

the harp is the instrument described as "clarsichoe" in later days, is still an undecided question. O'Curry, who had deeply studied the subject, says that in the earliest MS. in which reference to the cruit or crot is made it is called "coircethairchuir"—*i.e.*, the instrument of four beaks or points. Soon after, in the same MS., the mouths of crot, and bellies, and pipes are mentioned (*j*) in connection with the same instrument. Another MS. says that "a crot" without a "ceis" is like a crot without a "gles" (or tuning). This word, "ceis," fairly staggers O'Curry. It was evidently out of date at the time when the copies of the legend were made, and none of the transcribers can explain the meaning of the word (*k*). In endeavouring to explain the word, they call it the little pin; a small crot played with the large one; a nail on which the strings, called lethrind, were fastened; and another and most likely definition was "cobhla," or movable. Diodorus Siculus says that the ancient harps were like lyres, and we think that the crot mentioned was not a harp at all, but was like that shown on plate 19, figs. 3 and 4 (*l*), an instrument with four beaks or points, held with one hand, and played with the other. The lower part would be the sounding-board, and the strings at the comb or neck would pass in front of the sounding-board, and be secured at the bottom to a movable "ceis," which by tightening or loosening the strings produced the different scales or descriptions of music before mentioned. It will be seen that this "ceis" stands in front of the sounding-board in much the same manner as the tail-piece of a violin, and, being movable, would answer the last definition. The instrument from the cross at Clonmacnoise (fig. 3) clearly shows that the lower part projected in front of the other part, but this appears to have had a much smaller number of strings. This, however, is no guide, as the difference of the material in which the instrument is represented would account for this discrepancy. Fig. 5 is enlarged from a photograph, kindly forwarded by Professor Stephens, of Copenhagen. The upper part is in shadow, so that the detail is not very clear; but if the instrument is (as we imagine) upside down, there was probably a ceis to it like those of figs. 3 and 4.

The figure in the MS. represents King David, and the other figure on the cross undoubtedly represents some priest of the old religion; but we leave abler heads to decide whether this instrument was the one used by ecclesiastics, or whether it was the forerunner of the "crowd" (*m*).

On the cover of an Irish missal in the library of Stowe two instruments are shown (*n*); two are mentioned in the quotation at the commencement of this chapter, and this distinction in name was maintained until a late period (*o*), but we cannot, as before mentioned, say whether the cruit and the clarsichoe are the same, or whether the clarsichoe and the harp differ only in the nature of the strings (*p*), or whether the clarsichoe was a long harp like the Carolan or O'Neil harps (plates 20 and 22), strung with brass wires, and the harp an instrument like the Queen Mary's, the Lamont, and the O'Brien (plates 20, 21, and 22).

Several other stringed instruments are mentioned in the various manuscripts, but it is a matter of doubt whether their precise form will ever be determined. O'Curry's translation of an Irish MS. gives an idea of the almost incredible wealth bestowed by the Kelts on the decoration of the cruit: "Cruits of gold and silver and Findruine, with figures of serpents and birds and greyhounds upon them, accordingly as the strings vibrated, ran around them."

The Kelts, in addition to ornamenting the harp, decorated the harp bags. "This was the condition of these (cruits): there were cruit bags of the skins of otters about them, ornamented with coral (partaing), with an ornamentation of gold and silver over that, lined inside with snow-white roebuck skins, and these again overlaid with black-grey stripes, and linen cloths, as white as the swans coat, wrapped round the strings."

The form of the Highland harp, as far as we have been able to trace it, has always been the same. One

(*j*) A crot had been carried away by the enemy, and it was discovered hanging in the hall of the foe. The Daghdha (or chief Druid) then called the crot from the walls, saying, "Come, Dardabla; come, Coircethairchuir; come, Samh; come, Gamh; from the mouths of harps, and bellies, and pipes."

(*k*) The legend was transcribed from time to time.

(*l*) Fac-simile of a MS. in the British Museum.

(*m*) O'Curry, if we mistake not, thought that the timpan was the forerunner of the crowd.

(*n*) Fergusson. The harp shown on the sculpture already mentioned (plate 19) differs little in shape from the harp proper.

(*o*) 1502, April 4th. Pasch tisday.

"To Pate harper on the harp	- - - -	XIIIjs.
To Pate harper on the clarscha	- - - -	XIIIjs.
To James Mylson, harper	- - - -	XIIIjs.
To the Ireland clarscha	- - - -	XIIIjs.
To the English harper	- - - -	XIIIjs."

The Ersch clarscha was distinguished from the Ireland clarscha, for we find that in 1507 42s. were paid for a case to an Ersch clarscharis harp.

(*p*) Unknown MS., 1597: "The strings of the clarsichoe are of brass wyar, and the strings of the harpe of sinewes, which strings they strike either with their nayles, growing long, or else with an instrument appointed for that use."