

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.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 603. Note that there is also a simplified version called *An Litir Bheag* which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 299 corresponds to Litir 603.*

Ann an Litir ceud, seachdad 's a naoi (179) thug mi dhuibh seanfhacal as toigh leam – *is fheàrr a' bhlòigh bheag le beannachd na a' bhlòigh mhòr le mollachd* – *the little thing with a blessing is better than the large one with a curse*. Is fheàrr a' bhlòigh bheag le beannachd na a' bhlòigh mhòr le mollachd. Ann an cuid de dhualchainntean canaidh daoine *mallachd* seach *mollachd*.

Uill, bha mi a' leughadh seann sgeulachd Ghàidhlig o chionn ghoirid agus nochd an seanfhacal innte. 'S e ainm na sgeulachd *Balgam Mòr*, agus bu mhath leam a h-aithris dhuibh.

Bha nighean aig **Rìgh Eilean nam Ban** a bha anabarrach brèagha. Bha mòran shuirgheach aice. Ge-tà, cha phòsadh i ach am fear a dhèanadh long a sheòladh air muir agus tìr. Cha robh e an comas aon duine sin a dhèanamh, ged a dh'fheuch feadhainn.

Bha bantrach bhochd an sin aig an robh triùir mhac. Thuirt am fear a bu shine rithe, “Èirich is deasaich dhomh bonnach, a mhàthair, is falbhaidh mi, feuch an dèan mi long a sheòlas air muir is tìr.”

Dh'èirich a mhàthair agus rinn i dà bhonnach, fear beag is fear mòr. Thuirt i ri a mac, “Cò as fheàrr leat – am bonnach mòr le mo mhallachd no am bonnach beag le mo bheannachd?”

“Beannachd no mallachd – thoir dhomh am bonnach mòr,” fhreagair e agus dh'fhalbh e leis an fhear mhòr.

Thòisich e air an soitheach a thogail. Cha robh e fada ag obair nuair a thàinig seann duine liath na rathad. “Tha thu trang, a Mhic na Bantraich,” thuirt e.

“Tha mi sin,” thuirt esan.

“Ma bheir thu dhòmhsa cuid de do bhonnach, nì mi do chobhair,” thuirt am fear liath.

“Gu dearbh, cha toir,” fhreagair an gille. “Cha bhi gu leòr ann dhomh fhìn mus cuir mi crìoch air an t-soitheach seo.”

Agus, mar a thuirt, b' fhìor. Cha b' fhada na dhèidh seo gus an tug e suas an obair, 's gun tug e an taigh air.

“Ma-tà,” ars an dàrna bràthair, “thèid mi fhìn ga fheuchainn cuideachd. Ach, air a cheart dòigh mar a thachair da bhràthair, thachair dhàsan.

Latha de na làithean, dh'iarr am fear a b' òige air a mhàthair bonnach a dheasachadh dhàsan. Rinn a mhàthair dà bhonnach. “**Gabh do roghainn**,” ars ise, “am fear mòr le mallachd do mhàthar no am fear beag le a beannachd.”

“Thoiribh dhomh ur beannachd, a mhàthair,” ars esan, “agus beag no mòr am bonnach, bidh mise toilichte.” Fhuair e bonnach beag agus beannachd na chois. Thug e cùl don bhaile san robh e agus ràinig e an t-àite anns an robh aige ris an long a thogail.

Thòisich e air an obair agus thàinig an seann duine liath a-rithist. “Tha thu trang, a Mhic na Banntraich,” thuirt e.

“Tha mi sin,” ars esan.

“Ma bheir thu dhòmhsa cuid de do bhonnach, nì mi do chobhair,” thuirt am fear liath.

“Gheibh thu sin,” ars an gille, “ged nach eil e ro mhòr.”

Thòisich iad air an obair-togail a dhèanamh còmhla agus cha b’ fhada gus an robh an long ullamh. Saoilidh mi gu bheil puing mhoralta anns an sgeulachd seo! Co-dhiù, cha d’ ràinig sinn *Balgam Mòr* fhathast. Feuchaidh mi ri sin a dhèanamh an-ath-sheachdain.

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: anabarrach brèagha: *extraordinarily beautiful*; mòran shuirgheach: *many suitors*; trang: *busy*; puing mhoralta: *a moral point*.

Abairtean na Litreach: is fheàrr a’ bhlòigh bheag le beannachd na a’ bhlòigh mhòr le mollachd: *the little thing with a blessing is better than the large one with a curse*; cuid de dhualchainntean: *some dialects*; nochd an seanfhacal innte: *the proverb appeared in it*; bu mhath leam a h-aithris dhuibh: *I’d like to tell it [fem] to you*; ge-tà, cha phòsadh i ach am fear a dhèanadh long a sheòladh air muir agus tìr: *however, she’d only marry the man who would make a ship that would sail on sea and land*; cha robh e an comas aon duine sin a dhèanamh: *not one man was able to do that*; ged a dh’ fheuch feadhainn: *although some tried*; banntrach bhochd aig an robh trìuir mhac: *a widow who had three sons*; am fear a bu shine: *the eldest one*; èirich is deasaich dhomh bonnach: *get up and make me a bannock*; feuch an dèan mi long: *to try to make a ship*; cò as fheàrr leat?: *which do you prefer?*; nuair a thàinig seann duine liath na rathad: *when a grey-haired old man came his way*; ma bheir thu dhòmhsa cuid de do bhonnach: *if you give me some of your bannock*; nì mi do chobhair: *I’ll help you*; mus cuir mi crìoch air an t-soitheach: *before I complete the vessel*; mar a thuirt, b’ fhìor: *as he said, so it happened [was true]*; cha b’ fhada na dhèidh seo gus an tug e suas an obair: *it wasn’t long after this that [until] he gave up the work*; gun tug e an taigh air: *that he went home*; gun rachadh e a dhèanamh long: *that he would go to build a ship*; gheibh thu sin: *you’ll get that*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Rìgh Eilean nam Ban:** *The King of the Island of the Women. In previous Litrichean, I have mentioned nam ban as being the (irregular) genitive plural of bean, a woman or wife. Eilean nam Ban is not likely to be Eigg which bears the poetic name of Eilean nam Ban Mòra (The Isle of the Big Women). Instead, it is likely an imaginary place, one of the Islands of the Blessed, popular in Celtic and Greek mythology. The green well mentioned later in the story (you’ll have to wait!) is located in other tales on one of these islands which, according to some authorities, provides an origin for the name Brazil. If you want to find it, you’ll have to look out in the Atlantic to the west of Scotland or Ireland!*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: **Gabh do roghainn:** *take your pick/make your choice.*

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