

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Am Muillear Cam agus am Balbhan Sasannach

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 682. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 378 corresponds to Litir 682.

Seo stòiridh dhuibh – *Am Muillear Cam agus am Balbhan Sasannach*. Bha Albannach is Sasannach ann an taigh-seinnse ann an Dùn Èideann. “Cuiridh mi geall,” thuirt an Sasannach, “gu bheil fear balbh ann an Sasainn as **urrainn ceistean a chur nach urrainn duine sam bith ann an Alba a fhreagairt.**”

“Huh! Cuiridh sinn ceud not air,” fhreagair an t-Albannach. “Tha maighstir-sgoile againne as urrainn a h-uile ceist a fhreagairt a chuireadh Sasannach sam bith air.” Agus dh’aontaich iad coinneachadh a-rithist an ceann seachdain.

Chaidh an t-Albannach a chèilidh air a’ mhaighstir-sgoile. Ach dhiùlt am maighstir-sgoile gnothach a ghabhail ris. “Cha tèid mi ann idir,” thuirt e. Bha an t-Albannach a’ dol a chall a cheud not. Ach chaidh e a chèilidh air a’ mhuillear cham. “Och, bu chòir dhut fheuchainn,” thuirt e, “oir tha thu a’ dol a chall co-dhiù. Thèid mise ann an àite a’ mhaighstir-sgoile.”

Chaidh am muillear cam Albannach agus am balbhan Sasannach a chur còmhla ann an seòmar leotha fhèin. Shuidh iad mu choinneimh a chèile.

Chuir an Sasannach corrag suas. Chuir am muillear dà chorraig an-àirde mar fhreagairt. Chuir an Sasannach trì corragan suas. Dhùin am muillear a dhòrn. An uair sin, thug am fear balbh ubhal a-mach às a’ phòcaid aige. Thug am muillear pìos de dh’aran-coirce a-mach às a’ phòcaid aigesan. Nuair a rinn e sin, dh’èirich an Sasannach balbh agus dh’fhàg e an seòmar.

Chaidh am fear balbh a-mach gu far an robh an Sasannach eile. “Ciamar a chaidh dhut?” dh’fhaighnich an Sasannach eile. Thug e pàipear is peansail don fhear eile.

“Chaill mi,” sgrìobh am fear balbh.

“Ciamar a chaill thu?”

“Chuir mi aon chorrag suas,” sgrìobh e, “airson innse nach robh ann ach aon Dia. Chuir esan dà chorraig an-àirde airson a ràdh gun robh Athair agus Mac ann. Chuir mise trì corragan suas airson a ràdh gun robh Athair, Mac agus Spiorad Naomh ann. Dhùin e a dhòrn airson a ràdh gur e aonan a bh’ anns an triùir sin. Thug mise ubhal a-mach airson sealltainn dha mar a thàinig peacadh don t-saoghal. Ma thug, thug e fhèin pìos de dh’aran-coirce a-mach airson innse dhomh gum b’ e sin **aran na beatha**. An uair sin, dh’èirich mi is dh’fhalbh mi.”

Nuair a thàinig am muillear cam gu far an robh an t-Albannach eile, dh’fhàighnich an t-Albannach eile mar a chaidh dha.

“Dh’èirich e agus dh’fhalbh e,” thuirt e. “Tha mi a’ smaoinichadh gun do bhuannaich mi.”

“Ciamar?” ars am fear eile.

“Uill, chuir esan aon chorrach an-àirde,” thuirt e, “airson a ràdh nach robh agam ach aon sùil. Chuir mise na dhà suas airson a ràdh gun robh dà shùil aigesan. Chuir esan trì corrachan suas airson innse dhomh gun robh trì sùilean eadarainn. Dhùin mise mo dhòrn airson sealltainn gun robh mi feargach, leis gun robh e a’ fanaid orm. Thug e ubhal a-mach airson sealltainn dhomh dè tha a’ fàs ann an Sasainn. Agus thug mise aran-coirce a-mach às mo phòcaid fhèin airson sealltainn dha dè tha gar cumail beò ann an Alba. Dh’èirich e agus dh’fhalbh e. Agus ’s ann mar sin a bhuannaich mi!”

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Faclan na Litreach: dhiùlt: *refused*; corrag: *finger*; aran-coirce: *oatbread*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Am Muillear Cam agus am Balbhan Sasannach: *The One-eyed Miller and the Dumb [non-speaking] Englishman*; cuiridh mi geall: *I’ll bet/wager*; as urrainn ceistean a chur: *who can ask questions*; cuiridh sinn ceud not air: *we’ll put a hundred pounds on it*; tha maighstir-sgoile againne: *we have a schoolmaster*; a chuireadh Sasannach sam bith air: *that any Englishman would ask him*; bu chòir dhut fheuchainn: *you should try it*; tha thu a’ dol a chall co-dhiù: *you’re going to lose anyway*; dhùin am muillear a dhòrn: *the miller closed his fist*; thug am fear balbh ubhal a-mach: *the dumb man took an apple out*; dh’èirich X agus dh’fhàg e an seòmar: *X arose and left the room*; far an robh an Sasannach eile: *where the other Englishman was*; ciamar a chaidh dhut?: *how did you get on?*; thug e pàipear is peansail don fhear eile: *he gave paper and a pencil to the other man*; nach robh ann ach aon Dia: *there was only one God*; Athair, Mac agus Spiorad Naomh: *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*; gur e aonan a bh’ anns an triùir: *that the three were one*; tha mi a’ smaoinichadh gun do bhuannaich mi: *I think I won*; gun robh trì sùilean eadarainn: *that we had three eyes between us*; feargach, leis gun robh e a’ fanaid orm: *angry, because he was mocking me*; thug e ubhal a-mach: *he brought out an apple*; airson sealltainn dhomh dè tha a’ fàs ann an Sasainn: *to show me what grows in England*; dè tha gar cumail beò: *what keeps us alive*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: airson innse dhomh gum b’ e sin **aran na beatha**: *to tell me that was the bread of life*. Beatha is an unusual word. It is assuredly feminine, as can be seen from the genitive form with the article *ie na beatha*; some of you will be familiar with the following from the Bible: Agus thuirt Ìosa riutha, Is mise aran na beatha “*And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life*” (John 6/35). But it sounds intuitively masculine (being broad in vowel terms) and it doesn’t inflect with case, except incurring lenition with the article in the nominative singular case *ie a’ bheatha*; again, in the Bible, we have An tì a tha a’ creidsinn annamsa, tha a’ bheatha mhaireannach aige “*He that believeth in me hath [the] everlasting life*” (John 6/47). It also lenites under other grammatical influences eg anns an uisge-bheatha “*in the whisky*” and ’s e do bheatha “*you’re welcome*”.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: as urrainn ceistean a chur nach urrainn duine sam bith a fhreagairt: *who can pose questions that nobody can answer*.

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