

I cannot conclude without expressing a hope, that the subject of the alteration of the orthography will immediately excite the attention of the *literati* of Wales, and that something may be done to give the Welsh—what, it may be said, (from the continual changes introduced by the whims of writers) they never possessed—a settled orthography.

GWILYM.

P. S. Adverting to the article in your last number respecting the “Conformity between the Indian and Bardic Theology,” I beg to state, that some observations on the subject may be found in J. SMITH’S “*Gaelic Antiquities*.”

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## EXCERPTA.

### THE IRISH HARP.

THE following observations on the Irish Harp are extracted from Mr. Beauford’s Treatise on Ancient Irish Music. We do not, however, vouch for their perfect accuracy, and especially as, in the etymology of some ancient words, and indeed in the orthography of the words themselves, the writer does not appear to have bestowed on his subject all the attention it required. But we still think the extract sufficiently curious to entitle it to a place in a work devoted to the examination of Celtic antiquities.

“THE *clarsech*\*, or harp, the principal musical instrument of the Hibernian bards, does not appear to be of Irish origin, nor indigenous to any of the British islands. The Britons, undoubtedly, were not acquainted with it, during the residence of the Romans in their country; as, on all their coins, on which musical instruments are represented, we see only the Roman *lyra*, and not the British *telyn*, or harp. Neither can the Welsh trace their bards or music higher than the time of Cadwaladr, who died in 688 †. Both the Greeks and Ro-

influence of the preceding word, somewhat like the initial mutations in Welsh; but we are not aware, that the sound is thus altered. DH, when not final and followed by a vowel, has, in most parts of Ireland, the sound of *γ*; when final, it is quiescent, or, at best, but a faint aspiration.—ED.

\* Spelt also *clairseach*.—ED.

“† Pennant’s Tour through North Wales.” [The harp, or *telyn*, of the Welsh is, no doubt, of ancient origin, as frequent reference to it occurs

mans were unacquainted with such an instrument, as it is not found on their coins and sculptures, till towards the decline of the empire of the latter. The Greeks have it not; the musical instruments of the modern Greeks consist of the ancient lyre, which they play with their fingers and a bow; they have also the guitar, but no harp\*.

“The harp, in old Irish *oirpeam*, is certainly of Teutonic or Scythic origin. For Venantius Fortunatus, speaking of the several European musical instruments in the sixth century, ascribes the *lyra* to the Romans, the *achilliaca* to the Greeks, the *crotta* to the Britons †, and the harp ‡ to the Germans. And the author of the Life of St. Dunstan, in the tenth century, says, that the *cythara* of this Saint was called, in their native tongue, *hearpe* §.

“The Irish bards, on receiving the Gothic or Scythic harp, or, as they denominated it in their native tongue, *oirpeam*, would naturally consider of the most proper means of adapting it to their vocal music, and render it capable of supporting the voice and performing their symphonic airs, for which, in subsequent periods, they became so celebrated. This they effected, by filling up the intervals of the fifths and thirds in each scale, by which, and the assistance of the church music, they were enabled to complete their scale, and increase the number of strings from 18 to 28; in which the original chromatic tones were retained, and the whole formed on the oral improved system. Under these improvements, though the instrument had increased in the number of its strings, it was somewhat reduced in capacity; for, instead of beginning in the lower E

in the Welsh laws. It was, originally, of a very simple construction. See CAMBRO-BRITON, vol. i. p. 54, in the note.—ED.]

\* Voyage Lit. de la Grece 3d edit. tom. i. par Monsieur Guys. See also the figure of a lyre, to be played on with a bow, having the bridge curved like a violin, in plate 109, vol. i. of the Cabinet of the Honourable Sir William Hamilton, Naples, 1766.”

† In the Welsh language, *crwth*. This instrument, which resembles a violin in its principle, is peculiarly Welsh, and next the harp in estimation and antiquity.—ED.

‡ Romanusque lyrâ, plaudat tibi barbarus harpâ,  
Græcus achilliaca, chrotta Britanna canat.

Ven. Fortun. l. 7. Carm. 8.”

§ Sumpsit secum ex more citharam suam, quam paterna lingua *hearpe* vocamus. Vit. S. Dunstan, apud Wharton. Angl. Sacra.”

in the base, it commenced in C, a sixth above, and terminated in C, an octave below, and, in consequence, became much more melodious, and capable of accompanying the voice. These improvements were, most probably, farther enlarged on the introduction of the Latin church music by Malachy O'Morgair, archbishop of Armagh, about the year 1134\*, from which period the Irish poetry and music are supposed to have separated, and vocal and instrumental music became distinct †.

“ The Bardic Harp, derived from the Gothic, was a large instrument, with deep base tones, generally used in concerts or large companies, and distinguished, by the Irish, by the name of *cream-cruithin*, or *creamtin-cruith*, that is, the noisy or festive harp. This, from 28 strings, was, in the latter ages, augmented to 33, beginning in C in the tenor, and extending to D in alt, which seems to have been the last improvement of the Irish harp, and in which state it still remains. A harp of this kind, five feet high, was made in 1726.

“ In respect to the technical terms of the component parts of the harp in the Irish language ‡, the wooden frame was denominated *clair* or the board; the strings *tead* or *teadach*; the arm or head, in which the pins were placed, *cionar*; the front or stay, *orfcad*, and the pins, on which the strings were tuned, *urnaidhim ceangal*. Under these relative denominations the Irish gave their harp various names; as, from its sounding-board, *clairsech* or musical board; from its strings, *teadhloin*, whence the Welsh *telyn* §; from its arm, *cionar*, and, from the trembling of the strings, *cruith*. Among which derivatives the original name *oirpeam* ||, from the Gothic *hearpa*, was nearly lost.

“ During the middle ages, the harp appears to have been an universal instrument among the inhabitants of this isle; and, in consequence, their musicians became expert performers, and superior in instrumental music to their brethren in Britain, and, in a great measure, merited the high character given them

\* \* Inter S. Bernardi Opera, cap. 16.”

† † O'Connor's Dissertations.”

“ † O'Clerigh.”

§ The word *telyn* has its origin in the Welsh tongue, being derived from the root *tel*, which signifies any thing straight or drawn tight.—ED.

“ || From *oirpeam* comes the modern Irish *oirtheadach* a harper, and *oirsid*, melody.”

by Cambrensis, who observes, that ‘ the attention of these people to musical instruments is worthy of praise ; in which their skill is, beyond comparison, superior to that of any other nation that we see. For in these the modulation is not slow and solemn, as in the instruments of Britain, to which we are accustomed ; but the sounds are rapid and precipitate, yet sweet and pleasing. It is extraordinary in such rapidity of the fingers, how the musical proportions are preserved, and the art every where unhurt, among their complicated modulations, and the multitude of intricate notes ; so sweetly swift, so irregular in their composition, so disorderly in their concords, yet returning to unison and completing the melody. Whether the chords of the *diatessaron* or *diapente* be struck together, they always begin in *dulce* and end in the same, that all may be perfect in completing the delightful sonorous melody. They commence and quit their modulations with so much delicacy, and soothe so softly, that the excellency of their art lies in concealing it.’

“ This eminence of the Irish harpers is not exaggerated, nor is it a compliment paid to the nation, as some have imagined. Cambrensis was one of the most accomplished scholars of his time, and perfectly understood both the theory and practice of music at that period cultivated in Britain, where the English minstrels and Welsh bards principally applied their instruments in supporting the voice in plain song, and were, in a great measure, unacquainted with symphonic airs, to which indeed their languages were little adapted\*. On the contrary, the varied cadence of the Irish tongue, and the brilliant symphonies which naturally arose from it, must have greatly delighted and astonished an ear not accustomed thereto. Besides, it was not in the full choir or crowded theatre, that the Irish musicians were trained in practice, but in the lonely desert, the deep valley, and the rugged mountain, where, familiar with the sighing gale, softening echo, and pealing thunder, they became acquainted with those natural graces which give so much elegance to modern music ; and the *forte*, *piano*, *termente*, &c. constantly adorned their melodious performances. And, in

\* There are several assertions in this extract made without any great foundation ; and this appears to be one, the inaccuracy of which a reference to Mr. Jones's *Relics of the Welsh Bards* and Mr. Parry's *Welsh Melodies* will sufficiently prove.—ED.

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accompanying the vocal music with the harp, they sometimes imitated the modulations of the voice, then, quitting it, the base notes only sounded; again, whilst the voice moved slowly and gravely along, the treble strings delightfully tinkled above, as it were re-echoing the song from the surrounding objects. They seem, in every part of their performances, to have studied nature, and to have paid little regard to art; thereby forming a style strong and expressive, but wild and irregular. This wildness, however, though destitute of the truth of composition, was not destitute of the power of producing pleasing and extraordinary effects on the minds of the hearers."

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### CEINION Y GREAL.—No. I.

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IT must be known to most of our readers, that, about eighteen years ago, a Welsh periodical work, entitled *Y GREAL*, was established in London, for the purpose of familiarizing the natives of Wales with the language, literature, and history of their country. But, above all, the express object of this publication seems to have been the diffusion, amongst Welsh scholars, of a correct knowledge and a classical taste; and those, who have perused its pages, must have seen how well adapted it was to the accomplishment of this task. In addition to the skill, with which it was conducted\*, the interesting variety of its contents, especially in history, poetry, and biography, deserve to be also noticed, and more particularly, as, among them, are many early literary remains of considerable value, not elsewhere to be found. From all these circumstances it cannot but be a matter of regret to the admirers of our national literature, that the work in question should have had so short an existence, as it continued only, from the 21st of June, 1805, during nine quarterly numbers.

It has long been our wish to introduce our English readers to some acquaintance with the *GREAL*, and especially as the

\* We shall have full credit, we know, for what we have alluded to, when we state, that Mr. Owen Pughe was one of the Editors of the *GREAL*. The late Mr. Owen Jones, we believe, was also concerned in it.—ED.