

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk **

An t-seachdain 's a chaidh, dh'innis mi dhuibh mu òran a sgrìobh am bàrd, Uilleam Ros, anns an do dh'ainmich e an clàrsair Eireannach, Cormac. Cha chreid mi gu bheil fios aig mòran an-diugh cò bh' ann an Cormac, ach bha tuigse aig an fheadhainn a bha a' leughadh bàrdachd Rois aig an àm. Bha e aithnichte ann am beul-aithris, agus seo sgeulachd mu dheidhinn:

Mar bu dual do chlàrsairean Eireannach aig an àm, thàinig Cormac a dh'Alba, agus chuir e seachad ùine ann an taighean mòra nan ceann-feadhna. 'S ann mar sin a bhiodh iad a' dèanamh am bith-beò – a' cluich na clàrsaich agus a' seinn airson nan uaislean, is uaireannan a' sgrìobhadh òrain dhaibh. As dèidh greis, chaidh Cormac a Leòdhas far an d'fhuair e aoi gheachd còmhla ri MacLeòid.

Ach, ged a fhuair e fhèin is MacLeòid air adhart ceart gu leòr, dh'èirich trioblaid eatarra. Bha nighean aig MacLeòid agus ghabh i fhèin agus Cormac trom-ghaol air a chèile. Ach cha leigeadh a h-athair leatha an clàrsair a phòsadh, agus chuir a' chàraid romhpa teicheadh a dh'Eirinn.

Oidhch' a bha seo, ghleus Cormac a chlàrsach. As deidh don a h-uile duine an suipear a ghabhail, thòisich e air fonn àraidh a chluich. Chuireadh e a h-uile duine a bha ag èisteachd ris fo phràmh. Chluich Cormac airson greis agus an uairsin choimhead e mun cuairt air. Bha a h-uile duine na chadal, nam measg MacLeòid fhèin.

Chuir Cormac a chlàrsach an darna taobh agus tharraing e a-mach biodag fhada a bhiodh e a' giulan còmhla ris. Dh'èirich e agus chaidh e a dh'ionnsaigh a' chinn-chinnidh airson amhaich a sgoltadh.

Ach nuair a bha e faisg air, thàinig am mac a bu shine aig MacLeòid a-steach. Bha e air tilleadh bho bhith a' sealg anns a' mhonadh, agus chunnaic e an clàrsair faisg air athair, is biodag mhòr na làimh.

“A Chormaic, a Chormaic,” thuirt e. “Dè tha thu a' dèanamh? A bheil thu air a dhol às do rian?”

“Chan eil,” fhreagair an clàrsair, “ach tha gaol agam air do phiuthar agus tha mi airson a toirt leam a dh'Eirinn. Cha toir d' athair cead dhomh agus, leis a sin, feumaidh mi a cheann a thoirt far a bhodhaig.”

“Na dèan sin!” thuirt an gille. “Chan fhaod thu. Co-dhiù, chan eil math dhut a bhith cho dìleas sin ri mo phiuthar. Tha mìle òigh ann an Alba agus dh’fhaodadh tu do roghainn fhaighinn dhiubh, is a h-uile gin aca nas bòidhche na i.”

Smaoinich an t-Eireannach airson tiotan. An uairsin choimhead e air mac MhicLeòid. “’S e an fhìrinn a th’ agad,” thuirt e ris. “Thoir dhomh mo chlàrsach is gheibh mi cuidhteas gaol na h-òighe, do phiuthar, le bhith ga cluich.” Agus ’s e sin a rinn e.

Na chuid bhàrdachd, rinn Uilleam Ros coimeas eadar Cormac ’s e fhèin. Bha comas aig a’ chlàrsair leigheas fhaighinn airson tinneas a ghaoil leis a’ chlàrsaich. B’ e sin cumhachd a’ chiùil. Ach cha robh comas mar sin aig a’ bhàrd, agus cha b’ urrainn dha faclan a lorg, ann am Beurla neo Gàidhlig, a bheireadh toil-inntinn dha.

Ach, aig a’ cheann thall, cò chanadh nach iad na faclan as cumhachdaiche? Tha glè bheag a’ cuimhneachadh ceòl Chormaic an-diugh, ach bidh briathran is smuaintean a’ bhàird tric far comhair, còrr is dà cheud bliadhna as dèidh a bhàis.

* * *

Faclan na seachdainne: ceann-feadhna, ceann-cinnidh: *clan chief*; uaislean: *gentry*; ghleus e: *he tuned*; biodag: *dirk*; a’ sealg: *hunting*; òigh: *virgin, young woman*; cumhachd, cumhachdach: *power, powerful*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: ’s ann mar sin a bhiodh iad a’ dèanamh am bith-beò: *that is how they would make their living*; far an d’fhuair e aoigheachd: *where he obtained hospitality*; dh’èirich trioblaid eatarra: *a difficulty arose between them*; ghabh i fhèin agus Cormac tromghaol air a chèile: *she and Cormac feel deeply in love*; chuir a’ chàraid romhpa teicheadh a dh’Eirinn: *the couple decided to flee to Ireland*; chuireadh e a h-uile duine fo phràmh: *it would put everybody to sleep*; airson amhaich a sgoltadh: *to slit his throat*; am mac a bu shine: *the oldest son*; feumaidh mi a cheann a thoirt far a bhodhaig: *I must remove his head from his body*; chan eil math dhut a bhith cho dìleas sin: *it’s not good for you to be so faithful*; ’s e an fhìrinn a th’ agad: *you are telling the truth*; gheibh mi cuidhteas gaol na h-òighe: *I will get rid of the maiden’s love*; b’ e sin cumhachd a’ chiùil: *that was the power of (the) music*; a bheireadh toil-inntinn dha: *that would give him peace of mind*; bidh briathran is smuaintean a’ bhàird tric far comhair: *the words and thoughts of the bard are often in front of us*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdainne: mar bu dual do chlàrsairean Eireannach aig an àm: *as was usual for Irish harpers at the time. The link between dual and the Gaelic for the national environment agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, may not be immediately obvious, but there is one. Dual actually means a hereditary right or birthright so that mar bu dual dha would originally have meant “as was his birthright according to his heredity”. With the weakening of the position of heredity and pedigree in the Gaelic world, it has also come to mean “as was his wont” or “as was usual for him”, although you will still hear it used in the older sense. Related to dual is the word dualchas which originally meant a hereditary disposition but has also come to be a Gaelic equivalent to the English “heritage”. Thus, Scottish Natural Heritage is known in Gaelic as Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba and people talk today of “ar dualchas nàdarrach” for “our natural heritage” – a meaning of the word which would have been foreign to earlier Gaels. Another related word is dualtach. Tha e dualtach a bhith greannach anns a’ mhadainn (he is inclined to be ill-tempered in the morning).*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: dh’fhaodadh tu do roghainn fhaighinn dhiubh: *you could take your pick of them*.

* *“Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh” is funded by Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig*