

MAC A BHUTLER

James Ross

Bho chionn móran tid' air ais bha uachdaran as a' Ghaidhealtachd—chan urra mi innse dhuibh gu dé 'n t-àit' a robh e—ach bha'm butler a bh'aige bh'e aige poile mór agus 's e duine gasd' onorach a bh'ann agus bh'e còrdadh ri mhèistir glé mhath. Ach bha mac aig a' bhutler agus nair a thàinig esan go aois suas gu'n deanadh e feum a' frithealadh as an tigh mhór, chaidh e fhéin a thoirt a stigh ann.

Cha robh e uamhasach fad ann nuair a chaidh móran do dh'obair òir is airgid air chall agus cha robh fios cà robh ad. Ach rinneadh a mach gur h-e 'n gille òg a dh'fhalbh leotha 's gun do ghoid e ad. Agus bhruidhinn an t-uachdaran ri athair agus thuirt e ris gu feumadh e 'n gille chur air falbh oir neò mar a cuireadh e air falbh e gu feumadh ad falbh le chéile agus gu feumadh an teaghlach uile falbh 's gu feumadh e fear ùr shaighinn na àite.

O dheònaich athair an gille chur air falbh agus 's ann a dh'fhalbh e leis orson a chur go ciùird an àiteiginnich. Agus ràinig e Baile Ghlascho leis, agus an oidhche ràinig e thàinig fear a bhruidheann riu air an t-sràid le chéile, dh'aithnich e gur e coigreich a bh'unnta nach biodh e faicinn. 'S thàinig ad ann a seanachas agus dh'fhoighneachd e dheth gu dé 'n gnothach a bh'aige dha na bhaile. “Thàinig mi leis a ghille-sa,” as esan, “feuch a faighinn a chur far an ionnsaicheadh e ciùird.”

“A wel ma tha,” as an duine, “ionnsaichidh mise ciùird da.”

“Dé chiùird a dh'ionnsaicheas tu dha?” thuirt athair ris.

“Tha robaigeadh,” as esan.

“Wel gu dearbha chan eil mi smaoineachadh,” as athair, “gum bi sin glé dhoirbh dhut, oir 'se leithid sin a chur ann a seo e.” 'S dh'inns e dha'n duine mar a rinn e.

“Sin mar as fhior fhèarr e,” as esan.

Ach lorig athair an gille dha na robair [K 301.1]. Agus dh'fhalbh e leis agus bha àite neònach aig na robairean as a

THE BUTLER'S SON

A MASTER THIEF STORY FROM SKYE (Aa.- Th. 1525)

James Ross

A long time ago there was a laird in the Highlands—I cannot tell you where he was—but the butler he had had been with him for a very long time. He was a fine honourable man and his master was very pleased with him. But the butler had a son and when he grew up to the age at which he could be useful for service in the big house, he was brought in there.

He was not very long there when a lot of gold and silver articles went missing and nobody knew where they were. But it was made out that it was the young boy who had taken them and had stolen them. And the laird spoke to his father and said to him that he must send the boy away or else if he didn't send him away they would both have to go together with the whole family, and that he must get a new man in his place.

The father agreed to send the boy away and he himself went with him in order to apprentice him to a trade in some place. And he reached the town of Glasgow with him, and on the night he arrived, a man came to speak to both of them in the street, recognising that they were strangers that he didn't normally see. They talked and he asked him what business brought him to the town. "I came with this boy" said he, "so that I could put him where he could learn a trade".

"Well" said the man, "I will teach him a trade".

"What trade will you teach him?" said the father to him.

"Robbing", said he.

"Well, indeed, I do not think", said the father, "that that will be very difficult for you since it is something like that that has put him here." And he told the man what he had done.

"That makes him all the better", said he.

The father handed the boy over to the robber [K 301.1]. And he went with him, and the robbers had a queer place

robh ad a fuireach—cha robh fear-sa na aonar idir ann, bha treud ac' ann.

(i) Ach nair a fhuair an gille fo anail 's ann a thug fear dhiu mach oidhch' e orson sealltainn da mar a dh'obraicheadh e gnothaichean 's gun deanadh e shùilean as a' bhaile. Dh'fhalbh e go bùtha mhór watchmaker ann a shin. Agus chaidh iad a stigh le chéile 's thuir e ris an duine taobh thall a chuntair gu robh e ceannach uaireadair—gun tàinig e air son uaireadair a cheannach. Agus rinn e leth-char innse seòrsa bha dhìth air—'se uaireadair òir a bha dhìth air. Chuir an duine nall boc's' air a bheulabh as a robh uaireadairean 's sheall e orra 's, "O bheil seòrs eil' agad?" as esan. "O tha," as an duine. "O seall dhomh tuilleadh dhiu," thuir e. Nair a thionndaich an duine chùlabh bha esan a caimhead air na h-uaireadairean 's 's ann a chuir e té dhiu sìos na mhuilichinne. Agus thàinig an duine nall leis a bhocs' eile 's sheall e unnta. "O," as esan "cha dean gin dhiu sin chan eil iad freagarrach arm," as esan. "O mar a h-eil," as an duine, "chan eil cothrom air."

Ach dh'fhalbh e, agus dh'fhuirich an gill' òg agus nair a dh'fhalbh a robair 's an t-uaireadair aige 's ann a thuir e ris an fhear a bha air cùl a' chuntair thall, "A faca tu," as esan, "an obair a rinn an duin' ad?" "Gu dé rinn e?" as an duine ris. "A dhiall!" as esan, "chuir e té dhe na h-uaireadairean agad na mhuilichinne 's dh'fhalbh e leatha."

Chunntais an duine na h-uaireadairean 's nach ann a bha uaireadair a dhìth air ceart gu leòr 's ruith e mach orson polisman—as deodhaidh an duine ach cha robh 'n duine ri fhaicinn. 'S nair a fhuair an gill' òg air falbh e chuir e 'n ceann ann a fear dhe na bocsaichean agus chuir e fo sheacaid e 's dh'fhalbh e fhéin agus ghabh e rathad eile—cha b'e a rathad a bh'e a smaoineachadh a ghabh a' fear a chaidh as deodhaidh a' robair a ghabh e.

Ach ràinig e 'n t-àit' a robh ad a' fuireach, na robairean, agus chaidh e stigh. "A dhiall!" as a' robair ris, "a faca tu nise cho sgiobalt' agus a dh'obraich mi siod? Bheil thu smaoineach' gun d'rachadh agad fhéin air a leithid a dheanamh?" "A, bh'e glé mhath," as an gill' òg, "ach cha chreid mi nach d'rinn mise cheart cho math riut;" 's thug e 'm bocsa mach fo achlais 's chuir e air a' bhòrd e 's e làn uaireadairean.

(ii) Ach bha sin mar sin. 'S ann ann an ceann oidhche na dhà dh'fhalbh ad a rithist 's chaidh iad a mach air an dùthaich orson tigh as a robh beairteas ann a sin a robaigeadh. Agus fhuair ad a stigh gun duine 'ga faireachadh. Bha ad a' falbh

where they lived—this one wasn't alone at all, there was a gang of them.

(i) When the boy was rested, one of them took him out one night to show him how to work things, and to acquaint him with the town. He went to a big watchmaker's shop there. And they went in together and the robber said to the man who was on the other side of the counter that he had come to buy a watch. And he gave a brief description of the kind of watch he wanted—he wanted a gold watch. The man put a box of watches over in front of him and he looked at them and "Have you got another kind?", said he. "O, yes" said the man. "Show me some more", said he. While the man turned his back, he was looking at the watches and he put one of them down his sleeve. And the man came over with the other box and he looked among them. "O", said he, "none of these is suitable for me." "O, if they aren't", said the man "it cannot be helped."

The robber went away and the young boy stayed. And when the robber had gone with the watch he said to the man who was over behind the counter, "Did you see", said he, "the work that that man did?" "What did he do?" said the man. "He put one of your watches in his sleeve", said he, "and he went off with it."

The man counted the watches and wasn't he short of a watch right enough. He ran out to get a policeman and to chase the man but the man wasn't to be seen. And when the young boy got him out of the way he put the lid on one of the boxes and he put it under his jacket and he himself went and took another road; it was not the road that he thought the man who had gone to chase the robber had taken that he took.

He arrived at the place where the robbers were staying and he went in. "Did you see now", said the robber to him "how neatly I worked that? Do you think that you would be able to do such a thing?" "It was indeed very good" said the young boy, "but I think I have done every bit as well as you", and he took the box out from under his oxtter and he put it on the table, full of watches.

(ii) That was that. It was after a night or two that they went off again and they went out to the country in order to rob a house there in which there were riches. And they entered the house without anyone hearing them. They were going about

agus bha seilear as an tigh agus 's ann a chuir ad an gill' òg sìos air ròp dha'n a' seilear a bha sin feuch a faigheadh e ionmhas ann. Cha robh e fada shìos nair a dh'fhairich muinntir an taighe rudeiginnich 's dh'éirich ad agus theich na robairean 's fhuair ad an casan leotha gun bhreith orra. Cha robh fios aig an fhear òg gu dé dheanadh e—cha robh chollas air gu robh duine shuas a bheireadh suas air a ròp e na ròp fhéin ri fhaicinn na bu mhù. Ach th'e collach gu robh rudeiginnich aige—las e maidse na rudeiginnich agus sheall e. Chunnaic e ann an còrnair as an t-seilear seice damh na mart a bh'air a feannadh agus na h-adhaircean 's a chuile rud a bh'ann orra 's na casan. Agus chan fhacaidh e rud a b'fheàrr na suaineadh ma'n cuairt da fhéin. Agus rug e air té do chasan a' bheothaich as gach laimh 's thòisich e air bualadh 's air slaiseadh a chuile sian a bha ma'n cuairt da 'srinn e *noise* is fuaim a bha uamhasach. Ach th'e collach gun tainig cuideiginnich as a chionn 's dh'aoibh ad ris, “Cò tha sid?” “Tha mis’,” as esan. “Cò thusa?” “Tha,” as esan 's e 'g ainmeachadh an fhir bu mhios' air ainm, “s mis' e,” as esan; “agus mar a toir sibh dhòmh-s' iuchraichean an taigh agus gu faigh mi mach a seo,” as esan, “bheir mi si'péin 's an tigh lium air m'adhaircean.” Sheall an duine sìos, th'e collach gu robh solus air choireiginn aige 's chunnaic e chuis uamhais a b'uamhasaiche chunnaic e riamh shìos ann a shin 's cha robh ach iuchraichean a thilgeadh 'ga ionnsaidh 's thòisich e air fosgladh dhorsan gos an d'fhuair e mach. [K 521.1]

(iii) Nair a fhuair e mach tha mi creidsinn gun do thilg e na h-iuchraichean an dala taobh ach lean e ris an t-seicidh—thug e leis i. Rainig e a' chùil as a robh na robairean a' falach agus dé 'n obair a bh'aca—bha ad an deodhaidh móran dhe'n an ionmhas a fhuair ad a chreic agus gu dé 'n obair a bh'aca ach a dol reite chéile ma chuairt da roinn. Agus chuir e cheann a stigh 's na h-adhaircean air toll air choireiginnich agus thug e sgleogan leis na casan air àiteiginnich agus dh'eubh e riutha gu math àrd—“Fàgabh agam fhìn e,” as esan, “s fhada bha sibh ag oibreachadh dhomh 's ga chosnadh.” Ach dh'fhalbh a chuile fear, a' fear nach beireadh air a bhogha bheireadh air a chlaidheamh chaidh ad an camach 's an iar 's mas briobadh e shùil cha robh duine beò aig air a làraich 's bha 'n t-airgiod aig ann a shiod na thorran. Ghabh e stigh, 's chruinnich e chuile h-aona sgillin ruadh dheth agus thug e leis e. [K 335.0.12]

Dh'fhalbh e agus rinn e air tigh athair an uairsin. Ràinig e dhachaidh. “O a mhilltear thruaigh,” as athair, “gu dé chuir

and there was a cellar in the house and they lowered the young boy down into that cellar on a rope so that he could get valuables there. He wasn't long down when the people of the house heard something and they got up and the robbers fled and got clean away without being caught. The young one didn't know what to do. It didn't seem that there was anyone up there who could haul him up on the rope and the rope itself was not to be seen either. But it seems that he had a match or something that he lit and he looked around. He saw in a corner of the cellar the hide of an ox or cow that had been skinned and the horns and everything on it and the legs. And he couldn't see a better way than to wrap it around him. And he took one of the legs of the beast in each hand and he began to knock and strike everything that was around him and he made a noise and din that was dreadful. And it seems that somebody came above him and shouted to him "Who is that?" "It is I" said he. "Who are you?" "O", said he, naming the worst one by name, "I am him and if you do not give me the keys of the house in order to get out of here I will take you and the house along with me on my horns." The man looked down. It seems that he had some light and down there he saw the most awful apparition that he had ever seen. There was nothing for it but to throw keys to him and he began to open doors until he got outside. [K 521.1]

(iii) When he got outside, I believe that he threw the keys aside, but he kept the hide—he took it with him. He arrived at the den where the robbers were hiding and what were they doing but that they had sold much of the wealth that they had got and what were they doing but quarrelling about sharing it. And he put his head with the horns in through some hole and he banged with the legs at some other place and he shouted to them very loudly "Leave it for me" said he "you have been working a long time for me and earning it." Everybody fled, the one who couldn't seize the bow would seize the sword and they went in all directions and before he could blink an eye there was no living soul in the place and the money was there for him in heaps. He went in and gathered up every single brown penny and took it with him. [K 335.0.12]

He went then and he made for his father's house. "O you destructive rascal", said his father, "what sent you home here?"

'achaidh a seo thu? Caillidh mise m'àite" as esan, "agus bi againn ri falbh uile gu léir." Ach co-dhiù thàinig e go cluais an uachdarain gun tàinig e oir nèò chunnaic e fhéin e, chan eilios agam-sa có aca agus chuir e fios air athair.

"Nach do shaoil lium," as esan, "gun do chuireadh do mhac air falbh," as esan, "go ciùird." "O rinn mi sin," as esan "ach cha robh e fad air falbh nair a thill e." "Wel, cha b'urrainn e ciùird ionnsachadh", thuirt e, "as an tìde bh'e air falbh." "A wel tha mi smaoineachadh gun do dh'ionnsaich e glé mhath i," as athair, "tha chollas air gun d'rinn e glé mhath o bh'e air falbh." [F 660]

(iv) "'S gu dé chiùird a bh'ann?" "Bha robaigeadh," thuirt e. "A wel ma dh'ionnsaich e chiùird cho math sin," as esan, "theirig dhachaidh agus can ris," as esan, "gum bi peilear agam-sa ro cheann a màireach," as esan, "mara goid e leis a' siota bhios fodham-sa agus fo na bhean na air cadal as a' leabaidh a nochd." [H 1151.3]

"A wel," thuirt athair ris, "ceart cho math dhut a dhol agus a dheanamh an dràsda," as esan, "oir chan eil sin na choimeas a dheanamh."

"Cha dean mi 'n dràsda' e," as esan, "gos a fairlich e siod air. Ach ma dh'fhairlicheas e air," thuirt e, "nì mi e."

Nair a chaidh athair dhachaidh dh'inns' e dha na ghill' e 's cha do ghabh an gille sian air. Ach dh'fhalbh e agus nair a thàinig an oidhche, 's bha corp as a' chladh a chaidh a thio-dhlaigeadh latha na dha ro na sin. Agus dh'fhalbh e 's throg e e 's fhuair e aodach leis fhéin agus chòmhdach e 'n corp suas leis 's chuir e air a ghualainn e 's dh'fhalbh e go tigh an uachdarain feadh na h-oidhche nair a bha chuile neach air gabhail ma thàmh. Fhuair e fàradh 's chuir e ri uinneag an t-seòmbair chadail aig an uachdaran 's aig a bhean e. Agus nair a chuir e ris an uinneig e bha ròp aige 's cheangail e air a' chorp gu h-iseal e 's chaidh e suas as an fhàradh 's bh'e a' slaodadh a' chuirp leis. 'S fhuair e 'n uinneag aig seòmbar cadail an uachdarain a throgail. Agus chuir e 'n ceann aige ris an uinneig [K 362.2.1*]. "Tha seo air tighinn," thuirt an t-uachdaran, "ach ma th'e air tighinn chan fhalbh e mar a thàinig e." Bha gunn' aige ri thaobh asa' leabaidh agus bha esan a bha muigha' cur a stigh ceann a' chorp, ga chur bìdeag is bìdeag ach nair a fhuair an t-uachdaran a leth gu math a stigh air an uinneig loisg e urchair. 'S ma loisg, thilg a' fear a bha muigh—thug e putag dha 'n a' chorp a stigh 's rinn e glag aig bonn na h-uinneig air a' làr. Agus leum an t-uachdaran a mach as a' leabaidh.

I will lose my place and we shall all have to go." But anyway it came to the laird's ears that he had come or else he himself saw him, I don't know which and he sent for his father.

"Did I not understand", said he, "that your son was sent away to learn a trade?" "O I did that", said the other, "but he wasn't long away when he returned." "Well, he couldn't learn a trade", said he "in the time that he was away." "O well, I think that he learnt it very well", said his father, "it seems that he did very well while he was away." [F 66o]

(iv) "And what trade was it?" "Robbing" said he. "O well, if he learnt his trade as well as that", said he "go home and say to him", said he "that I will put a bullet through his head tomorrow", said he, "if he doesn't steal the sheet that will be under my wife and I sleeping in the bed tonight." [H 1151.3]

"O well", said the father to him, "you might as well go and do it just now", said he, "because he hasn't got the ability to do that".

"I will not do it just now", said he, "until he fails to do that. But if he fails I will do it."

When his father went home he told this to the son and the boy was not put out in the least. He went off when the night came and there was a body in the churchyard which had been buried a day or two before. And he went and raised the body and he got clothing belonging to himself and he dressed the body up with it. He put it on his shoulder and he went to the laird's house during the night when everyone had gone to rest. He got a ladder and placed it against the window of the bedroom of the laird and his wife. And when he put it to the window he had a rope and he tied it to the body down below. He went up the ladder dragging the body with him. And he managed to raise the laird's bedroom window and he put its head against the window. [K 362.2.1*]

"Here he comes", said the laird "but if he has he will not go as he comes." He had a gun by his side in the bed and the one who was outside was putting the head of the body in, bit by bit, and when the laird made out the side of its head coming in at the window he fired a shot. And as he did, the one who was outside gave a little push to the body and it made a thump inside below the window on the floor. And the laird jumped out of bed. "I must", said he, "go and put him out

“Feumaidh mi,” as esan, “a dhol ’s a chur as an t-sealladh an àiteiginn,” as esan, “’s cha gabh sinn oirnn gun tàinig e riamh; ga brith dé their daoine cha ghabh sinn oirnn gu faca sinn riamh e ’s cha bhi ceasnachadh mór ma dheodhainn,” thuirt e.

’S ann mar seo a bha. Dh’éirich e agus dh’fhalbh e leis a’ chorp. Agus th’e collach nair a fhuair an gill’ òg a bha muigh an t-uachdaran air falbh leis a’ chorp dha ghiùlain, dh’fhalbh e fhéin ’na ruith a stigh ’s bha fhios aige rathad a ghabhadh e gu math leis an eòlas a bh’aig’ as an tigh an toiseach. ’S rànaig e seòmbar cadail an uachdarain ’s na mnatha agus, “A,” as esan, “tha bhiast ad uamhasach trom,” as esan, “ri ghiùlan,” as esan, “chan eilios ’am dé gheibh mi as an cuir mi e, cè dhomh,” as esan, “a’ siot’ tha seo air a’ leabaidh,” as esan, “agus cuiridh mi ann e ’s falbhaidh mi leis.” Fhuair e siota ’s dh’fhalbh e. Bha dùil aig a bhean gur h-e ’n duine ceart gu leòr a bh’ann ach cha robh i fada nair a thàinig e agus bha i ’g iarraidh siot eile chuireadh i air a’ leabaidh. Bha leisg orra muinntir an taighe chur air an cois, luchd frithealaidh, agus a rithist cha robh i orson gu faighte mach gu dé thachair, ’s ann a bha i ’g iarraidh rud a chuireadh i air a leabaidh. “A dhiall!” thuirt an duin’ aice, an t-uachdaran rithe, “dé chuir air do chois an dràs’ thu?” “Nach eil mi ’g iarraidh siota chuireas mi air a’ leabaidh,” as ise. “Nach tug thu fhéin leat a’ siota,” as ise, “dol a thiodhlagadh an duine bha siod a mharbh thu a’ tigh’n a stigh air an uinneig.”

Thuig an t-uachdaran an uairsin go robh ’n gill’ òg tuilleadh ’s a chòir air a shon ’s gum b’fhèarr dha fuireach sàmhach. Bha athair as an t-seirbheis agus chan eilios agam-sa gu’n dé ’n tù a chaidh an gill’ òg fhathast. Cha chuala mi ’n còrr ma dheodhainn.

NOTES

This story was recorded from Samuel Thorburn, or *Sammy Shomhairle*, of Waterstein, Glendale, Isle of Skye in July 1953 (RL 365). He heard it over forty years ago from his father, *Somhairle Beag*, who was a well known local story teller. (There is another version of the same tale, recorded from the same man in June 1957, on RL 37).

The story is a variant of an internationally known tale. Stith Thompson says of it “. . . the story of The Master Thief is much more than a casual group of clever thefts. As a well-defined folktale, it appears to have a wide geographical distribution with clearly recognizable relationships from area to area, and a literary history going back at least to the Renaissance. Because of the interesting affinities between this tale and many other stories of thefts and because of the extremely wide circulation which this tale has experienced over the world it would be interesting to know much

of sight somewhere, and we will never let on that he ever came; no matter what people say we will never let on that we ever saw him and there won't be much questioning about him."

That is how it was. He got up and went away with the body. And it seems that when the young lad who was outside got rid of the laird, he went running inside and well he knew which way to go because of the knowledge he had of the house before. And he reached the bedroom of the laird and of his wife and "O" said he, "that beast is awfully heavy to carry. I don't know what to get to put him in. Give me", he said, "this sheet on the bed," said he, "and I will put him in it and go with him." The wife thought that it was her husband right enough, but it was not long till her husband came and she was looking for another sheet to put on the bed. She was loath to waken the household, the servants, and again she did not want what happened to be discovered, and she was looking for something to put on the bed. "What", said her husband the laird to her, "are you up for at this time?" "Do I not need a sheet for the bed", said she, "and did you not take away the sheet yourself," said she, "to bury that man you killed as he was coming in at the window."

The laird then understood that the young boy was too much for him and that he had better just keep quiet. His father remained in service and I don't know yet which way the young boy went. I haven't heard any more about him.

more about its history and development than we do now, when no really adequate study has been devoted to it." (1951:175).

The following notes are limited to a brief description of the story as it occurs in Scottish Gaelic.

*Type 1525 in Scottish Gaelic*¹

Inclusive of the above, fourteen variants have been traced to date, nine of them hitherto unpublished. These are listed A-N below.

The beginning of the career of the master thief and the circumstances under which he begins thieving

In three of the versions, A, E and K, the central character is a habitual thief whose father is forced by a superior to send him away. In J he is a drunkard, in H he is the innocent victim of the minister, the trade of

thieving being forced upon him on pain of death. Some tellers introduce moral overtones at this point and the accounts of parental resistance to such a trade vary. In A there seems to be resignation to the inevitable and in E the father will not accept the responsibility of acting on the gentleman's advice that his son should take up such a trade without asking the son, Billy, to decide. The strongest parental resistance is in B and I where the would-be thief has to resort to a trick to persuade his mother that he must take up thieving as a profession. In F alone he is the master of the clever retort (J 1250) and this is what makes the landlord advise his father to make him a professional thief. The trade of thieving does not appear in D, and in G the story opens with the doings of professional thieves.

Journey and Return

In six of the versions, A, E, F, H, J and K, there is a journey and a return home. The time which the thief has spent away from home is not always explicitly stated but the general implication is that it was short. There is considerable variation in the accounts of the actual journey and apprenticeship. A is unusual in that no less than three of the feats are performed while the thief is away from home prior to his return. In E and F one feat is performed, while in H, J and K the chief episodes open with his return. In B and I, both closely similar versions, the thief simply leaves home to take up his career.

The nature of the feats and tasks and the circumstances under which they are performed

In five of the versions, B, C, G, I and L, the feats performed by the master thief are not tasks set by another person but are suggested by himself. In one, D, his master bets his landlord that he can perform them. In most of the versions the feats are performed at the expense of somebody who is in a superior position to the thief's father or master. When they are set by the superior the punishment for failure when stated is expulsion or death (A iv, H i, ii and iii, J and K). No rewards are offered, but in four versions, C, D, E and K, he marries the superior's wife or daughter [Q 91.1*]. In two versions only the thief loses his life (B and I) and in none is he actually sentenced to death.

Feats of thieving not set as tasks

1. Stealing of watches from a shop by a ruse. Unique to A. [K 341].
2. Plundering of house or inn in which the master thief is trapped and deserted by his accomplices. This episode occurs in two versions, A ii and E i. In both he escapes by disguising himself in a cowhide and pretending to be the devil [K 521.1, K 152].
3. Plundering of thieves' den (A iii, F i). In both cases the disguise of the cowhide as devil is used [K 335.0.12].
4. Plundering a room of nuts, food, valuables. B i and ii, G iii, iv, I iii. The thieves generally hide in roof or loft. Ruses used are stampeding cattle (B i, G iii) and raising a false alarm by tying a cowhide to his master's coat tails (B ii, I iii).
5. Theft of wedder, goat, ox. B iii, iv, v; G i, ii; I i, ii; L. Accomplished by two ruses.

(a) Leaving shoes at different points in the path of the man who is carrying or leading the animal (B iii; G i; I i; L), [K 341.6].

(b) By bleating like a goat or sheep at the place where the first animal was lost (B iii, iv, v; G ii; I ii), [K 341.7].

Set tasks

1. Theft of horse or horses from carters or ploughman. E ii, H i, J i. Always done by the ruse of using rabbits with broken legs [K 341.5.1].

2. Theft of horse or pony from guarded stable or room [H 1151.2]. C i; D i; E iii; F iii; H ii; J ii; K i. Excepting one version (C i) this is invariably done by making the guards drunk [K 332]. This is carried out by disguise as packman or soldier [K 311.17+] and pretending to be drunk. In C i the device of lowering a dead body down the chimney is used [K 362.2.1, K 341.3].

3. Abduction of laird's daughter, bishop's daughter. C ii; D ii. Achieved by disguise as woman [K 311.16], (a) as princess, (b) as a captain's sick sister. An accomplice is used in both cases.

4. Stealing of bed sheet [H 1151.3]. A iv; E iv; F iv; H iii; K iii. Accomplished in all versions by the use of a dead body which the laird shoots and leaves the house to bury.

5. Stealing of tablecloth with six people playing cards on it [H 1151.3*]. Unique to K ii. Very similar to the episode of plundering the thieves' den (Nos. above). Drops through the ceiling on to the table in cow hide [K 335.0.12].

6. Abduction of bishop or minister. C iii; H iv. Abduction in both cases by "angel" disguise of salmon skins [K 311.2].

7. Riding and not riding, clad and not clad. Task [H 1053.1, H 1054.1]. Unique to F ii. Accomplished by riding a sow and dressing in a net.

The episode of hanging by deception [K 852] is confined to B and J. The accidental hanging episode with which J closes [N 334.2] is also found in B in its longer form, coming after the Rhampsinitus story [Aa. Th. 950] into which it develops. This linking of the two types in B and G is interesting in view of the fact that the present storyteller tells a good version of the Rhampsinitus story separately and knows it under another name.

Two distinct strains are evident in this medley of variants. The most prominent is Type 1525 A involving the journey and return of a son and a series of clearly set tasks which call for great ingenuity. While there is no journey and return in C and D there is the normal triumvirate of characters and in D the clearly defined superior who is the master thief's victim.

The other strain is that of Type 1525 D, which does not involve activities against a home background and in which the chief character spends his career among thieves. The episode involving the theft of the goat, wedder or ox, accomplished by means of the shoe and the bleating trick, is never a set task for the thief as is the theft of the sheet and the stabled horse. The plundering of the room of nuts or valuables by ruses are also clear thefts and are not found as tasks. The use of the dead body always occurs with the tasks as does the ruse of pretending to be drunk. The devil disguise of the cow skin is usually found with the thefts, although in one case (K ii) it is used to accomplish a set task. This episode is, however, very similar to the plundering of the robber's den of A iii and F i.

Version N (Aa. Th. 1525 M, *Mak and the Sheep*) is one of a group of stories accompanying songs which have deception as their chief purpose. In this case a sheep stealer is pursued after he has stolen a lamb. As the pursuers approach his home he dresses the lamb up as a baby, puts it in a cradle and sings the lullaby which is sung in connection with the story. This is a quite distinct offshoot of the main type and, to the best of the writer's knowledge, is not known other than as an explanation for the origin of a song. Another song sung to a keg of whisky dressed up as a baby in order to deceive pursuing Excisemen (RL 1104.4) has a similar explanatory story. Yet another, *The Lament for Seathan* (RL 1082.1) has a story which says that the lament was sung by Seathan's wife in order to delude his pursuers into thinking that he was dead.

Abstracts of Variants

B. *An Gille Carach Mac na Bantraich* (The Shifty Lad the Widow's son). J. F. Campbell 1860:1, 320-51.

This story was obtained from John Dewar of Arrochar in June 1860. Its first half is a variant of the type with which we are concerned but it develops into a story of the Rhampsinitus type (Aa.-Th. 950).

The chief character is a widow's son who has a good education and who wants to take up thieving as a career, against his mother's wishes. He stays away from church on a Sunday and as he hides he shouts *meàirle, meàirle* "thieving, thieving." His mother thinks that this is a sign that her son is fated to be a thief. She apprentices him to the Black Thief of Achaloinne (K 301.1) while prophesying that he will be hung.

(i) They go to a rich farmer's house on Halloween and hide in loft. Shifty Lad stampedes cattle and the company rush out to calm them. Shifty Lad steals nuts (K 341).

(ii) The company returns to the room. Shifty Lad ties a cowhide to his master's coat tails and then cracks a nut loudly. The people hear and come looking for them. The Black Thief runs with the hide behind him. He is recognised and chased while the Shifty Lad plunders the money chest and steals food (K 341).

(iii) Shifty Lad bets his master that he will steal a wedder being taken to a wedding. Accomplished by leaving one shoe in the herd's path and another shoe some distance further on. Herd leaves wedder to return for the other shoe to make the pair (K 341.6).

(iv) Herd is again sent to the hill by his master, this time for a goat. Shifty Lad hides in the wood where he stole the wedder and bleats like a sheep. Herd leaves goat to recover what he imagines to be the lost wedder and goat is stolen (K 341.7).

(v) Herd is sent for an ox. Shifty Lad and the Black Thief go to the same wood and bleat in different places, one like a goat, the other like a sheep. The herd leaves the ox to investigate and it is stolen (K 341.7).

(vi) Thieves become drovers and they make a big profit. On the way home they pass a gallows and the Shifty Lad recalls his mother's prophecy and suggests that they try hanging to see what it is like. Shifty Lad tries first and is lowered at a signal. His master tries and the Shifty Lad hangs him (K 852).

The story then develops into the Rhampsinitus type (Aa. Th. 950) with the motifs of breaking into the King's storehouse (K 315.1); the

trapping and beheading of accomplice (K 730, K 407.1), followed by several chase episodes. The Shifty Lad marries the King's daughter (Q 91.1) and is finally hanged accidentally on Dublin Bridge (N 334.2).

C. *Mac an Tuathanaich Albannaich* (The Son of the Scottish Yeoman). Written down in 1859 by the Rev. T. MacLauchlan from Donald Maclean, a native of Ardnamurchan, Argyll, then living in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh. (Campbell 1860: II, 239-57).

The master thief in this case is the youngest son of a Scottish farmer who takes service with the "Provost" of London (*Probhaisd Lunnain*). The story is in three episodes, each involving a feat of thieving, suggested by the thief himself.

(i) His master covets the horse of the Bishop of London and he wagers his life that he will steal it. The bishop accepts and places the horse in a room guarded by men who are drinking. The thief finds a habitual criminal who becomes his accomplice. He takes him to the hangman who provides them with a dead body and rope. The body is lowered down the chimney by the neck (K 362.2.1) and the guards think it is that of the thief (K 341.3). They begin to lead the horse out of the room and the thief, waiting by the door takes the bridle pretending to lead the horse back to the stable (H 1151.2).

(ii) He bets that he will steal the bishop's daughter. Bribes tailors to give him dresses made for the king's daughter. With his accomplice of the previous night he gains entry to the bishop's house disguised as the princess and her maid of honour (K 311.16*). Pretending to take her for greater safety to the royal palace, he takes her instead to his own bed in the Provost's house.

(iii) He bets that he will steal the bishop himself. Dressed in luminous salmon skins (K 311.2) he goes to the bishop's church after midnight and begins preaching. Bishop is summoned and thinks he is an angel and goes with him in return for a promise of forgiveness. Thief finally marries bishop's daughter (Q 91.1*).

D. No title. Heard by Campbell in September 1859 as he walked along a North Uist road with a drover called Donald MacCraw (Campbell 1860: II, 257-60).

The scene in this version is laid in Ireland. The thief is the servant of a smith who works for a laird or landlord. The story is in two episodes.

(i) The landlord comes to have his "powney" shod. The smith bets that his servant could steal it (H 1151.2). He goes towards the guarded stable at night with three bottles of whisky and pretends to be drunk. Guards find him and in handling him discover a bottle. They drink it and discover the second and third. Thief takes the pony when they are drunk (K 332).

(ii) The smith bets that his servant could steal the landlord's daughter. No time limit is set and the servant goes to a seaport where he takes a ship's captain into his confidence. He dresses up as a woman (K 311.16) and the ship sails to the landlord's house. The captain tells the landlord that he has a sick sister. She is invited to sleep in the daughter's room. The daughter is deceived into going for a walk with the thief. She is taken to the smithy.

The thief finally marries the daughter (Q 91.1*).

E. *Bilidh* (Billy), Mackay 1940:118-29. This version was collected by Campbell in 1859 from Roderick MacNeill, Barra. The characters are a tenant farmer, his son Billy and a gentleman. Billy is a habitual thief (K 301) and the gentleman suggests that he learns thieving as a trade (K 301.1). He goes away and apprentices himself to a thief. From this point the story falls into four episodes.

(i) Thief takes Billy to an inn and lowers him down the chimney (K 316). Deserts him when the booty is sent up. Billy finds a cowhide which he puts on and creates a commotion (K 484). The master of the house takes him for a devil and buys him off (K 152).

(ii) Billy returns home and is set a test by the gentleman (H 1151). He must steal a horse from carters. This he does by releasing rabbits with a leg broken near the carters (K 341.5.1). He takes a horse when they chase the rabbits.

(iii) Stealing a horse from a stable guarded by five people (H 1151.2). Billy approaches the stable at night with four bottles of whisky in his pockets. He pretends to be dead drunk. Guards find the whisky and when they are drunk he takes the horse (K 332).

(iv) He must steal the bed sheet from under the gentleman's wife under pain of death (H 1151.3). He digs up a dead body as in A above and dresses it up. He climbs to the gentleman's roof and lowers the body down the chimney. (K 362.2.1). Gentleman shoots it and when he goes away to bury it, Billy impersonates him and goes to bed with his wife. He smuggles the sheet away. The gentleman admits defeat. He goes away and Billy gets his house and wife (Q 91.1*).

F. *An Gille Dubh* (The Black Lad). Archibald Campbell 1885:226-73. Characters: Laird, tenant and son, *An Gille Dubh*.

In conversation with the laird, the Black Lad shows a facility for making clever retorts (J 1250). The laird asks him where his parents and sister are and he replies: "My father is out hunting and what he does not kill he takes along with him, my mother is winnowing the meal we ate last year, and my sister is mourning the laugh we laughed last year." Laird advises father to send him away to become a professional thief (K 301.1). From this point the story falls into four episodes.

(i) On his return home the Black Lad discovers a thieves' hut and hides in loft. Thieves return and dispute about the spoil. Black Lad puts on oxhide and shouts (K 335.0.12). Thieves flee.

(ii) Returns home and is summoned by laird (F 660.1). Set tests—to go to the laird riding and not riding, clad and not clad. He succeeds by riding sow while wearing an old net (H 1053.1, H 1054.1).

(iii) Stealing of horse from stable (H 1151.2). Succeeds by making guards drunk (K 332).

(iv) Stealing of bed sheet (H 1151.3). He lowers a dead body down the chimney (K 362.2.1). Laird shoots it and thief takes sheet while the laird buries body. Wife not present.

G. *Donacha Bàn and his Men*. Campbell Mss. Vol. XVI, p. 67. Collected from John MacNair in 1860.

The characters are a group of thieves and the story opens with their betting whether a certain feat of thieving could be accomplished (K 305).

(i) A *cirinn* (glossed as "gelding goat") is being taken to a wedding. A young member steals it by means of the shoe trick as in B iii and I i (K 341.6).

(ii) A wedder is stolen by him by using the bleating trick as in B iv (K 341.7).

(iii) With his master he stampedes cattle to get a share of nuts at a Halloween party as in B i (K 341).

(iv) On the return of the guests he ties dried skins to his master's coat tails and raises alarm. As B ii.

At this point the thief leaves his master and takes service with a carpenter in Ireland and the story then enters the Rhampsinitus phase (Aa.-Th. 950) ending with the thief's marriage to the king's daughter (Q 91.1).

H. *Mac an Tuathanaich* (The Farmer's Son). Recorded by Calum Maclean in September 1941 from *Seumas Iain Ghunnairigh* (James MacKinnon) of Northbay, Barra. This synopsis is made from the collector's transcript in Irish Folklore Commission Ms. No. 1029, p. 240 *et seq.*

Characters: a minister, a poor tenant and his son.

The minister dislikes the tenant and he forces him, on pain of death, to send his only son away to learn thieving (K 301.1). Boy goes away for a time and then returns. Minister hears of his coming (F 660.1*) and tasks are set on pain of death (H 1151).

(i) Stealing of ploughman's horses while ploughing. Boy takes two rabbits, breaks the legs of one and releases it near the ploughman. Ploughman chases it a short way and catches it. Boy then releases another without its legs broken. He takes the horses while the ploughman chases it out of sight (K 341.5.1).

(ii) Stealing of *am ponaidh buidhe* "the yellow pony" (H 1151.2). Pony has eight guards, two on its back, one holding the head, one the tail, and two guarding each of its flanks. Boy buys seven or eight bottles of whisky, disguises himself as a packman (K 311.17*) and pretends to be drunk. He stumbles into the stable. Bottles are found by guards as in D i and the pony is stolen when they are drunk (K 332).

(iii) Stealing of bed sheet (H 1151.3). Uses dead body which is shot at window as in A iv (K 362.1*). While minister is away burying it he impersonates him and goes to bed with his wife. He pretends to wriggle with cold and steals sheet.

(iv) No task set but boy decides to steal minister. He dresses in salmon skins as in C iii (K 311.2) and goes to minister's church at midnight. Minister is summoned after he is heard preaching in many languages. Boy pretends to take him to heaven in a sack (K 711). Takes him instead to a cliff top and threatens to throw him over if he molests him further.

I. *An Gille Carach* (The Shifty Lad). Recorded by Calum Maclean from *Aonghas Barrach* (Angus MacMillan), Benbecula, in December 1948. Synopsis taken from collector's transcript in Irish Folklore Commission Ms. No. 1155, p. 3 *et seq.*

The chief character is a widow's son called *An Gille Dubh* (The Black Lad) who wants to learn the trade of thieving against his mother's wishes and deceives her as in B i. He is apprenticed to the Shifty Lad.

(i) The King is having a great party. They see a man going to the palace with a wedder on his back. Black Lad steals it as in B iii by the shoe trick as in B iii and G i (K 341.6).

(ii) King orders man to get the very best wedder on the hill and not to let it go until he reaches the palace. Stolen by bleating trick as in B iv and G ii (K 341.7).

(iii) King's banquet proceeds. They enter and hide themselves above the room. Alarm raised in similar manner to G iv and the Black Lad plunders the room.

(iv) They become drovers and the Shifty Lad is killed in the "hanging game" as in B vi (K 852) which takes place at the Great Bridge of Ireland.

(v) Meets King's daughter and as they are out walking he suggests that they try the hanging game again. Black Lad is accidentally hung (N 334.2).

J. *Mac a' Gheamair* (The Gamekeeper's Son). Recorded by Calum Maclean from Alasdair Stewart, Travelling Tinsmith. Synopsis taken from the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive, RL 867 B 1.

Scene laid in neighbourhood of Dunvegan, Skye.

Characters: MacLeod, his gamekeeper and the gamekeeper's son, who is addicted to drink.

His father is forced to send the son away but he returns home and begins drinking again. He is set tasks by the chief on pain of expulsion of self and father.

(i) Stealing of ploughman's horses while ploughing. Accomplished by use of rabbits as in E ii and H i (K 341.5.1).

(ii) Stealing of guarded "pedigree mare" (*sic*) out of stable (H 1151.2). Thief takes two bottles of black tea and two of whisky. Offers the guards whisky while he drinks tea. Guards get drunk (K 332).

K. *Mac a' Ghàrmalair* (The Gardener's Son). Recorded by Calum Maclean in December 1959 from *Aonghas Beag Mac Aonghais 'ic Eachainn* (Angus MacLellan), South Uist. Synopsis taken from the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive, RL 1651.

Characters: laird, gardener and gardener's son.

The son steals (K 301) and the father is forced to send him away. He returns in a year. Laird asks him what he did and is told thieving (K 301.1, F 660.1). He is set tasks under pain of death.

(i) Stealing of guarded pony from stable (H 1151.2). He exchanges clothing with an old soldier (K 311.17*), conceals whisky about his person and collapses in midden by the stable. Guards find him and get drunk (K 332).

(ii) Stealing of tablecloth with six people playing cards on it (H 1151.3+). He goes at night dressed in a cow's hide and begins to make a hole in the ceiling. Quarrel develops about cards and he drops through the ceiling with a shout. All faint or flee (K 335.0.12).

(iii) Stealing of a bed sheet (H 1151.3). He uses dead body as in A iv and H iv (K 362.2.1*) and removes sheet as in H iv.

Laird drowns himself with chagrin and the son of the gardener marries his lady (Q 91.1*).

L. *Fear a' goid muill* (A man stealing a wedder). Recorded by Calum Maclean in May 1953 from Archie Cameron.

One episode only. A man steals a wedder by the trick of leaving one shoe and then another (K 341.6).

M. *Borran*. Written down by Donald J. MacDonald, South Uist from his father's recitation (Duncan MacDonald).

Identical with E in all respects except for different name of chief character.

N. A story explaining the origin of the song *Maol Ruainidh Glinneach Thu*, recorded by the writer in June 1960 from Nan MacKinnon, Vatersay. [Aa.-Th. 1525 M, *Mak and the Sheep*] S.S.S. RL 583. B. 11.

LIST OF MOTIFS

Motifs which are not in the Stith Thompson Index in the form in which they are found here are given the closest approximate number, and indicated with an asterisk, thus K308*. This is in accordance with the advice given in Thompson 1955: I, 25.

F 660	Remarkable skill.
H 1151	Theft as a task.
H 1151.2.1	Task: stealing horse when owner has been forewarned.
H 1151.3	Stealing sheet from bed on which person is sleeping.
H 1153.3.2*	Stealing tablecloth while people are playing cards on it.
J 1786.1	Man costumed as demon; thieves flee.
K 152	Thief masked as devil is bought off by frightened owner.
K 301	Master thief.
K 301.1	Youth learns robbery as a trade.
K 305	Contest in stealing.
K 308*	Apprentice surpasses master as thief.
K 311.2	Thief disguised as angel.
K 311.16	Thief disguised as girl.
K 311.17*	Thief disguised as old soldier, packman.
K 316	Theft through chimney.
K 332	Theft by making owner drunk.
K 335.0.12	Owner frightened away by thief disguised as devil.
K 341.5.1	Theft of horse by letting loose a rabbit so that drivers join in the chase.
K 341	Owner's interest distracted while goods are stolen.
K 341.3	Thief distracts attention by apparently hanging himself.
K 341.6	Shoes dropped to distract owner's attention.
K 341.7	Animal's cry imitated to distract owner's attention.
K 362.2.1*	Thief lowers corpse down chimney. Householder shoots corpse (Not in Motif Index. More W.H.).
K 521.1	Escape by dressing in animal skin.
K 711	Deception into entering bag.
K 852	Deceptive game: hanging each other.
N 334.2	Hanging in game accidentally proves fatal.
Q 91.1*	Wife or daughter of laird, daughter of bishop won by clever thief.

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