

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for 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, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 560. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 256 corresponds to Litir 560.

Bu mhath leam seann stòiridh innse dhuibh – *An Rìgh agus an Searrach*. A bheil sibh a’ tuigsinn an fhacail *searrach*? Tha e a’ ciallachadh “each òg”.

Bha duine ann uaireigin. Chaidh e a-mach air an rìgh, ged nach eil fhios dè rinn e. Chaochail a bhean agus bha e fhèin ’s a nighean a’ cumail taighe. Bha a nighean uabhasach seòlta agus math air a h-uile rud.

Chuir an rìgh fios air an duine. Chaidh an duine don chaisteal. Agus chuir an rìgh dùbhlán ron duine. “Thig an seo a-màireach,” thuirt an rìgh, “agus inns dhomh dè an rud as pailte air an t-saoghal.”

Chaidh an duine dhachaigh. Bha dragh air agus dh’fhaighnich a nighean dheth gu dè bha a’ cur air. Dh’inns e mar a bha.

“Carson nach do dh’inns sibh don rìgh nuair a bha sibh thall a-staigh aige?” thuirt an nighean.

“Dè dh’innsinn dha?” dh’fhaighnich a h-athair.

“Nach robh sìon air an t-saoghal cho pailt ris na taobhan,” fhreagair a nighean.

“A bheil thu fhèin a’ smaoinichadh,” ars esan, “gur iad na taobhan as pailte?”

“Nach eil fios agaibh gur iad, athair,” ars ise. “Chan eil e gu diofar cia mhead rud a th’ air an t-saoghal, tha co-dhiù dà thaobh aig gach fear aca. An taobh a-staigh ’s an taobh a-muigh. An taobh àrd ’s an taobh ìosal. An taobh thall ’s an taobh a-bhos.”

Bha an duine riarichte agus air an ath mhadainn chaidh e don chaisteal.

“Tha thu air tighinn,” thuirt an rìgh.

“Tha, **ur Mhòrachd**,” ars an duine.

“Uill, dè an rud as pailte air an t-saoghal?”

“Chan eil sìon air an t-saoghal cho pailt ris na taobhan,” ars an duine.

“O, tha mi an dùil gu bheil,” thuirt an rìgh.

“Chan eil, le ur cead,” ars an duine. “Air an lughad, tha co-dhiù dà thaobh air a h-uile rud. Cho pailt ’s a tha rud sam bith, tha a thaobhan nas pailte.”

“Tha mi riarichte,” ars an rìgh. “Ach bi an seo a-màireach, agus inns dhomh dè an rud as beartaiche air an t-saoghal.”

Dh’fhalbh an duine, agus dragh air. Nuair a chunnaic a nighean e, bha fios aice gun robh e ann an droch shunnd. Mhìnich an duine a’ chùis dhi.

“Carson nach do dh’inns sibh don rìgh nuair a bha sibh thall a-staigh aige?” thuirt an nighean.

“Dè dh’innsinn dha?” dh’fhaighnich a h-athair.

“Nach robh sìon air an t-saoghal cho beartach ris a’ mhuir,” fhreagair a nighean.

“A bheil thu fhèin a’ smaoinichadh,” ars esan, “gur i a’ mhuir as beartaiche?”

“Nach eil fios agaibh gur i, athair,” ars ise. “Ainmichidh sibhse rud sam bith air an talamh. Tha a’ mhuir fada nas motha na sin. Tha barrachd innte dhen a h-uile rud a th’ ann. Leis a sin, nach i as beartaiche air an t-saoghal?”

Bha an duine riarachta agus air an ath mhadainn chaidh e don chaisteal.

“Tha thu air tighinn,” thuir an rìgh.

“Tha, ur Mhòrachd,” ars an duine.

“Uill, dè an rud as beartaiche air an t-saoghal?”

“Chan eil sìon air an t-saoghal cho beartach ris a’ mhuir,” ars an duine. Agus mhinich e carson. Bha an rìgh riarachta ach thuir e an uair sin, “Thig air ais an seo a-màireach agus mura h-inns thu dhomh gu dè as luaithe a th’ air an t-saoghal caillidh thu do cheann.”

Agus càite a bheil an searrach anns an stòiridh? A, uill, nochdaidh e an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: An Rìgh agus an Searrach: *The King and the Foal*; seòlta: *cunning*; a’ mhuir: *the sea*; talamh: *land*; innte: *in her*.

Abairtean na Litreach: chaidh e a-mach air an rìgh: *he fell out with the king*; ged nach eil fhios dè rinn e: *although it’s not known what he did*; chaochail a bhean: *his wife died*; bha e fhèin ’s a nighean a’ cumail taighe: *he and his daughter were keeping house [together]*; chuir an rìgh fios air an duine: *the king sent for the man*; chuir an rìgh dùbhlán ron duine: *the king set the man a challenge*; inns dhomh dè an rud as pailte air an t-saoghal: *tell me what is the most plentiful thing in the world*; dh’fhaighnich a nighean dheth gu dè bha a’ cur air: *his daughter asked him what was upsetting him*; dè dh’innsinn dha?: *what would I tell him?*; cho pailt ris na taobhan: *as plentiful as the sides*; chan eil e gu diofar: *it doesn’t matter*; chan eil sìon: *there’s nothing*; tha mi an dùil gu bheil: *I reckon there is*; le ur cead: *by your leave*; air an lughad: *at [the very] least*; ann an droch shunnd: *in a bad frame of mind*; nach i as beartaiche air an t-saoghal?: *isn’t she the wealthiest [thing] in the world?*; mura h-inns thu dhomh gu dè as luaithe a th’ air an t-saoghal: *if you don’t tell me what is the fastest [thing] in the world*; caillidh thu do cheann: *you’ll lose your head*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Carson nach do dh’inns sibh don rìgh nuair a bha sibh thall a-staigh aige?: *why didn’t you tell the king when you were over in his [castle]? Do you notice the girl addresses her father with the “sibh” (plural, respectful) form of pronoun rather than “thu”*. This shows him respect because of his age and relationship to her. He, on the other hand, addresses her as “thu”. The man uses sibh with the king, whereas the king uses thu with the man. This traditional usage is perhaps not as strong as it once was, but it is still important. It is one of the ways we express politeness in our use of language. The Gaelic equivalent for “please” – mas e do thoil e – is only infrequently used. We don’t have the “magic word” in Gaelic but “magic phraseology”.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: ur Mhòrachd: *your Majesty*. Normally ur (bhur) does not lenite the following noun (we say ’s e do bheatha, but ’s e ur beatha) but mòrachd is here in the vocative case because the king is being addressed.

Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinichadh le MG ALBA