

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*Each week the **West Highland Free Press** publishes the text for Roddy Maclean's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on **BBC Radio nan Gaidheal (103-105 FM)**. The programme is broadcast at 11.50 every Friday morning, and repeats at 7.30 pm the following Monday.**

An t-seachdain 's a chaidh, dh'fhàg sinn Colla Ciotach ann an Colasa, agus e a' cur Calum Mac a' Phì gu bàs. Uill, an dèidh sin, bha cùisean na bu shitheile do Cholla airson bliadhnaichean. Ach, mu dheireadh, ann an sia ceud deug is naoi deug ar fhichead (1639), thàinig an t-strì eadar an Rìgh, Teàrlach a h-Aon, agus Clèirich na h-Alba, na Pròstanaich a bha an aghaidh easbaigeachd anns an Eaglais, gu cogadh.

Bha Colla Ciotach na Chaitligeach agus cha robh e deònach ainm a chur air a' Chùmhnant a bha ag iarraidh Eaglais Chlèireach a stèidheachadh gu neo-eisimileach bhon Rìgh. Air sgàth sin, chaill e a chuid fearainn ann an Colasa agus chaidh a chur anns a' phrìosan le Iarla Earra-Ghaidheal. Dh'fhalbh cuid de a chàirdean, ge-tà, a dh'Eirinn. Nam measg bha an treas mac aige - Alasdair. Alasdair Mac Cholla.

Bha Colla na dhuine mòr ach bha Alasdair na bu mhotha buileach. Bha e sia troighean is sia òirlich a dh'àirde, agus bha e uabhasach làidir. Bha e ciotach, mar a bha athair, agus a-rèir beul-aithris, nuair a bha uaislean na h-Eireann air tighinn cruinn airson ceannard a thaghadh don arm aca ann an Alba, arm a bhiodh a' sabaid airson an Rìgh an aghaidh muinntir a' Chùmhnant, leum Alasdair gu a chasan.

Aig an àm sin, 's e an duine a bu làidire a chleachdadh claidheamh a bhiodh air a thaghadh mar cheannard an airm. Bha dithis Eireannach ann a bha an dùil gur iadsan a rachadh a thaghadh. Ach bha smuain eile aig Alasdair Mac Cholla. "Dè an gàirdean as làidire a th'ann?" dh'fhaighnich na h-uaislean. "Seo e!" dh'èigh Alasdair agus tharraing e a chladheamh às a thruaill le a làimh dheis.

"Is càit' a bheil an ath ghàirdean as làidire?" dh'fhaighnich na h-uaislean. "Seo e!" dh'èigh Alasdair, agus chuir e a chladheamh na làimh chli; bha e ciotach, cuimhnich. Cha robh duine deònach dhol na aghaidh agus chaidh Alasdair a thaghadh mar cheannard an airm.

Dh'obraich e fhèin agus Montròs, Marcuis Mhontròis, còmhla ann an arm an Rìgh, agus choisinn Alasdair cliù dha fhèin, gu h-àraidh am measg nan Gàidheal Caitligeach, mar fhear dhen ghaisgich a bu làidire a bh'ann a-riamh. Taobh a-staigh bliadhna rinn iad a' chùis air arm muinntir a' Chùmhnant sia tursan, agus tha mòran fhathast a' cuimhneachadh dhà dhen bhatailean sin – aig Allt Eireann, gu sear air Inbhir Nis, agus ann an Inbhir Lòchaidh ann an Loch Abar.

Ghabh Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh àite ann am meadhan a' gheamhraidh as dèidh do dh'arm Mhontròis dhol gu cabhagach tarsainn bealaich àrda anns na beanntan. Thàinig iad a-mach às na beanntan gun fhiosda do dh'arm nan Caimbeulach, agus rinn iad a' chùis orra gu furasta. Chaill na Caimbeulaich mìle is trì cheud duine air an latha sin.

Bha sin ann an sia ceud deug, dà fhichead 's a còig (1645), an dearbh bhliadhna 's a fhuair Colla a-mach às a' phrìosan. Cha b'fhada gus an robh Colla a' toirt taic do dh'Alasdair ged a bha e a-nise gu math sean.

Thàinig saoghal an dithis gu crìch anns an aon bhliadhna, dìreach dà bhliadhna as dèidh Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh. Fhuair na Caimbeulaich greim air Colla, agus chaidh a chrochadh air cnoc gu tuath air an Òban. Chaill Alasdair batail ann an Cinn Tìre, agus theich e a dh'Eirinn, far an deach a mharbhadh le saighdearan Sasannach.

Dh'fhàg an dithis dìleab mhòr eachdraidheil don Gàidhealtachd, ach tha Alasdair Mac Cholla air a chuimhneachadh cuideachd leis gun do dh'fhàg e sean-fhacal dhuinn ann an Gàidhlig, a chluinnear fhathast. Agus innsidh mi sin dhuibh an ath sheachdain.

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Faclan na seachdaine: na bu shìtheile: *more peaceful (past tense)*; an t-strì: *the strife, struggle*; Teàrlach a h-Aon: *Charles the First*; Clèirich: *Presbyterians*; neo-eisimileach: *independent*; ciotach: *ambidextrous (or left-handed)*; uaislean: *nobles*; gàirdean: *arm*; Marcuis Mhontròis: *The Marquis of Montrose*; batailean: *battles*; Allt Eireann: *Auldearn*; (Blàr) Inbhir Lòchaidh: *(The Battle of) Inverlochy*; Loch Abar: *Lochaber*; Cinn Tìre: *Kintyre*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: bha X na Chaitligeach: *X was a Catholic*; cha robh e deònach ainm a chur air a' Chùmhnant: *he was not willing to put his name on the Covenant*; chaill e a chuid fearainn: *he lost his land*; bha Alasdair na bu mhotha buileach: *Alasdair was even bigger (lit. altogether bigger)*; sia troighean is sia òirlich: *six feet and six inches*; choisinn X cliù dha fhèin: *X won a reputation for himself*; taobh a-staigh bliadhna: *within a year*; 's e an duine a bu làidire a chleachdadh claidheamh a bhiodh air a thaghadh: *it was the strongest man who would wield a sword who would be chosen*; tharraing e a chloidheamh às a thruaill: *he drew his sword from its scabbard*; tarsainn bealaich àrda: *across high passes*; gun fhiosda do X: *with X completely unaware*; thàinig saoghal an dithis gu crìch: *the lives of the two men came to an end*; chaidh a chrochadh: *he was hanged*; dìleab mhòr eachdraidheil: *a great historical legacy*; a chluinnear fhathast: *which is still heard*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: na Pròstanaich a bha an aghaidh easbaigeachd: *the Protestants who were against episcopacy. If you don't know what the Gaelic is for episcopacy, but you do know that easbaig means "bishop", it is a fair bet that you will get "episcopacy" by adding –eachd to the end of easbaig; and even if it is not right, you will probably be understood. Here are some other examples: draoidh (druid), draoidheachd (sorcery, magic); fiaclair (dentist), fiaclaireachd (dentistry); snaigheadair (hewer, carver), snaigheadaireachd (the art of hewing, carving); eunadair (wildfowler), eunadaireachd (wildfowling); ciobair (shepherd), ciobaireachd (shepherding). It is useful to note that most words ending in –(e)achd are feminine, even though the words from which they are derived are usually masculine.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: ged a bha e a-nise gu math sean: *although he was now very old. Have you have been confused by hearing “gu math” in sentences like this? It is used to strengthen an adjective in a similar way to uabhasach (although it is not as strong). Bha mi gu math toilichte (I was pretty pleased); bha Seumas gu math sgìth an dèidh latha anns a’ mhonadh (James was very tired after a day on the hill). This usage, however, can cause difficulties for Irish Gaelic speakers. One said to me that a Scottish Gael had told him that something was “gu math dona” (pretty bad) and the Irishman didn’t know if the Scot meant it was good or bad or whether he was just confused!*

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