

The harp was preserved in many families as a heirloom (*y*), and was anciently held in great estimation by the bards. The clergy also, of later date, in the whole of the empire, excelled as musicians. The harp was the instrument for the gentleman; it was handed round at feasts, when each one was expected to play in his turn (*z*). The nails of the player were trimmed in a special way, and the harp was either played with the nails or by a plectrum (*aa*). In course of time, however, the harpers were so much honoured, and received so many presents and privileges (*bb*), that their pride eventually led to their extinction. This pride was so offensive that in all ages they were punished for it in a simple manner. The *Senchus Mòr* says, "If a harper's nail is cut off, a wing nail must be given in compensation"; and we find that O'Kane, the Irish harper, when he exceeded the bounds of good breeding, was punished by the young sparks, cutting off his nails; this, of course, preventing him from playing until they grew again.

Mention has several times been made of harpers during the progress of this work, and the community of taste and feeling that really exists between the inhabitants of these islands is clearly shown by the regard they all had for the harper (*cc*).

Harie M'Gra, harper, from Largs, is the last harper recorded as being attached to a Highland troop (17th century), and the last harper who occupied an official position in the retinue of a chief was Murdoch McDonald, who remained with the McLeans of Coll until about 1734.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the cruit, harp, &c., had a varying number of strings at different periods, but thirty appears to have been the number for our best harps, and thirty is the number which Bunting says was on the harps he examined when he noted his scale (*dd*) (plate 23), and we see no reason why he should not be correct. By this scale the lowest string was C; the first F was omitted, making G the eleventh string; the twelfth being also called G; they were named the sisters, and were both tuned to tenor G on the violin. Plate 20 shows an ancient bronze wrest, "crann glesa," (*ee*), or tuning hammer. It has three square sockets to receive the heads of the pins; the projection at the rear held the strap for hanging to the girdle; and a small handle, fitted in and riveted to the large socket, gave the necessary leverage for tuning. The harper, having screwed up the strings to the necessary pitch, would play a tuning prelude, in order to see if the instrument was in perfect tune; the arpeggios being played the reverse way to the modern style (*ff*) (plate 23), and the instrument having successfully passed this test, would melodiously respond to the touch of its master.

(*y*) A harp being detained at one time, a law suit instituted, and the decision was—"The said Walter was ordered to deliver ane harp als gude as it was at the tyme it was taken fra the said Isabell Dalyell."

(*z*) Kirke, in 1691, says:—"Irishmen, and Northern Scottish and Atholmen, are much addicted to and delighted with harps and music."

(*aa*) J. Good, in 1566, says:—"They love music mightily, and, of all instruments, are particularly taken with the harp, which, being strung up with brass wires, and beaten with crooked nails, is very melodious."

(*bb*) Lord McDonald gave O'Kane, the Irish harper, a harp key, finely ornamented with gold and silver and precious stones. It is said to have been worth one hundred guineas.

(*cc*) Henry III. in the thirty-sixth year of his reign gave 40s. and a pipe of wine to his harper, and another pipe of wine to Beatrice, his wife. "Augustine Priory, Oxfordshire, 1431. Given to the harper on St. Jerome's Day, VIII^d."—*Burney*, Vol. II.

(*dd*) Gunn, who re-strung the Queen Mary harp, says that the strings were tuned from C to C.

(*ee*) This is described in the catalogue as the top of a chieftain's banner.

(*ff*) Bunting.