in her heart. Her first love still lurked there, though reason and virtue exerted themselves to expel him. In the course of a few months, the worth and tenderness of her husband, and a laudable desire of standing well in the opinion of the world, had greatly weakened these impressions ; so that hitherto she had acted her part in the marriage-state with propriety and applause. A meeting, however, so romantic and unexpected as the present, was too strong a temptation. A thousand tender incidents of childhood and youth crowded into her recollection, and too successfully suggested, that the companion of her happiest years was alone worthy of her love.

“ The young man, on his part, was equally captivated ; and indeed the charms which had so

touched his heart in early youth, were now in full bloom, and, in his opinion, much improved; and guessing by her demeanour, and the language of her eyes, that he still maintained a place in her affections, he listened, enamoured, to her conversation, which, being in the presence of her husband, was lively and innocent; while, hurried away by the impulse of his passion, his purpose was to carry her off to a distant island, where they were both unknown.

“The husband at length proposed to his wife to proceed on their journey, when the stranger politely offered to accompany them a few miles. By the way he found means to whisper his scheme; and was glad to find his old mistress as impatient as he could wish, to abandon, for his sake, all that a virtuous woman holds dear.—Such was the return she made to her husband for all his tenderness and love! and so blind

was she to that misery and shame which were soon to overtake her !

“ They at length came to the foot of a mountain, where was a deep woody glen. Here the artful woman, complaining of thirst, the fond and unsuspecting husband ran to a stream, which he saw at a distance, while the guilty pair made their elopement, and were out of sight in an instant. But who can paint the situation of the husband at his return ! Bereaved thus both of his wife and his Harp, he exclaimed, in an agony of grief, *Smeirg a loisgeadh a thiompan ria !* Fool that I was, to burn my Harp for thee !”

This story was published many years ago in Edinburgh, in a periodical work called the “Bee;” and it was related by a native to Dr Garnet when in the island of Mull, who has inserted it in his “Tour to the Hebrides,” in the year 1800. Mr Macneil has also taken the same incident for the subject of his poem of “The Harp;” but he has

changed the scene into that of a passage in a boat to St Kilda ;\* and it has given rise to a well known proverb, generally applied by the inhabitants of Mull and the neighbouring country and islands, on occasions of their meeting with ingratitude, in return for any benefit conferred,—“ Fool that I was,” say they, “ to burn my Harp for him or her !”

There was scarcely one considerable household of the Highland chieftains, which had not a Bard, or a Harper, on its establishment. A piece of ground was allotted for his subsistence, which devolved to one of his descendants, on condition of his being properly educated, so as to be qualified for the discharge of his office. † On a te-

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\* Mr Macneil has told me, that he now regrets his having departed so much, in his poem, from the traditional story.

† See Lachlan Macvurich's attested declaration, or affidavit, in the Committee of the Highland Society's report, *Appendix*, p. 278.

Macvurich was the eighteenth in lineal descent from Muireach, who held the farms of Stroiligary and Drimsdale, as Bards to the family of Clanranald. Neil Macvurich, the father of Lachlan, was

THE HARPER

nure of this nature, a farm of the estate of Torloisk, in the island of Mull, called *Fanmore nan Clairsairean*, or the Harper's Field, was held by the Harper belonging to that ancient family. One of these Harpers appears to have conveyed it over to the family of Argyle, in times when the family of Torloisk was involved in public troubles, which had brought the devastation of fire and sword into the estate. This farm had remained for several generations afterwards in the possession of the Argyle family, who had no other landed property contiguous to it, until it was, not many years ago, purchased from the Duke of Argyle, by the late General Maclean Clephane, and again annexed to the estate of Torloisk, by the name of the *Penny Land of the Harper's Field*. The family of the Macleans

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the last who had been educated for the office of Bard, and in that quality possessed one of these farms.

## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

IN THE HIGHLANDS.

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of Dowart are also known, in the island of Mull, to have had a succession of Harpers in lineal descent, whose names were Macneil. \* In the parish of Urray, in the north Highlands, there is also a field called *Cruitach*, or the Harper's Field; and these fields are always situated contiguous to the chieftain's residence. †

In the old castles also of several Highland chieftains, the Harper's seat is pointed out by the natives to this day; as the *Harper's window*, at Duntullim castle, in the island of Skye, the ancient seat of Lord Macdonald's family; the Harpers gallery at Castlelachlan, in Argyleshire, and others. That the Harp was cultivated, and held in high estimation in the former family, is also evident from the following anecdote, alluded to in Dr Johnson's and Mr Boswell's Tour to the

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\* See Mrs Mackenzie's Letter, inclosed in that of Colonel Maclean of Coll, to be mentioned afterwards.

† *Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. VII. p. 259.

Hebrides, in the year 1773. The celebrated performer, O'Kane, who has been already mentioned, had been about that time in the Highlands, and had frequently entertained the late Lord Macdonald with his excellent performance on the Harp, at his lordship's residence in the Isle of Skye. No one was better able to feel, and to estimate the superior talents of O'Kane ; for I can vouch Lord Macdonald to have been one of our best amateurs on the violin, and one of the best judges of musical talents of that period. There had been for a great length of time in the family, a valuable *Harp-key* ; it was finely ornamented with gold and silver, and with a precious stone ; this key was said to have been worth eighty or a hundred guineas ; and, on this occasion, our itinerant Harper had the good fortune of being presented by Lord Macdonald with this curious and valuable implement of his profession.



The family of Argyle had also an establishment for a Harper. The following passage of the history of Scotland is not only a proof of this, but also shews, that at the close of the sixteenth century, the ancient Celtic custom of having a Harper at the head-quarters of an army, had been occasionally kept up among the Highland chieftains, at least, had not been altogether laid aside at that period.

From about the year 1584, after the Reformation had taken place in Scotland for upwards of twenty years, until the year 1594, “several Jesuits and other priests had diligently laboured in Scotland, and with far greater success than could possibly be credited,”—such are the words of the Catholic account,—“insomuch, that in a very short space a considerable part of the nobility, having abandoned Calvinistical heresies, embraced the Catholic faith. Among these were three earls, the chiefs of illustrious families, Wil-

liam Douglas, Earl of Angus, George Gordon, Earl of Huntley, and Francis Hay, Earl of Errol." These three noblemen, having refused to comply with the terms of a law that was made on this occasion, enacting, "that whoever adhered to the errors of popery, and, after having been admonished, refused to recant, should be publicly excommunicated, and his property confiscated," were accordingly convicted of high treason, and their whole property confiscated for ever. To put this sentence in execution, an army was levied in the Highlands, consisting chiefly of the two clans of Campbells and Macleans; and the king appointed the young Archibald, Earl of Argyle, to the command. The Catholics say this army amounted to twelve thousand men; and to give it more the air of a war waged against the principles of the Roman Catholic religion, the general brought along with him Neil Campbell, Bishop of Argyle, and two clergymen, who

had a share both in the march and in the battle. Besides drums, trumpets, and the bagpipe, to inspirit a warlike people, the Earl of Argyle took with him his Harper; and the army was also accompanied by a noted sorceress or witch, who, as the estates of the Catholics were to be laid waste, was, by her incantations, to discover to the army the property and hidden treasures of the terrified inhabitants, who lived chiefly in the districts of Strathbogie and Buchan, on the Murray Firth, from the river Spey eastward to the point of Peterhead. Before the army had penetrated far into the former district, belonging to the Earl of Huntley, it was met, and put to flight, by a body of cavalry, which the Catholic lords had raised, near the river Aven; whence the battle, which was fought on Thursday the 3d of October, 1594, is called the Battle of Strathaven. One of the prophecies of this enchantress to the army was, that on the following

Friday, which was the day after the battle, “Argyle’s Harp should be played in Buchan, the residence of the Earl of Errol; and the bagpipe should sound in Strathbogie, the seat of the Earl of Huntley. Nor were her vaticinations altogether unaccomplished; for both the Harp and the bagpipe sounded in Strathbogie and Turef, (a market town in Buchan,) but the general was not present to hear this most agreeable music; neither could her sorcery foresee or prevent the death that awaited her after the victory.”\* The

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\* “*Incantatrix edidit oraculam, Argadi Lyram in Buchania, ubi Errolius habitabat, pulsandam, et tibiam utricularem maximam, Bogie quæ Huntlei est palatium, proximâ veneris die, quæ diem prælii est subsequuta, resonaturam. Nec vana erant responsa; nam et lyra et tibia, Bogie et Turefi, resonuerunt, sed non aderat imperator, qui gratissimam auribus harmoniam hauriret, nec illa, suis præstigiis, imminentem necem, quæ, victoriâ partâ, est insequuta, evitare potuit.*” MS. in the Advocates’ Library, entitled, *Vera narratio et miraculi plenæ victoriæ, partæ apud Avinum in Scotiæ borealibus partibus, a Georgio Gordonio Huntlæo, et Francisco Hayo Errolio, Catholicis principibus, contra Archibaldum Campbellum Argadorum, Imperatorem, 5 nonas Octobris, A. D. 1594.*

joy which this victory afforded was soon damped by subsequent grief; “ a trembling messenger,” adds the historian, “ announced the king’s approach with an immense army,—the Catholic lords submitted, and every thing was restored to its original security.” \*

It could here be shewn, that, from the middle of the sixth century, about the time of St Columba’s establishment at Icolmkill, which is contiguous to the island of Mull, and until the end of the twelfth century, the superior clergy were, generally, performers on the Harp; that singing to the Harp was considered an indispensable part of the education of the upper ranks of society during that period; and that at their festivals it was customary for the Harp to be hand-

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\* There is a translation of this manuscript, together with a poem on the same subject, and many other interesting articles, published in a work entitled, *Scottish Poems of the Sixteenth Century*. Edin. 1801.

ed round, and each of the company, in his turn, to sing to it, as was done by the heroes of the ancient Gaelic poems above alluded to. But as it can be proved that this custom, together with the peculiar notions of shame which were associated with the want of this accomplishment, were introduced from Asia, with the Harp itself, by our Caledonian ancestors, from whom the custom, accompanied by the very same notions, descended successively to the Cambro-Britons, and to the Anglo-Saxons, the discussion of that part of the subject is reserved for a more extended enquiry into the antiquity of the Harp. It may suffice at present to observe, that it was probably during the above mentioned period, that the separation of poet and musician in the same person,—at least, that the separate profession of a minstrel, or merely instrumental performer,—took place in Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland; and that, from the cultivation of

the Harp by the clergy of that time, some additional strings may have been added to it, and its practice may have been conducted on improved principles, which ultimately led to the surprising degree of command of the instrument, to which we shall now see the Harpers of Ireland and of the Highlands of Scotland attained, in the twelfth century.

On this point we have the most explicit and satisfactory evidence which a mind, capable of the most perfect comprehension of the subject, forming its judgment under circumstances the most advantageous for a just decision, could have possibly afforded us. Giraldus de Barri, known by the name of Giraldus Cambrensis, was born in the year 1146, in the castle of Manorbeer, in Pembrokeshire. He applied himself so assiduously to his literary pursuits, that having surpassed all his fellow students in his own country, he was sent to Paris to complete his educa-

tion, where he remained for three years, gave lectures on Rhetoric and the Belles Lettres, and was pointed out, by the doctors of the university, as a pattern to the young men of his age. He appears also to have studied music; and, by the custom of Wales, which is mentioned above, he had been probably taught to play on the Harp; at least, he was well acquainted both with the technical language of music, and with its general history. In a subsequent period of his life, he revisited the continent, and seems to have paid a particular attention to the various degrees of excellence of the musicians he had heard abroad; and had been in the habit of comparing them with those he had heard in England, in Wales, and in Ireland. He moreover expresses himself, when writing on the effects of music, in such glowing language, as those alone, who have a high degree of sensibility for it, employ, when describing the enchanting power of that



art over them. I shall only add to this short sketch of the character of Giraldus, in the words of his elegant translator, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, that, "in whatever point of view we examine the character of this extraordinary man, whether as a scholar, a patriot, or a divine, we may justly consider him as one of the brightest luminaries that adorned the annals of the twelfth century."

In the year 1185, Giraldus was appointed, by King Henry the Second, preceptor to his son Prince John, whom he accompanied to Ireland, as secretary. He there availed himself of the means he had, at that time, so much in his power, of procuring the most accurate information respecting the manners and customs of Ireland, which composed the most interesting part of a learned work he afterwards wrote, and entitled, "The Topography, or remarkable Things of Ireland." His account of the character and manners of the inhabitants of that country, has been

thought, in its general complexion, to be written with a degree of prejudice against them, and consequently he cannot be suspected of being liable to give too high, or too favourable, a colouring to any of their attainments. On the subject of their musical performances, he expresses himself in the following words:—

“ The cultivation of instrumental music by this people, I find worthy of commendation ; in this, their skill is, *beyond all comparison*, superior to that of any nation I have ever seen ; for their music is not slow and solemn, as in the instrumental music of Britain, to which we are accustomed ; but the sounds are rapid and articulate, yet, at the same time, sweet and pleasing. It is wonderful, how, in such precipitate rapidity of the fingers, the musical proportions are preserved, and by their art, faultless throughout, in the midst of the most complicated modulation, and most intricate arrangement of notes ;

by a velocity so pleasing, a regularity so diversified, a concord so discordant, the melody is preserved harmonious and perfect; and whether a passage, or transition, is performed in a sequence of fourths or of fifths, (by *diatesseron*, or by *diapente*,) it is always begun in a soft and delicate manner, and ended in the same, so that all may be perfected in the sweetness of delicious sounds. They enter on, and again leave, their modulations with so much subtlety, and the vibrations of the smaller strings of the treble sport with so much articulation and brilliancy, along with the deep notes of the bass; they delight with so much delicacy, and sooth so charmingly, that the great excellence of their art appears to lie in their accomplishing all this with the greatest seeming ease, and without the least appearance of effort or art.” \*

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\* I have frequently heard it related of O’Kane, the celebrated Irish Harper before-mentioned, in different places where he had

To this animated and glowing eulogium of the Harpers of Ireland, this accomplished writer subjoins the following remarkable observation, which brings it home to the Harpers of Caledonia, their neighbouring nation, of the same stock, having the same language, manners, and customs, who, until that period, had incessantly maintained its intercourse with Ireland, and had ever, in the arts of poetry and music, kept up with it, at least by an equal pace.

“ It is to be observed, however,” continues Giraldus, “ that both Scotland and Wales, the former from intercourse and affinity of blood, the latter from instruction derived from the Irish,

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been heard, that he very commonly drew tears from his auditors. During my residence at Cambridge, Manini, our first violin, often spoke of the performance of O’Kane with great rapture; assuring me, that, together with an astonishing variety of other things, he could, although blind, play with great accuracy and fine effect the first treble and bass parts of many of Correlli’s concertos, in concert with the other instruments.

exert themselves with the greatest emulation to rival Ireland in musical excellence. In the opinion of many, however, Scotland has not only attained to the excellence of Ireland, but has even, in musical science and ability, *far surpassed* it; insomuch, that it is to that country they now resort, as to the genuine source of the art.”\*

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\*The classical reader, who has never met with the elegant original of these passages, will be gratified in finding them inserted here.

“*In musicis solum instrumentis, commendabilem ingenio gentis istius diligentiam, in quibus præ omni natione quam vidimus, incomparabiliter est instructa. Non enim in his, sicut in Britannicis (quibus assueti sumus) instrumentis, tarda et morosa est modulatio, verum velox et præceps; suavis tamen et jucunda sonoritas. Mirum quidem, quod in tantâ tam præcipiti digitorum rapacitate, musica servatur proportio, et arte præ omni præclarâ, inter crispatos modulos, organaque multipliciter intricata, tam suavi velocitate, tam dispari paritate, tam discordi concordia, consona redditur et completur melodia. Per diatesseron seu diapente chordæ concrepent, semper tamen ab molli incipiunt, et in idem redeunt, ut cuncta, sub jucundæ sonoritatis dulcedine, compleantur. Tam subtiliter modulos intrant et exeunt, sicque sub obtuso grossioris chordæ sonitu, gracilium tinnitus licentius ludunt, latentius delectant, lasciviusque demulcent, ut pars artis maxima videatur, artem velare.*”

“*Notandum vero, quod Scotia et Græcilia, hæc propagationis, illa comæationis et affinitatis gratia, Hiberniam in modulis æmulâ imitari*

That this honourable and unsuspecting testimony of our excellent author, in favour of the superior talents of the Irish and Caledonian Harpers of that age, was the result of the most deliberate conviction of his mind; and that it stood the test of his future reflexion, and re-examination of the subject, will still farther appear from what the writer of his life relates of him; that “after his return from Ireland, he was indefatigable in composing, revising, and correcting his work on the Topography of Ireland.” And to show the singular honour that was done to the above explicit and decided declaration of the superiority of the Harpers of Ireland and Caledonia, which the author makes the exordium,

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*nitantur disciplinâ. Multorum autem opinione, hodie Scotia, non tantum magistrâ æquiparavit Hiberniam, verum etiam in musica peritia, longe prævalet et præcellit; unde et ibi quasi fontem artis jam requirunt.”* Girald. Camb. Topog. Hiber. distinct. III. ch. 11. apud Camdeni Anglica, Hibernica, &c. Scripta, 1602. p. 739.

or introduction, to four learned chapters on the general history of music, and its effects, from the earliest period; I must farther add, that it was publicly recited by him, before the university of Oxford, in full convocation, at the most magnificent and sumptuous festival that had ever been given in that renowned seminary of learning; “rivalling the times of the ancient classic poetry,” as Giraldus expresses it, “and wholly unknown in England, either in the past or present age.” The learned work, of which the above passages form so conspicuous a part, is divided into three books; and these were recited for three successive days by Giraldus, before this learned and splendid audience. On the first day, he entertained, with munificent hospitality, the poor people of that populous city. On the second day, he entertained the doctors of the different faculties or professions, and the students of the greatest

celebrity;\* and on the third day, he entertained the remainder of the students of the different colleges of the university, together with the burghers and militia of the city. †

Such was the state of our instrumental music in the Highlands in the reign of William, surnamed the Lyon. From our own historical annals of those times, we receive but few, and these very imperfect, notices, respecting the state of the arts; yet there is every reason to believe, that poetry and music continued to be cultivated and encouraged in the Highlands for several centuries after this period. The first coronation of the kings of Scotland, of which we have any parti-

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\* If I am not very much mistaken in my recollection, it is recorded, that the number of students at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were as many thousands at that period, as it is hundreds at this time.

† Life of Girald. Cambr. in Sir R. Colt Hoare's Itinerary of Archb. Baldwin. Vol. I. p. xxiv.



cular account, is that of Alexander the Third, in the year 1249. On this occasion, a Highland bard, dressed in a scarlet tunic, or robe, repeated on his knees, in the Gaelic language, the genealogy of Alexander, and his ancestors, up to Fergus, the first King of Scotland;\* and this, together with what will be more particularly mentioned concerning the state of music, and the Highland Harpers, in the reign of King James the First of Scotland, proves, that these orders were still held in considerable estimation; and we shall even see, that the superior excellence of the Highland Harpers was proverbial, as far down as the beginning of the sixteenth century.

This accomplished monarch, who, during the whole of his reign, was chiefly occupied in reforming the abuses which had pervaded every

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\* Forduni Scotichron. Lib. X. c. 2.

department of the state, was also a zealous promoter of the liberal arts. He introduced organs into his chapels, and founded an institution for the instruction of the Scottish clergy in the science of music. Our old historian, John Major, in his *Annals of Scotland*, which were published in the year 1521, when enumerating the talents of King James, says, that “ he was a skilful musician ; in the management of his voice in singing, inferior to no one ; on the Harp, he was another Orpheus ; he excelled the Irish or the *Highland Scots*, who are esteemed the best performers on that instrument.”\* The same historian, in another part of his work, says of the Highlanders, that, “ for instrumental music, and the accompaniment of the voice, they make use

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\* “ *Musicus artificiosus, et in vocis modulatione nulli secundus, in Cytharâ tanquam alter Orpheus, Hibernenses aut Silvestres Scotos, qui, in illa arte, præcipui erant, exsuperabat.*”—*De Gest. Scot. Lib. VI. cap. 14.*

of the Harp, which, instead of strings made of the intestines of animals, they strung with brass wire, and on which they perform most sweetly." \*

In less than fifty years after this time, our celebrated historian George Buchannan, who himself was born at the foot of Ben Lomond, in the Highlands, † when treating, in the first, or introductory book, of his History of Scotland, of the manners and customs of the western islands, has the following passage :—" Instead of the trumpet, they use the great bagpipe. They de-

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\* "*Pro musicis instrumentis, et musico concentu, lyra, Silcestres utuntur, cujus chordæ ære, et non ex animalium intestinis, faciunt, in qua dulcissime modulantur.*"—De Gest. Scot. Lib. I. cap. 8.

† "He was born at a place called the Moss, a small farm the property of his father, two miles from the village of Killearn, remarkable for its view of striking objects. It is skirted with two ridges of hills, some of which are of considerable height. In the foreground is the water of Blane, meandering through fertile pastures and cultivated fields, whilst the diversified prospect, extending

light very much in music, especially in Harps of their own sort, of which some are strung with brass wire, others with intestines of animals; they play on them either with their nails grown long, or with a plectrum. Their only ambition seems to be, to ornament their Harps with silver and precious stones: the *lower ranks*, instead of gems, deck theirs with crystal. They sing poetical compositions, not inartificially made; celebrating the exploits of their valiant men; nor do their bards, for the most part, treat of another

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over the parishes of Killearn, Drymen, Kilmarnock, Buchannan, &c. comprehends Loch Lomond, Ben Lomond, Ben Leddie, the Grampian hills, &c. and at length is lost amidst the far distant mountains of Argyle, and Perthshire, mingling their azure-coloured summits with the clouds. The gentlemen of this parish and neighbourhood, as a testimony of respect for their learned countryman, did, in the month of June 1788, erect a beautiful monument to his memory, in the village of Killearn. It is a well-proportioned *obelisk*, nineteen feet square at the base, and reaching to the height of one hundred and three feet above the ground."—Dr CRIRIE'S *Scottish Scenery*, p. 384.

subject. Their language is that of the ancient Gauls, a little altered.”\*

Buchanan's History was first published in the year 1565. The anonymous writer of “Certain Matters concerning the Realme of Scotland as they were A. D. 1597, under his title of the Yles of Scotland in general,” follows Buchanan's account, in the following words, with the remarkable variation of the Gaelic term for the Harp, together with the English, as if there had been two distinct species of Harps :—“ They delight much in musicke, but chiefly in *Harpes*

1582

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\* “ *Loco tubæ, tibia utuntur utriculari. Musica maxime delectantur, sed sui generis fidibus, quarum aliis chordæ sunt æneæ, aliis e nervis factæ, quas vel unguibus prælongis, vel plectris, pulsant. Unica autem illis ambitio est, ut fides multo argento exornent, et gemmis. Tenuiores, pro gemmis, crystallum adhibent. Accinunt autem carmen non inconcinne factum, quod ferè laudes fortium virorum contineat: nec aliud ferè argumentum eorum bardi tractant. Vetere Gallorum sermone, paulum mutato, utuntur.*”—Buchan. Hist. Scot. ed. Ruddiman, p. 14.

and *Clairschoes* of their own fashion. The strings of their *Clairschoes* are made of brasse wyar, and the strings of the *Harpes* of sinews; which strings they stryke either with their nayles growing long, or else with an instrument appointed for that use. They take great pleasure to deck their *Harpes* and *Clairschoes* with silver and precious stones; and poor ones, that cannot attain hereunto, decke them with christall. They sing verses prettily compounded, containing, for the most part, prayses of valiant men. There is not almost any other argument whereof their rymes entreat. They speak the ancient French language, altered a little.” \*

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\* As this is the only quotation which I have not collated with the original, I think it necessary to give the following evidence of the existence of such an original. I at first found it referred to in Jones's History of the Welsh Bards, in these words:—“Munro, in his History of the Western Isles, says, the natives delight in music, especially in Harps, or *Clairsechau*, decked with silver, after the

The Harp is also frequently mentioned by other Scottish writers, when incidentally, or professedly, alluding to the musical performances of those times, by its Gaelic name of *Clarsach* ;\*

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manner of the Britons ;” and he also refers to Lewis’s History of Great Britain, fol. 234 ; but I could find no such passage in Munro. A learned gentleman, who has contributed much towards the illustration of Scottish history and antiquities, obligingly furnished me with a transcript he had taken of the passage, from the original work, which is very scarce, in the words above given, but not containing the last four lines. In his common-place book was added the following words :—“ The preceding passage is from a work called a Description of Scotland, printed between 1593 and 1596. Lastly, I found the passage, in the very same words, in Campbell’s Tour in Scotland, 1802, Vol. I. p. 176., with the addition of the last four lines. Mr Campbell gives it from a copy printed in London, for John Flasket, in the year 1603 ; and from Mr Campbell’s quotation, I have inserted above the title of the book, “ Certain Matters concerning the Realme of Scotland as they were A. D. 1597.”

\* In Holland’s poem of the Houlate, (Bannatyne MS. fol. 308,) he represents the Highland bard as skilled in “ the Chenachy,—the *Clarsach*.” In the ludicrous poem on King Berdok of Babylon, in the same manuscript, it is said, “ Weill could he play on the *Clarsho* and *Lute*.” And in the splendid entertainments given by King James IV. at the celebration of his marriage with Margaret, the eldest daughter of King Henry VII., he is recorded to have played

of which many instances could be produced, which would of themselves prove the general notoriety in Scotland, that the Harp was an instrument well known in the Highlands; but the more particular evidence which has been already given on this subject must henceforth remove every possibility of doubt on that point.

Having thus incontestibly proved the Harp to have been, from the earliest times, down to the end of the sixteenth century, in general use in the Highlands of Scotland; the two ancient instruments, which have been so long preserved in that country, are now to be considered as authentic documents, not only connected with, and proving and illustrating, the manners of the

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before his bride on the *Clarychordes* and *Leut*, which corresponding so nearly with the last mentioned instruments of *Clarsho* and *Lute*, is probably a typographical error or alteration in the word *Clari-chord*, for the Scottish instrument *Clarsho*.—LELAND'S *Collect. App.* III. p. 284.



country, but may themselves be henceforth produced, and referred to, as historical monuments, to illustrate any obscure point of antiquity, however remote, to which their form and structure may apply.

The Caledonian Harp was brought, as has been mentioned in its description, by Miss Lamont, from her father's residence in Argyleshire, to a very distant part of the Highlands, and has, ever since the time of her arrival at Lude, about the year 1460, been kept at that house, in a proper state for performance; having been occasionally played upon, in that family, until within these last eighty or ninety years, and distinguished by the appellation of *Clarsach Lumanach*, or the Lamont Harp. From these circumstances, we must infer the lady to have been a performer on the Harp; and as she could not have learnt the difficult process of tuning, or the intricate art of playing upon it, of herself, she

must have had a master, most probably in Argyleshire, who not only taught her, but others also, in that district of the Highlands, about the middle of the fifteenth century. In the same manner it must be inferred, from Queen Mary's having, in about a hundred years afterwards, presented the other lady with her own Harp, that she was also a performer on that instrument, and had been taught by a master, who had probably taught her, as well as others, in a very different part of Scotland, her father's residence being at no great distance from Aberdeen; and from both instances we must necessarily conclude, that the Harp was taught and performed upon, in different parts of the Highlands of Scotland, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and that playing on, or singing to, the Harp, was an accomplishment of the ladies of the Highlands at this period.

If we look back into more remote ages, we shall still find this to have been the immemorial custom of the upper ranks in that society; and that the art of playing on the Harp down to this period, in Scotland, as well as in Ireland and Wales, proceeded from the same original source, which, to distinguish it from the musical science that had, by this time, made great progress on the continent, in England, and, to a certain degree, in Scotland, may be aptly called the music, or system, of the Celtic school.

But Queen Mary, as we shall afterwards see more particularly, highly accomplished as she was in musical science, which was not of the *Celtic*, but of the *Italian* school, although the Harp, described in this work, was made and procured for her, does not appear to me to have been a performer upon that instrument, for reasons which shall be given in their pro-

per place; but, having met with a performer upon the Scottish Harp, of eminent abilities, in the lady now alluded to, the Queen may be supposed to have been so much pleased with her performance, and so much delighted with the simplicity and beauty of her native Caledonian music, on a national instrument, played with a degree of skill, which she had little reason to expect,\* that she may have been induced

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\* Queen Mary, on the evening of her arrival at Holyrood-house from France, was received with every demonstration of joy; and on this occasion the whole musical talents of the capital seem to have been collected, for the performance of a serenade of vocal and instrumental music, as was done, about thirty years afterwards, on the public entry, into Edinburgh, of Queen Anne, of which there is a particular account in Watson's Collection of Scottish Poems. The serenade given to Queen Mary, according to Brantome, who came with her, consisted of Psalms, so ill sung, and so badly accompanied by a number of violins, and rebecs, (an inferior sort of fiddle,) so shockingly discordant, that nothing could exceed it. "*He!*" exclaims that courtier, "*Quelle musique, et quelle repos pour sa nuit!*"

to give the lady an honourable proof of the pleasure she had received, and of her esteem, by presenting her with her own Harp. That this was pretty nearly the manner in which this lady became possessed of this regal Harp, must appear highly probable from the following circumstances.

The tradition in the family of Lude, which has always accompanied this Harp, is, that it was presented to their ancestor, Beatrix Gardyn, by Queen Mary, when she was on a hunting excursion in Athol. That lady was at this time resident in that neighbourhood, having been

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Considering the refinement of the Queen's ideas on the subject of musical performances, it is probable, that her opinion of the musical abilities of her subjects, at this time, was much the same as that of Brantome, and consequently, her surprise would be the greater, on hearing the native Caledonian Harp so well played in the Highlands, as it probably still was at this period.

married to Mr Farquharson of Invercauld.\* The account of this magnificent hunting party will be read with interest, and I shall give it in the words of an eye-witness. “ I had a sight of a very extraordinary sport : In the year 1563, the Earl of Athol, a prince of the blood-royal, had, with much trouble, and vast expence, provided a hunting-match for the entertainment of our most illustrious and most gracious Queen. Our people call this a royal hunting. I was then a young

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\* It has been erroneously stated above, in the description of Queen Mary's Harp, that Beatrix Gardyn was married into the family of Lude. This was written from the impression left upon my mind at a time when General Robertson's letter had been mislaid ; but on getting back this document, which I have now before me, I find his words are, “ from which lady both the families of Farquharson and this family are descended.” She appears, in fact, from the public records, to have been married to one of the ancestors of the present family of Invercauld, distinguished, according to the custom of the Highlands, from his size, by the appellation of *Findla More*. In this manner, Queen Mary's Harp came, with one of her female descendants, into the family of Lude.

man, and was present on that occasion. Two thousand Highlanders were employed to drive to the hunting-ground all the deer from the woods and hills of Athol, Badenoch, Marr, Murray, and the countries about. As these Highlanders use a light dress, and are very swift of foot, they went up and down so nimbly, that, in less than two months time, they brought together two thousand red deer, besides roes and fallow deer. The Queen, the great men, and a number of others, were in a glen, or narrow valley, when all these deer were brought before them; believe me, the whole body moved forward in something like battle order. This sight still strikes me, and ever will strike me; for they had a leader whom they followed close wherever he moved. This leader was a very fine stag, with a very high head. The sight delighted the Queen very much, but she soon had cause for fear, upon the Earl's (who had

been from his early days, accustomed to such sights) addressing her thus: ‘Do you observe that stag who is foremost of the herd?—There is danger from that stag; for if either fear or rage should force him from the ridge of that hill, let every one look to himself; for none of us will be out of the way of harm, as the rest will all follow this one; and having thrown us under foot, they will open a passage to the hill behind us.’ What happened a moment after confirmed this opinion; for the Queen ordered one of the best dogs to be let loose upon a wolf; \*—this the dog pursues—the leading stag was frightened—he flies by the same way he had

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\* This translation, from the Latin original, is in the words of Mr Pennant. (*Tour in Scotland*, Vol. III. p. 64.) Through some inadvertency, however, he has rendered the above sentence, “the Queen having ordered one of the best dogs to be let loose *on one of the deer*,” instead of, “*on a wolf*.” The words of the original are, “*Laxatus enim reginæ jussu, atque immissus in lupum, insignis admodum ac ferox canis.*”



come there—the rest rush after him, and break out where the thickest body of the Highlanders was. They had nothing for it now but to throw themselves flat on the heath, and to allow the deer to pass over them. It was told the Queen, that several of the Highlanders had been wounded, and that two or three had been killed outright; and the whole body of deer had got off, had not the Highlanders, by their skill in hunting, fallen upon a stratagem, to cut off the rear from the main body. It was of those that had been separated, that the Queen's dogs, and those of the nobility, made slaughter. There was killed that day three hundred and sixty deer, with five wolves, and some roes." \*

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\* *Barclay de Regno et regali potestate*, p. 279, 280. The writer who has transmitted to us this interesting and lively account, was William Barclay, a native of Aberdeenshire, and a learned civilian. He spent the early part of his life, and much of his fortune, at the

This hunt, truly *Caledonian*, so nearly resembles those of the ancient Highland heroes described in the old Gaelic poetry, that a Highlander would naturally expect the account to terminate in that of the subsequent feast, in which “the shell went round, the bards sung, and the soft hand of virgins trembled on the strings of the Harp.”\* That the Earl of Athol

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court of Queen Mary, and accompanied her on this excursion to the Highlands, at the age of twenty-two. In the latter part of his life he married a French lady, lived in France, and was Professor of Civil Law in the university of Angers, where he died in the year 1604.

\* See above, p. 34 and note. See also p. 32 and note \*.—The Gaelic lines, in the latter note, are from an antient poem, which describes the manners of the Fingalian heroes, and are immediately preceded by a description of a chace, which, after the first twenty lines, proceeds thus :

## ORIGINAL.

“ *Bu chian ar sgaoileadh o cheile,  
 Fea' gach sleibh air barra bhac ;  
 Laochraí' chalna, churant Fhinn,  
 'S an bogha gach tiom nan glaic.* ”

## LITERAL TRANSLATION.

Far would disperse asunder,  
 Through the steep banks of each mountain,  
 The strong, adventurous band of Fingal,  
 With bows ready in their grasp.

did actually conclude this magnificent fete, by entertaining his royal guest and relation in the most princely stile of the times, and with every variety that could be procured, cannot admit of a doubt; and it may, with great reason, be supposed, that the tradition handed down in the family of Lude, does expressly refer to this very festival, to which some of the best performers on the Caledonian Harp may have been invited, in order to display their musical powers before the Queen; and that Beatrix Gardyn had the

## ORIGINAL.

'Nuair a dh'eiradh seilg an fheidh,  
 Dh' fhuasgladhmaid na ceuda cu;  
 S'iomha' damh, carb, agus Adh  
 A thuiteadh, 'sa bhail gach iul.  
 Philleamaid le'r seilg tra-non,  
 Gu Teamhra' cheolmhor nan teud;  
 An bu lionmhor cruit is clar,  
 'S ioma' Bard a sheinneadh sgeul.  
 B'ioma' slige doll mun cuairt,  
 'S dana nua' ga luadh le cheil,  
 A' caitheamh na feist 's ann Tiar."

## LITERAL TRANSLATION.

When the deer began to start,  
 We let slip the hundreds of hounds;  
 Many a hart, roe, and hind  
 Fell, as far as I could view.  
 We returned at noon, with the spoils of the chase,  
 To the musical Taura of strings,  
 Where numerous were Cruits and Harps,  
 And many a bard to sing a tale.  
 Many a shell went round,  
 And new songs were sung together,  
 Whilst the feast was consuming in the tower.

distinguished honour, on this occasion, of being presented with the royal Harp, still preserved by her descendants, of which the description, illustrated by a most accurate engraving, has been given above.

That this Harp was of Scottish manufacture, appears to be extremely probable, as well as that it had been an established custom, for many preceding reigns, to have a Harp provided for the royal palace. It has been seen, that Queen Mary's illustrious ancestor, King James the First, was celebrated for his performance on the Harp; and the arms of Scotland, in gold, together with Queen Mary's portrait, show, that this Harp had been provided for her, in consequence of such an established custom; and that it is constructed on the principles of the Celtic school, appears from its perfect resemblance, in size, and number of strings, to the Harp of Brian Boromh of the year 1014; each of these regal Harps

having twenty-eight strings ;—Brian Boromh's Harp is thirty-two inches high ; that of Queen Mary is thirty-one inches.

It cannot possibly be supposed that this Harp came from France. At this period the Harp appears to have been entirely laid aside in that country, at least by the higher ranks of society. Their favourite instrument was the lute, in shape not unlike a guitar, but improved by an additional number of strings, and those of much finer powers. Besides lutes of the smaller size, used mostly to accompany the voice, others were made on a much larger scale, called the theorbo, and arch-lute, six feet in length, and sometimes longer, on which *thorough bass* was played. So much was the lute the leading instrument in France, that, at this day, the name of a musical instrument-maker, of whatever kind, even of one that can only make flutes, is, *un Luthier*, or

lute-maker ; and to such a length had they proceeded, with their favourite instrument, in Paris, not many years after Queen Mary left it, that lutes were constructed in such a manner, that their backs opened, like the doors of a chamber, so as to “ admit young pages, who, being thus rendered invisible, sung the treble part, while the lutanist both *sung* the tenor, and *played* the bass on the lute ;” and we have this from no less authority than that of their most celebrated mathematician, Mersennus, who adds, “ that it was in that manner that Granier performed concerts, in three parts, before the Queen-dowager, Margaret of Valois.”\*

It was on a lute of the smaller size that Queen Mary used, for the most part, to accompany her

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\* *Mersenne Harmonie Universelle.* Paris, 1636.

songs.\* The accomplished ladies, and even gentlemen, of that period, could sing a part of madrigals, and other vocal compositions, of four parts, *at sight*; insomuch, that Castiglione, in his *Cortegiano*, or *Perfect Courtier*, published 1587, enumerates that talent, as one of the requisites for the accomplished gentleman; and many of the excellent vocal compositions, in three and four parts, of that period, are still sung with pleasure in England, and are among the most difficult and intricate music, of that description, that is sung at this day. Queen Mary's private concert consisted chiefly of music of this kind. Sir James Melville, one of the most accomplished men of that age, possessing

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\* "*Elle avoit,*" says Brantome, "*la voix tres douce et tres bonne; car elle chantoit tres bien, accordant sa voix avec le luth, qu'elle touchoit bien solidement, de cette belle main blanche, et de ces beaux doigts si bien façonnés, qui ne devoient à ceux de l'Aurore.*"—*Mem. de Brantome*, Vol. V. p. 113.

all the refinement and address of Castiglione's perfect courtier, informs us, that "Queen Mary had three valets, who sung three parts, and that she wanted a person to sing a bass, or fourth part. David Rizzio, who had come to France with the ambassador of Savoy, was recommended as one fit to make the fourth in concert, and thus he was drawn in to sing sometimes with the rest; and afterwards, when her French secretary retired himself to France, this David obtained the said office." \*

Besides Queen Mary's knowledge of vocal music, on these scientific principles, and her accompanying herself on the lute, she appears to

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\* Sir James Melville's Memoirs, p. 54.—With respect to David Rizzio, it is elsewhere stated more minutely, and admitted to be true, that he was born at Turin, where his father earned a subsistence as a musician; that it was in *Scotland* he arrived, in the train of the Count de Morette, the ambassador from the Duke of Savoy; and that he was engaged by Queen Mary, as related above by Sir James Melville. *Encyc. Brit.* voce *Scotland*, No. 632.



have been a very great performer on the *virginals*, which was a keyed instrument, having touches, and fingering, similar to those of the spinet, harpsichord, or piano-forte, which were its successive improvements. The music that was played on the virginals by Queen Elizabeth is still extant. It is written in a musical stave of *six* lines, which certainly much increases the difficulty of reading it; yet, even when this difficulty is overcome, I have been assured by a first-rate performer in London, who had this music given him to play, that he found it very difficult to execute; and the specimens of music played by Bull, a professor of that time, which are published in Dr Burney's History of Music, will convince any one, that there was music played on keyed instruments, at that period, that may be called, even at this day, extremely difficult. Now, if we are inclined to draw the inference from Sir James Melville's statement of the com-

parison of the accomplishments of these rival Queens, that he evidently intended his reader to draw from it, whatever idea it may have been calculated to convey to Queen Elizabeth, we must conclude, that, in playing on the virginals, as well as in the other talents she displayed before him, Queen Mary must, in his opinion, have far surpassed her. \*

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\* The following passage of the history of those times, besides being the evidence which I have to produce for what is above maintained, is so precious in itself, that, though already pretty well known, I shall make no further apology for its insertion. Sir James Melville having been sent by Queen Mary, in quality of her ambassador, to Queen Elizabeth, to clear up some serious misunderstandings which had arisen betwixt them, after having in one of his interviews succeeded, with wonderful address, in adjusting the important points in dispute, and having brought Queen Elizabeth into good humour with Queen Mary, and with herself, this able negociator thus proceeds to relate the sequel of that interview:—"The Queen desired to know of me, what colour of hair was reputed best, and whether my Queen's hair or hers was best, and which of them two was fairest?—I answered, the fairness of them both was not their worst faults—but she was earnest with me, to declare which of them I judged fairest—I said, she was the fairest Queen in England, and

If we, moreover, add to the great length of time, which the study of these accomplishments necessarily requires, those still larger portions of time, which her other various studies demanded;—when we consider, that she attained to so

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mine the fairest Queen in Scotland—Yet she appeared earnest—I answered, they were both the fairest ladies in their countries; that her Majesty was whiter, but my Queen was very lovely—She enquired, which of them was of highest stature?—I said, my Queen—Then, said she, she is too high; for I myself am neither too high nor too low—Then she asked, what kind of exercise she used?—I answered, that when I received my dispatch, the Queen was lately come from the *Highland hunting*; that when her more serious affairs permitted, she was taken up with reading of histories; that sometimes she recreated herself with playing upon the *lute and virginals*—She asked, if she played well?—I said, reasonably for a Queen.” This passed before dinner, and Sir James, who was asked to dine at court with one of the ladies, was taken after dinner, by Lord Hunsdean, who undoubtedly was instructed so to do by the Queen, to a quiet gallery, that “I might hear,” continues Sir James, “some music; but he said he durst not *avow* it, where I might hear the Queen play upon the *virginals*. After I had hearkened a while, I took by the tapestry that hung before the door of the chamber, and stood a pretty space, hearing her play *excellently well*; but she left off immediately, so soon as she turned her about, and saw me. She appeared surprised, and came forward, seeming to *strike me* with her

great a proficiency in the Latin tongue, that she declaimed publicly in the hall of the Louvre, in presence of the whole court of France, an oration, of her own composition, in that language, maintaining, against the common opinion,

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hand, saying, she was not accustomed to play before men; but when she was solitary, to shun melancholy. She asked me, how I came there?—I answered, as I was walking with my Lord of Hunsdean, as we passed by the chamber-door I heard such melody as ravished me, whereby I was drawn in ere I knew how, excusing my homeliness, as being brought up in the court of France, where such freedom was allowed, declaring myself willing to endure what kind of punishment her Majesty should be pleased to inflict upon me for so great an offence. Then she sat down upon a cushion, and I, upon my knees, by her; but with her own hand she gave me a cushion to lay under my knee, which at first I refused, but she compelled me to take it. She enquired, *whether my Queen or she played best?* In that *I found myself obliged* to give her the praise. On my pressing earnestly my dispatch, she said, I was weary sooner of her company than she was of mine—I told her Majesty, that though I had no reason of being weary, I knew my mistress's affairs called me home. Yet I staid two days longer, that I might see her dance; which being over, she enquired of me, whether she or my Queen danced best?—I answered, my Queen danced not *so high and disposedly* as she did."—Sir J. MELVILLE'S *Memoirs*, p. 50. 51.

that a proficiency in learning, and in the liberal arts, was not unbecoming the female character; that in the French, the Italian, and the Spanish languages, her progress was still greater; that she employed two hours every day in study and reading; that she had also made a great proficiency in painting;—when to all these is added, the time taken up in needle work, tapestry, dancing, and riding; and that all these branches of education were acquired in the nine years which elapsed from her sixth to her fifteenth year, when she was married to the Dauphin of France;\*—when all this is considered, we are fully warranted to suppose, that her musical studies consisted only of the extensive branches mentioned above; among which there

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\* Brantome's Mem. Vol. V. p. 113.; and Dr T. Robertson of Dalmeny's History of Mary Queen of Scots, p. 3.

could not have been found a vacant space for the study of the Harp. It is not at all likely she could have found any time for it, after her return to Scotland, so as to have made any progress on so difficult an instrument, and which, at the same time, could not gratify that desire of variety of modulation, or temporary change of key, which one accustomed to the system of the Italian school could not fail of feeling, almost at every instant. This can only be done on the modern Welsh Harp, of three rows of strings, and on the Pedal Harp. The Harpers of the old Celtic school had, however, by long use, and knowledge of the combinations which their more simple system could furnish, the power of pleasing themselves and others, on their instrument, in a very high degree. Whether Queen Mary was a performer on the Harp, or not, does not affect, in any way, the history of its progress in the Highlands, which is the

object of the present enquiry; but it must be allowed, that her not being able to play upon it, was a good reason for her giving away this Harp of state.

Queen Mary's Harp, together with the more ancient *Caledonian Harp*, have been occasionally played upon, in the family of Lude, as has been already observed, until within the last seventy or eighty years. Roderick Morrison, one of the last native Highland Harpers, who was regularly bred and professionally instructed, accompanied the Marquis of Huntley on a visit to Lude, about the year 1650. This Bard and Harper, who will be more particularly mentioned afterwards, composed a *port*, or air, on this occasion, which was called *Sui-par Chiurn na Leod*, or Lude's Supper. The last of this family who played on Queen Mary's Harp, before it was despoiled of its valuable ornaments by the soldiery in the year

1745, was the great-grand-father of General Robertson. The music which he played upon it consisted chiefly of the airs which had been composed by the Highland bards on some remarkable occasion; *Laments*, in commemoration of deceased persons of eminence; of the airs called *Ports*, and of marches of the Highland clans. None of these have been preserved in the family excepting that of *Lude's Supper*. The father of the present Mr Robertson of Strowan, however, who had been constantly in the practice of hearing General Robertson's great-grand-father play this music on Queen Mary's Harp, used to play a great number of them on the violin. From him his son, Colonel Colgear Robertson, learned, by the ear, to play a number of them on the violin, which General Robertson has heard him play, and some of them were taken down in writing from his performance, by Bowie, a music-seller in Perth, and were pub-



lished, about twelve years ago, at the end of his collection of reels, &c.\*

The establishments of the Highland Chieftains, with respect to their Bard, Harper, &c. had, for several centuries, from political causes, and from a variety of other changes in their condition, been gradually diminishing, and given up. There never does appear to have been, independent of these establishments, any set of men in the Highlands who had been taught to play upon the Harp, in order to gain their subsistence by it, from the public at large; nor do the nature, and circumstances, peculiar to the situation, of the Highlands, hold out any encouragement for such a profession, after these establishments had been discontinued; at least we do

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\* General Robertson's Letter to the Secretary of the Highland Society, dated Lude, 23d May, 1805; and Memorandum concerning the Harps and Highland Music, dated 9th November, 1805.

not find any accounts, or traces, of itinerant native Harpers in the Highlands, such as are still to be found in Ireland and in Wales; or if such were bred there, they probably went to the Lowlands to exercise their profession. The last regularly bred Highland Harpers appear to be the two following, with the account of whom, and the establishments to which they respectively belonged, I shall conclude the present enquiry.

In the seventeenth century, the Laird of Macleod, named John *Breck*, from his having been much marked by the small-pox, was one of the last Highland Chieftains who had an established Bard, Harper, Piper, &c. at his residence of Dunvegan Castle, in the island of Skye, all of them excellent, and liberally provided for. The offices of Bard and Harper were filled by Roderick Morison, who, being blind, was called *Ruarie Dall*; but he was born a gentleman, and lived on that footing in the family of this chieftain.

He was the last person in this country who possessed the talents of Bard and Harper, of Poet and Composer of Music, in an eminent degree. After the death of John Breck, Dunvegan Castle, and its establishment, was abandoned by his son; a measure which the poor neglected bard lamented, in an excellent elegy on his patron, which was printed in a late collection of Gaelic poems.\* I have not been able to procure any further accounts of him; but he appears to have been, after this, still held in great estimation, and to have been taken notice of by persons of the first rank in this country. His accompanying the Marquis of Huntley to

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\* See an interesting Dissertation on the Influence of Poetry and Music upon the Highlanders, from which this account of Rory Dall is taken, prefixed to P. M'Donald's valuable Collection of Vocal Highland Airs; and the excellent remarks on the music contained in it, in the preface to the first edition of that work, both which treatises are written by gentlemen of eminent abilities.

Lude-house has been already taken notice of. Some of his compositions for the Harp are still extant; I remember to have seen one of them in an old collection of engraved Scottish music.

The family of Maclean of Coll was one of those who maintained a Harper. John Garve Maclean of Coll, who lived in the latter end of the reign of King James the Sixth, and during that of Charles the First, was esteemed an excellent performer on the Harp, and a good composer of music. Two of his compositions have been handed down, one called *Toum Muran*, the other, *Caoineadh Rioghail*, or the Royal Lament, probably composed in memory of the latter unfortunate monarch. An anecdote has been handed down in the family, of an English vessel having been wrecked on the island, the captain of which went to the castle of Coll, and on seeing this venerable gentleman, with a Bible

in his hand, and a Harp placed by his side, exclaimed, in the enthusiastic language of that time, that he beheld *King David restored again to the earth!* Murdoch Macdonald, brought up by the family of Coll, appears to have been the last native Harper of the Highlands of Scotland. He was first sent to the island of Skye, to receive instruction from Rory Dall, and afterwards into Ireland, for the same purpose. He remained in the family of Coll, in quality of Harper, until the year 1734, as appears from an account of payments made in that year, in the hand-writing of Hector Maclean of Coll, uncle to the present Colonel Maclean. How long he continued afterwards in the family does not appear; but he retired to Quinish, in the island of Mull, where he remained until his death. He was always called, and is still remembered in the island of Coll, by the name of Murdoch *Clarsair*, or Murdoch the Harper. His son, who acted occa-

sionally as a servant to the present Colonel Maclean of Coll, was distinguished by the name of *Eoin Mac Mhurchaidh Clairsair*, or John, son of Murdoch the Harper; and the grandson of Murdoch is, at this time, in the service of Colonel Maclean.

The particulars above mentioned, which relate to the family of Coll, were communicated by Colonel Maclean, in a letter to the author, dated 26th March, 1806, and in a letter written by Mrs Mackenzie, his relation, from the island of Coll, which was received in May following; and are not contained in the author's Report upon this subject, which was delivered to the Highland Society previous to their annual meeting in the month of January preceding. Mrs Mackenzie is daughter of Doctor Maclean of the island of Mull, who was, at the time of Doctor Johnson's and Mr Boswell's visit to that island, writing

a history of the Macleans. Her letter contains several particulars concerning the Harpers of the island of Mull, which have been before taken notice of. She remembers a number of the compositions of the Highland Harpers, which were no doubt among those with which she entertained Dr Johnson and Mr Boswell at her father's house. These airs she had learnt of her father, who played them on the flute, and had them, in all probability, immediately from Murdoch Macdonald, the last of the Highland Harpers, who lived in his neighbourhood. It is this lady of whom Dr Johnson said, "She is the most accomplished lady I have found in the Highlands; she knows French, music, and drawing, sews neatly, makes shell-work, and can milk cows." Colonel Maclean's Letter, together with Mrs Mackenzie's, General Robertson's Letter and Memorandum, the author's Report, and

the original drawings of the Harps, are deposited among the Records of the Highland Society.

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## POSTSCRIPT.

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THE foregoing descriptions and enquiry were, in substance, contained in a Report which I delivered to the Highland Society of Scotland in December 1805. That Report was then intended to have been printed at the end of the third volume of the Society's Prize Essays and Transactions, which was going to the press. The subject having been, on many accounts, highly interesting to me, I was desirous to avail myself of what further interval of time the press might allow, and of the ready access which had been granted to me to the Advocates' Library, in order to add to my Report any further discovery I might make on the subject. That interval was much longer than what I had expected, and I was by these means imperceptibly led to give a wider range to my research.

In a treatise on the Origin of Stringed Instruments, which I had written during my residence at Cambridge, and published on my removing to London, in the year 1789, there was left a chasm in the history of the Harp, and of the other musical instruments mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, which I was unable, from any authentic documents, to fill up. On the present occasion, I again ventured to renew my investigation of that subject, not without entertaining

some hopes that I should be able to trace a connection betwixt our Harps of Caledonia and those of Egypt and Palestine; and I have had the good fortune at length, if I am not greatly deceived, of making, what I conceive to be, important discoveries on this subject, from ancient sculpture, coins, and other Oriental monuments. These, together with an original Harp of the kingdom of Pegu, perfectly entire, with all its original strings, now under my care, for the purpose of being accurately drawn and engraved, promise to throw much light, not only on the antiquity and history of this ancient instrument, but also on the origin and ancient history of the Caledonians. This interesting suggestion again led me into an extensive line of research, in order to discover what resemblance there might be betwixt the ancient religious establishments, Pagan rites, language, manners, and customs of the Oriental nations, and those of the Caledonians; the result of which also appeared to me fully to justify and support the inference I had drawn from the similarity of the Harps of both nations; and, taking both in connection with each other, they have produced the most deliberate conviction on my own mind.

I have much reliance on the sufficiency of my documents, as to their number, competency, agreement, and force; but, on the other hand, I have much diffidence in my own powers of presenting them to the public with suitable advantage. In hopes, however, of meeting with some indulgence for what deficiency there may be, on my part, in that respect, I conceive it to be a duty I owe to the highly respectable Society, which has so patriotically been the instrument of instituting the original enquiry, further to show the great importance of these Caledonian Harps, as monuments capable of illustrating points, highly interesting, of the most remote antiquity. I feel it, moreover, to be a duty I owe to my country, to bring forward the

evidence I have found of such important parts of its history and antiquities.

When the ample materials I have collected are sufficiently compressed and digested, they may be comprized in one volume, to be published without unnecessary delay; with reference to which, I beg leave at present to offer the following

P R O S P E C T U S  
OF AN  
ENQUIRY INTO THE ANTIQUITY OF THE HARP,  
AND INTO  
THE ORIENTAL EXTRACTION AND ANCIENT HISTORY  
OF  
*THE CALEDONIAN SCOTS;*

Demonstrating, from their LANGUAGE, ANCIENT RELIGION, SUPERSTITIOUS RITES, their KALENDAR and FESTIVALS, their remarkable TRADITIONS, MANNERS, and CUSTOMS, and from other Documents and Monuments still existing in ASIA, FRANCE, GREAT BRITAIN, and IRELAND, that they brought the HARP, together with other ARTS OF CIVILIZED LIFE, from ARMENIA, and the Western Coast of ASIA, into the Southern Parts of ENGLAND, prior to the Æra at which our Writers commence the History of GREAT BRITAIN.

The INTRODUCTION will treat of the ideas which have been hitherto adopted with respect to the first peopling of Great Britain,—will show the errors of that system to have occasioned much useless discussion and controversy, and to have rendered the most ancient monuments of the country, the origin of

its ancient commerce with Asia, and the first introduction of the arts of civilized life into Britain, altogether inexplicable. The system now proposed will illustrate these obscure points, and fill up the void in our ancient history. Although it is as yet but little and imperfectly known, this system is founded on the principles laid down by the best philosophers, and is supported by the authority of the best antiquarians. The nature and variety of the proofs and documents which are to be produced to sustain it; their dependence upon, and mutual illustration of each other, will be explained.

CHAP. I. Will treat of the antiquity and use of the Harp in Asia,—will ascertain its form and structure, illustrated by engravings of an original Harp from the kingdom of Pegu, and other representations of Oriental Harps from ancient sculpture, coins, and paintings of Egypt and Palestine. The connection of the Harp with the ancient religious establishments of Asia, and particularly with the Prophet of the Oriental nations, and of the Lyre with the Prophets, or Bards, of ancient Greece, will be pointed out. The stringed instruments most frequently mentioned in the sacred Scriptures will be more clearly ascertained, and shown to have been the Oriental Harp and the Grecian Lyre.

CHAP. II. Will discover the similarity of the Caledonian Harp and Cruit, to the Harp and Lyre of Asia, which will also be supported and illustrated by engravings from authentic documents; and the use of these instruments will be shown to be, in the same manner as they were in Asia, connected with the Pagan religious establishment of the Caledonians. The *Faid* of the Caledonians will be shown to be the same, both in the word and office, with the *Prophet* of the Oriental nations and Greeks, and the *Vates* of the Romans; and the name and offices of the other two chief members of the Caledonian Priesthood will be shown to be Oriental, and to correspond with those of the Eastern nations.

CHAP. III. Will show the Pagan God of the Caledonians to have been the Baal of the nations of Western Asia, so frequently mentioned in the Scriptures;

and that the superstitious worship of the Caledonians to their Baal, were similar to those of the Gentile nations, described in the sacred Scriptures. (See above, page 5, note.)

In CHAP. IV. Will be given interesting details of the Kalendar and Festivals of the Caledonians, and their correspondence with those of their Asiatic ancestors will be clearly ascertained, both as to the times of the year, and objects of their institution ;—this will discover the origin of most of the festivals of Great Britain.

In CHAP. V. Will be shown the similarity of numerous superstitious ideas of the Caledonians to those of their Oriental ancestors ; and more particularly the specific virtues, ascribed by both to the same natural substances. In this chapter will be contained an account of various species of divination common to both people, which have a remarkable correspondence, both in their nature and in their names ; together with singular and interesting traditions and opinions of both nations ; and other topics, which strongly point out their common origin.

In CHAP. VI. Will be demonstrated, that the constitution of the Caledonian nation, and the greatest part of their peculiar and primitive manners and customs, in themselves very interesting, and many of which have continued to the present time, correspond exactly with the patriarchal state of the ancient nations of Asia, and with the manners and customs, which travellers have found to be the most strikingly characteristic of the Eastern nations at this day.

CHAP. VII. Will treat of the correspondence of the Gaelic language of the Caledonians with the Hebrew, and other Oriental languages in general ; and more particularly with those of their ancestors, the ancient Armenians, or Persians, and Phœnicians, with interesting specimens ;—and it will be shown, that the Welsh, or Cambro-British, has no such degree of affinity with those

languages.—Curious specimens of Armenian and Persian Music, so much resembling that of the Caledonians, that the Persian song which will be given, was taken, at different times, by different persons, who had been accustomed to hear Highland vocal music, for a Gaelic song, both with respect to the air, and to the articulation and sound of the *words*.

In CHAP. VIII. Will be shown the original country of the Caledonians, and their subsequent residence in a different part of Asia—The origin of their name and descent—Their emigration to Europe—Their progress and residence traced on the continent, by their language, dress, religious institutions, a variety of peculiar sounds in their pronunciation, and from other striking monuments, which have no parallel in the habitable world, but what have been left in their tract on the continent, and in those parts of Britain into which they afterwards removed. It will be shown, that the Cambro-Britons came by a very different rout, and under very different circumstances, from Asia into Gaul and Britain.

In CHAP. IX. The first settlement of the Caledonians on the southern coast of Britain will be ascertained by the topography of that part of England at this day; and it will be proved, that before they retired into the more northern parts of Britain, they occupied the sea-coast of the British and Bristol Channels, with an inland territory, which included Kent on the east, and Brecknockshire on the west.

CHAP. X. Will treat of the arts introduced by the Caledonians into Britain, namely, Mineralogy, Metallurgy, Dyeing, Manufacture of Glass, the Armed War Chariots, which became afterwards so formidable to the Romans; and the knowledge of mechanical powers, capable of raising astonishing weights—Of the ancient commerce with the Phœnicians—Of the learning of the Druids, and particularly of a Caledonian Druid—Of the scientific structure of the Harp, as possessing the only geometrical curve adapted to the proportions of the diatonic scale—Of the ancient Gaelic poetry in general; and of the origin

of the Orientalisms of the old English and French or Armoric metrical romances, which has so much divided the opinions of celebrated critics.

CHAP. XI. Will treat of the Harp, as communicated by the Caledonians to the Cambro-Britons—Of the origin of the word Harp—Of the rude instrument of five strings, brought by the Anglo-Saxons into Britain, which was improved by the Oriental Harp of the Cambro-Britons; and after having been so improved, became known on the continent of Europe, before the reign of King Alfred, by the name of *Cithara Anglica*, or *English Harp*—Of the rude Northern Harp, and of the *Cithara Anglica*, engravings will be given from authentic foreign documents. It will be proven, that the Oriental Harp never was in use among the Romans, and that it could not have been transmitted by them to the Italians, or any of the other nations of Europe.

CHAP. XII. Will treat of the practice of the Harp in the Highlands, from the retreat of the Scots into Caledonia, until the beginning of the thirteenth century; and specimens will be given of the melodies to which the ancient Gaelic heroic poems are sung in different parts of the Highlands extremely remote from each other; the manner in which the Highlanders adapt the expression of the air, to the different varying circumstances of these long poems, will be explained.

CHAP. XIII. Will treat of the practice of the Harp in the Highlands, from the thirteenth century, and during its decline; and some fine specimens will be given of the plaintive and pathetic airs, with the original words, to which the Highland Lyric Poetry is sung, which have attracted the notice, and called forth the inimitable powers of the celebrated Haydn, in giving additional parts and symphonies suitable to them—Of the causes which appear to have contributed to the progress and excellence of the Scottish music in general—Of its general character and estimation in the musical world; and of the causes which have brought on the decline of music, and prevented its cultivation, and that of musical science, in Scotland.

A few written copies of the above *Prospectus* were delivered to some of the leading members of the Highland Society previous to their annual meeting, at Edinburgh, in January 1807. .

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