

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Cailleach nan Cnò agus Tàillear nan Clàr

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.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 663. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 359 corresponds to Litir 663.

Seo agaibh an stòiridh tràidiseanta *Cailleach nan Cnò agus Tàillear nan Clàr*. O chionn iomadh bliadhna bha cailleach a’ fuireach ann an gleann air a’ Ghàidhealtachd. Bha na daoine dhen bheachd gun robh i olc. Fhuair i a far-ainm oir bhiodh an-còmhnaidh poca làn chnothan aice.

Dh’fhàs a’ Chailleach tinn. Thuirte i ris a h-uile duine, nam faigheadh i bàs, gun robh i ag iarraidh gum biodh poca làn chnothan air a thiodhlacadh còmhla rithe, aig a ceann. Sin mar a thachair. Fhuair i bàs, chaidh a thiodhlacadh, agus chaidh poca chnothan a chur don uaigh ri taobh a cinn.

Ach bha gille sa bhaile nach robh a’ creidsinn ann an cumhachd na Caillich. Thuirte e ris fhèin gum biodh e tàmailteach mura dèanadh cuideigin feum de na cnothan san uaigh. Air oidhche dhorch, dh’fhalbh e don chladh le spaid, airson am poca chnothan a chladhach suas.

Air an rathad don chladh, ge-tà, thachair e ri duine a bha droch-chliùiteach airson a bhith ri mèirle chaorach. “**Cà’l thus’ a’ dol?**” dh’fhaighnich am mèirleach.

“Tha mis’ a’ dol a chladhach suas cnothan na Caillich,” fhreagair an gille. “Agus tha thus’ a’ dol a ghoid molt. Ma bheir thusa dhòmhsa leth dhen mholt, bheir mise dhutsa leth de na cnothan. Fhad ’s a tha thu air falbh, nì mi suidhe sa chladh agus cnacaidh mi na cnothan.” Agus dh’aontaich am mèirleach.

Bha Tàillear nan Clàr a’ fuireach sa bhaile. Bha ciorram air. Bha clàran fiodha air gach bois agus air gach glùn aige. Bhiodh e a’ gluasad air na clàran. Bha an Tàillear math air naidheachdan innse, ach bha e mòr às fhèin. Chuireadh e sìos air feadhainn eile. Cha chuireadh e dragh air duine sa bhaile nam biodh cuideigin a’ toirt car às.

Cha robh uisge anns an taigh. Dh’fhalbh fear òg don tobar faisg air a’ chladh. Ach chuala e cnacadh chnothan anns a’ chladh. Ruith e air ais don taigh le eagal, gun a’ chuinneag a lionadh. Thuirte e gun robh Cailleach nan Cnò air èiridh bho na mairbh!

Rinn an fheadhainn eile magadh air. “Thoir dhòmhs’ a’ chuinneag,” ars an Gille Maol Dubh, agus dh’fhalbh e leatha. Ach thachair an aon rud dhàsan. Thill e gun uisge, ach leis an naidheachd gun robh a’ chailleach a’ cnacadh chnothan anns a’ chladh.

“Tha sibh lag-chridheach ’s gun fheum,” arsa Tàillear nan Clàr. “Nam biodh comas coiseachd agamsa, bhithinn a’ lionadh na cuinneig gun dragh, ge brith cò bha a’ cnacadh chnothan anns a’ chladh.”

“Uill,” thuirte an Gille Ruadh, “bheir mise ann sibh air mo dhruim.”

“Glè mhath, ma-thà,” fhreagair an Tàillear.

Nuair a bha iad faisg air a’ chladh, chuala iad cnò ga cnacadh. “Air m’ onair, ’s i a th’ ann,” thuirt an Tàillear.

Chunnaic an gille sa chladh an Gille Ruadh agus Tàillear nan Clàr anns an dorchadas. Bha e a’ smaoineachadh gur e am mèirleach a bh’ ann, agus e a’ tilleadh le molt air a dhruim. Dh’èigh e, “A bheil e reamhar?”

“Reamhar no caol, faodaidh tu fhaighinn,” ars an Gille Ruadh. Agus thilg e Tàillear nan Clàr far a dhroma don chladh. Agus cha robh Tàillear nan Clàr cho bragail idir nuair a thill e dhachaigh.

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: olc: *evil*; uaigh: *grave*; tobar: *well*; Gille Maol Dubh: *black-haired, crop-haired lad*; lag-chridheach: *cowardly*; bragail: *cocky*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Cailleach nan Cnò agus Tàillear nan Clàr: *the old woman of the nuts and the tailor of the boards*; bhiodh an-còmhnaidh poca lan chnothan aice: *she would always have a bag full of [hazel] nuts*; air a thiodhlacadh còmhla rithe: *buried along with her*; tàmailteach mura dèanadh cuideigin feum de: *terrible if somebody didn’t make use of*; dh’fhalbh e don chladh le spaid: *he went to the cemetery with a spade*; droch-chliùiteach airson a bhith ri mèirle chaorach: *infamous for rustling sheep*; a’ dol a ghoid molt: *going to steal a wether*; bheir mise dhutsa leth de: *I’ll give you half of*; cnacaidh mi na cnothan: *I’ll crack the nuts*; bha ciorram air: *he was disabled*; bha clàran fiodha air gach bois agus air gach glùn aige: *there were wooden boards on each of his palms and knees*; mòr às fhèin: *conceited*; chuireadh e sìos air feadhainn eile: *he’d be dismissive of others*; nam biodh cuideigin a’ toirt car às: *if somebody took a rise out of him*; gun a’ chuinneag a lìonadh: *without filling the water pail*; air èiridh bho na mairbh: *[had] risen from the dead*; chuala iad cnò ga cnacadh: *they heard a nut being cracked*; air m’ onair, ’s i a th’ ann: *on my honour, it’s her*; le molt air a dhruim: *with a wether on his back*; reamhar no caol, faodaidh tu fhaighinn: *fat or thin, you can have him*; far a dhroma: *from his back*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *This traditional story might not appear to be very politically correct (and many old stories were not) but the motif is more concerned with taking a pompous character down a peg or two, rather than making fun of his disability. In other European traditions, it tends to be a pompous churchman whose obesity makes him unable to walk properly who is carried to the cemetery, but in Scotland, he is replaced with a disabled tailor. Tailors, not being required to work the land, and often being men of intellectual rigour, might be perceived as superior in their attitudes, and therefore fair game to be an object of a ‘cleas’. I’ve based this version of the story on one collected in Islay in 1969 by Alan Bruford, Donald Archie MacDonald and Ian Fraser.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: “Cà’l thus’ a’ dol?": *“where are you going?”* Short for “Càite a bheil thusa a’ dol?” – *a very natural abbreviation.*

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