

TWO MORE STORIES FROM ATHOLL

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The following stories are Nos. 207 and 208 in Lady Evelyn Stewart-Murray's MS. collection of Atholl traditions.* They were taken down from Mrs. Campbell at Foss Post-Office on 4th June 1891, the day after the story printed in *Scottish Studies* 9:153 was collected in Strathtay. It seems that Lady Evelyn took down 14 stories of different lengths, over 3000 words in all, from four tellers in Foss that day: we can admire her industry as much as we envy her opportunities.

I know no other version of either of these tales in Scottish Gaelic. The first seems to be a variant of AT 570, "The Rabbit-Herd". Though very worn-down, it looks as if it may originally have conformed to the summary given in the AT type-index, where the hero's magic whistle which summons wild animals is the means by which he wins the princess's hand. In this version, however, neither the means by which the whistle was acquired—it is not even stated to be a magic one—nor its use to win the princess is narrated; in fact it is implied that the hero married the princess just because his master was a good cooper! In other languages the winning of the princess often contains improper details, and the episode may have been deliberately omitted by the teller or her source for this reason. According to the list in AT the story is commonest in Scandinavia, Germany and France, and for Ireland Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen (1963:126) list 21 versions. The formal style in which the rabbit-herding episode is told here suggests that the story had been established in Scottish Gaelic for some time.

The second story is possibly a more recent importation: the formula-phrase used by Lady Evelyn as title may be translated from English (see note 6). It belongs to the Bluebeard type AT 955, "The Robber Bridegroom", and is close to the well-known English story of "Mr. Fox".¹ The form *pàrrad* (*sic* MS.) for "parrot" might suggest a Scots origin. On the other hand an Irish version (Ó Duilearga 1948:53) gives a parallel to the

* *Scottish Studies* 9:153

curious murder of the bride by bleeding. The story is again popular in Scandinavia and Germany, and Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen (1963:189-90) list 47 Irish versions.

As before I have left the text as it stands in the MS., apart from adding accents, apostrophes and punctuations to clarify the sense and standardising one or two spellings which do not affect the pronunciation, such as *adhart* for *aghart*. Lady Evelyn's earliest transcriptions give many words in their local forms with the standard spelling in brackets; later, however, she seems in general only to have given the dialect form, though occasionally standard forms occur such as *daibh* alongside *dau* or *aca* instead of the characteristic Perthshire *ac'* with the final open syllable dropped. In case this might represent a real variation in the speaker's pronunciation I have let these stand, as also variants such as *gobhair*: *gobhar* in the plural. In most of the doubtful cases the endings are actually pencilled into the ink MS., suggesting a conflict in the writer's mind between what she heard and what she thought correct, and similarly where *na gobhar* appears instead of more grammatical *nan . . .*, a pencil stroke after *na* indicates the doubt.

The translation is based on a rough version prepared by Mr. Sorley Maclean for the late Duke of Atholl (Lord James Murray) about 1955.

An Giullan Maol Carrach

Bha muime 'ghiullain mhaol, charrach ro olc dha, 's chum i anmoch e 'dol shir' na gamhainn da'n mhon'. Ach chunnaic e rionnag sholuis far an robh e. Ciod bha 'n sin ach tigh cùbair agus a bhean. Cha robh nì aca ach gràinnein ghobhar. Bha e sir' fuireach cuide riu, 's gu'n gleidheadh e iad. Cha robh iad ro thoileach an toiseach, ach dh' aontaich iad ri 'ghleidh', agus bha e buachailleadh na gobhar dhau. Dar thàin' 'n oidhche, bha feadag aiges', 's sheinn e oirre. Agus gu dé thàinig ach maigheach mhór cuide ris na gobhar.² Choinnich e null i, 's choinnich e nall i, 's chuir e stigh cuide ris na gobhar i. Dar chaidh 'bhean bleoghann na gobhar, ghlaodh i ris an duine aice:

"Dhuine, dhuine, bì nuas le d' thuadh 's le d' thàl; tha beothach biorach, biorach, sgeunach, sgeunach³ an so."

Thàinig an duine le 'thuadh, 's le 'thàl, 's mharbh e 'mhaigheach, 's dh'ith iad i. Bha iad cunnt' gu'n d'fhuair iad rud anabharrach (*sic*) math anns a' ghiullan mhaol, charrach.

Chaidh e mach 'n ath latha, 's bhuachaillich e na gobhair

gus an d'thàinig 'n oidhche, 's ghobh e 'n fheadag, 's sheinn e oirre, 's thàinig an sin earb tarsuing. Choinnich e null i, 's choinnich e nall i, 's chuir e stigh cuide ris na gobhar i. Dar chaidh 'bhean bleoghann na gobhar, ghlaodh i ris an duine:

"Dhuine, dhuine, bì nuas le d' thuadh, 's le d' thàl; tha beothach biorach, biorach, biorach, sgeunach, sgeunach, sgeunach an so."

Thàinig an duine le 'thuadh, 's le 'thàl, 's mharbh 'n earb. Bha an so na b' fhearr aca 'n oidhche so.

Chaidh e mach 'n ath latha rithist leis na gobhair. Dar thàin' e fagus da'n oidhche rithist, sheinn e 'n fheadag mar rinn e roimhe, agus thàinig fiadh feadh nan gobhar. Choinnich e null e, 's choinnich e nall e,⁴ 's chuir e stigh cuide ris na gobhar e. Chaidh 'bhean bleoghann na gobhar, mar chaidh i roimhe, 's dar chunnaic i am fiadh, ghlaodh i:

"Dhuine, dhuine, bì nuas le d' thuadh, 's le do thàl; tha beothach biorach, biorach, biorach, biorach, sgeunach, sgeunach, sgeunach an so."

Thàinig an duine le 'thuadh, 's le 'thàl, 's mharbh e 'm fiadh, 's dh'ith iad e.

Thuir an giullan maol, carrach ris a' chùbair:

"Théid sinn gu srath, thun 'mhargad, 'chreic nan soithichean"⁵—agus thug iad leo uiread 's b'urrainn daibh dhiu. Chreic iad iad, 's fhuair iad *lot* sgillinn agus bunnachan sé orra. Bha 'n cùbair 's a bhean ro thoilichte, 's cha'n fhac' iad riamh uiread sin dh' airgid ac' fhé'.

Chaidh iad ann 'chiad latha faidhreach rithist leis na b' urrainn dau ghiùlan da na soithichean. Dar chunnaic an sluagh na soithichean math' bh' aca, thug iad móran airgid dhau an tarruing so. Bha 'n cùbair 's a bhean anabarrach toilichte gu'n d'thug iad fasgadh do'n ghiullan, 's am math rinn e dhau.

Chaidh iad an treas tarruing rithistich dar thàinig margad eile. Leis cho math 's bha cliù nan soithichean cinntinn, fhuair iad òr an tarruing so, 's thàinig an rìgh fhé' 'cheannach gràinn dhiu. Agus thug iad an so an cùbair 's a bhean as a' mhonadh, chionn gu'n robh iad deanamh obair cho math. 'S fhuair an giullan maol, carrach nighean an rìgh ri phòs'.

The Cropped Scabby Laddie

The stepmother of the cropped scabby laddie was very hard on him, and she kept him late going to look for the stirks on the moor. But he saw a twinkle of light there. What was that but

the house of a cooper and his wife. They had nothing but a handful of goats. He was asking to stay with them and look after the goats. At first they were not very willing, but they agreed to keep him, and he herded the goats for them. When night came, he had a whistle, and he blew it. And what should come with the goats but a big hare.² He met her here and he met her there and he put her in with the goats. When the woman went to milk the goats, she called out to her husband:

"Man, man, come down with your axe and your adze; there's a sharp, sharp, scary, scary beastie here."

The man came with his axe and his adze and killed the hare, and they ate it. They reckoned that they had got a remarkably good thing in the cropped scabby laddie.

He went out next day and herded the goats until night came, and he took the whistle and blew it, and along came a roe. He met her here and he met her there and he put her in with the goats. When the woman went to milk the goats, she called out to her husband:

"Man, man, come down with your axe and your adze; there's a sharp, sharp, sharp, scary, scary, scary beastie here."

The man came with his axe and his adze and killed the roe. With that they did even better that night.

Next day again he went out with the goats. When it came near night again, he blew the whistle as he had done before, and a deer came among the goats. He met it here and he met it there and he put it in with the goats. The woman went to milk the goats as she did before, and when she saw the deer, she called out:

"Man, man, come down with your axe and your adze. There's a sharp, sharp, sharp, sharp, scary, scary, scary, scary beastie here."

The man came with his axe and his adze and killed the deer, and they ate it.

The cropped scabby laddie said to the cooper:

"We'll go down to the lowlands to the market, to sell the cogs"⁵—and they took with them as many as they could of them. They sold them, and they got a lot of pennies and half-pennies for them. The cooper and his wife were very pleased, and they had never seen so much money in their own hands.

They went there the first fair day after with all the cogs they could carry. When people saw the good cogs they had they gave them a lot of silver this time. The cooper and his

wife were wonderfully pleased that they had given shelter to the laddie, with all the good he had done them.

They went again, for the third time, when there was another market. The cogs were getting such a good name that they got gold this time, and the king himself came to buy some of them. And then they brought the cooper and his wife away from the moor because they were making such good stuff. And the cropped scabby laddie got the king's daughter to marry.

*Theirig dân', a bhaintighearn', 's na teirig dân,
a bhaintighearn'*

Bha suiriche tighinn shir' baintighearn', 's bha e ro bhriagh, bha dà ghill' dheug aige, agus bha na càirdean aice ro thoileach gu'm pòsadh i e, ach cha robh i fhé' toileach 'ghobhail gus am faiceadh i beagan. Dh'fholbh i latha, agus chaidh i air adhart gus an d'ràinig i coill. Chaidh i stigh da na choill, agus chaidh i air adhairt gus an d'ràinig i tigh briagh. Agus ciod a bha 'n sin ach pàrrad ann an *cage* an croch' aig cliathach an tighe. Agus thuirt a' phàrrad rithe:

"Theirig dân', a bhaintighearn', 's na teirig dân', a bhaintighearn'."6

Chaidh i stigh, agus 'chiad seamar 's an d'thàinig i, bha criathrachan arain-coirc' 's càise. Thug i leatha gràinnean dheth 'na puidse. Chaidh i da rùm eile, agus bha e làn gùintean grinn, agus dh'fhosgail i dràr agus fhuair i fàinneachan agus màinneachan,7 agus chaidh i da rùm eile, agus fhuair i baintighearnan air an croch' air am falt. Agus chual' i 'n so fuaim tighinn. Theich i agus chaidh i an cùl clòsaid nan con, agus thug i dhau beagan arain 's càise. Có thàinig an so ach an suiriche agus an dà fhear dheug cuide ris, agus có bh' aca ach nighean bràthair h-athar. Agus thuirt an suiriche:

"S fheairrd' baintighearnan òg' taom fala thoirt asda"—agus chuir e casan nighean bràthair h-athar an tuba bùirn blàth, 's shìor-theireadh e rithe:

"S fheairrd' baintighearnan òg' taom fala thoirt asda."8

Ma dheireadh thuirt i gu'n robh i faicinn an tigh cinntinn dubh, agus thuirt fear da'n dà fhear dheug: "Gu'n glacadh Dia h-anam," 's bha ise marbh. Thòisich iad air thoirt dhi 'n fhàinne, agus cha b' urrainn dau, agus dh' fholbh iad, agus thug iad an làmh uile dhi, 's thilg iad thun na con i.9 Bheir ise oirre, agus thug i mìr 's càise da na coin g'am breug'. Chaidh

iads' croch' nighean bràthair h-athar air 'falt cuide ris na baintighearnan eile bha 'san t-seamar.

Fhuair ise teicheachd,¹⁰ agus theich i dhachaidh. Cha robh fhios aige (*sic*) gin air so ach i fhé'. Thàinig an suiriche rithistich 'ga sir' mar bha e roimhe, e fhé' 's a dhà fhear dheug. Thuirt i gu'n deanadh i còrdadh co-dhiu, ach gu'n robh i toileach gu'm biodh bràthair h-athar 's a dhà mhac aig a' chòrdadh, agus gu'm faigheadh ise 'na suidhe eadar dà mhac bràthair h-athar, agus bràthair h-athar fhé' 'na (*sic*) coinneamh. Dar fhuair i 'n so 'n òrdugh, agus i eadar dà mhac bràthair h-athar, 's bràthair h-athar mu coinneamh, thuirt i:

"Tha mise dol dh'innse bruadair dhuibh. Cha'n 'eil ann," thuirt i, "ach bruadair. Thoiribh sibhse 'n aire orms', mhic bhràthair m' athar." Dh' innis i dhau na h-uile nì mar thachair, agus bha i 'g ràdh an dràs' 's rithist:

"Thoiribh 'n aire orm, 's na gobhaidh ach mar bhruadair e."¹¹

Bha es' ro thoileach air faotainn air folbh, 's e ro luaineach. Thàin' i air adhart leis an naigheachd uile, gus an d'thàinig i thun na làimhe; dar thàinig i thun na làimhe, thug i mach á puidse i, 's thuirt i:

"Mur creid sibh mise, fhaicibh sin an làmh."¹²

Agus chaidh an glac' an so, 's chaidh e fhé' 's aon deug chroch', ach am fear ghuidh air son nighean bràthair h-athar dar bha i faicinn an tigh dubh, fhuair es' as.¹³

Go boldly, lady, and don't go boldly, lady

A suitor was coming to woo a lady, and he was very handsome, he had twelve attendants, and her kin were very willing that she should marry him, but she herself was not willing to have him until she had looked around a little. She set off one day, and she went on until she came to a wood. She went into the wood, and kept on until she reached a fine house. And what was there but a parrot in a cage hanging on the side of the house. The parrot said to her:

"Go boldly, lady, and don't go boldly, lady."⁶

She went in, and the first room she came to, there were riddles full of oatcake and cheese. She took some of it with her in her pocket. She went to another room, and it was full of lovely gowns, and she opened a drawer and found rings and earrings, and she went to another room and found ladies hanging by their hair. Then she heard a noise coming. She ran away and went into the back of the dog kennel, and she

gave them a little bread and cheese. Who should arrive now but her suitor and the twelve men along with him, and who had they with them but her father's brother's daughter. And the suitor said:

"Young ladies are the better for having a drop of their blood drawn"—and he put her cousin's feet in a tub of warm water, and kept on saying to her:

"Young ladies are the better for having a drop of their blood drawn."⁸

At last she said that she saw the house growing black, and one of the twelve men said: "May God receive her soul," and she died. They began to take the ring off her, and they could not, and they went and cut off the whole hand, and threw it to the dogs.⁹ The lady got hold of it, and she gave the dogs a piece with cheese to quiet them. They went off to hang her cousin by the hair with the other ladies in the room.

The lady managed to escape and ran away home. Nobody knew about this but herself. The suitor came again to woo her as before, himself and his twelve men. She said she would get engaged anyway, but she wanted her father's brother and his two sons to be at the betrothal, and that she should be allowed to sit between her uncle's two sons with her uncle himself opposite her. When she had this arranged, herself between her uncle's two sons and her uncle opposite, she said:

"I am going to tell you a dream. It is nothing but a dream," said she. "You mark me well, my uncle's sons." She told them everything as it had happened, saying every now and then:

"Mark me well, but take it only as a dream."¹¹

The man was very anxious to get away; he was very uneasy. She went on with the whole story, until she came to the hand; when she came to the hand, she took it out of her pocket, and said:

"If you don't believe me, look, here is the hand."¹²

And they were seized then and the suitor and eleven of them were hanged, but the man who had prayed for her cousin when she saw the house grow black was allowed to go free.¹³

NOTES

- ¹ First printed in Malone's *Shakspeare* (1821) 7:163, to explain a passage in *Much Ado about Nothing*: it was contributed by Blakeway, who had heard it from a great-aunt when he was a boy. The many reprints include Jacobs 1890:148 and Hartland 1890:25; my quotations and the information above are from the latter. There is a discussion of

- English versions of this and a related type in Briggs and Tongue 1965: xxiii, xxvi and 90, but this deals principally with the variant type, also called "Mr. Fox", of which a version is printed *op. cit.* p. 90. In this the girl hides in a tree and sees her wooer dig a grave for her; she later reveals this in riddles. Baughman proposes the type-number AT 955C for "Mr. Fox", meaning no doubt this variant, but Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen (1963:191) list it under AT 956C; the 956C of the latest AT type-index is a different story again. There is a rich confusion here which is overdue to be cleared up.
- ² The whistle is evidently meant to summon the goats, but it also manages to bring in the wild animal. It seems reasonable to assume that in an earlier form of the story it was explicitly a magic whistle as in the international tale.
 - ³ The MS. has *sgeannach* in pencil each time this formula occurs. At its first appearance the translation "impudent" is pencilled above this, and the alternative spelling *sgiarmach* (perhaps a badly written *sgiannach*) below. It seems that Lady Evelyn, and possibly the teller if "impudent" is from her, took the word to be *sgeannach*, "staring, big-eyed"; but in the context *sgeunach* (pronounced *sgianach*) "easily scared, apt to run away" seems the most likely meaning, and in view of the doubt about the spelling and on the advice of my colleague Mr. D. A. MacDonald I have adopted it.
 - ⁴ MS.: "Chonnich (*sic*) e null e, 's choinnich e, 's choinnich e nall e . . ."
 - ⁵ *Thun 'mhargad*, "to the market", written (in ink) above the line: it may be an alternative to *gu srath*, "to the lowlands". *Soithichean* is difficult to translate here, when it applies to wooden vessels which might be of any size from cups to great vats; at the risk of obscurity I have used the Scots *cogs*, which covers all the stave-and-hoop vessels likely to be made by a Highland cooper except actual barrels.
 - ⁶ In *Mr. Fox* the corresponding words, "Be bold, be bold, but not too bold," are inscribed over successive doors through which the heroine passes; over the last is written:

"Be bold, be bold, but not too bold
Lest that your heart's blood should run cold."

This sort of rhymed or rhythmical speech seems typical of the remaining examples of English *märchen*-telling. The parrot's speech in the Gaelic story is very similar to the English phrase and could be a translation of something like it (*dàna* in Gaelic can mean either "bold" or "rash"), and the parrot himself, though he is not in the surviving English version, suggests an origin outside the Highlands. In Grimm it is a bird which gives the warning.

- ⁷ Lady Evelyn glosses *màinneachan* as "ear-rings". Dwelly gives a word *màilleag* with this meaning, a diminutive of *màille* (from French *maille*), "chain mail", or "link or ring of mail", and by extension any ring. The form here may be a mishearing or may be due to the constant tendency of folk-tale tellers to make any formula of words into a rhyming jingle.
- ⁸ As it stands this incident is somewhat obscure, but evidently the lady was bled in the medical manner, with her feet in warm water to stimulate the flow of blood, until she died. The same method of murder is more explicitly shown in Seán Ó Conaill's version from Kerry

(Ó Duilearga 1948:55) though the other details of the story are rather different. I translate:

"The night she arrived, he said she needed a drop of blood drawn from her (*go dteastódh bhuaithe braon fola a bhuint aisti*), that she was weak and tired after the journey. She told him to do it. He got a lancet and opened one of her veins and left her there bleeding until she dropped."

- The details of this incident seem rather different from the other versions. In *Mr. Fox* the lady's hand is cut off while she is still alive and clinging to the banisters with it: there is a bracelet on it which later helps to prove the story. In the Kerry version (Ó Duilearga 1948:56-8) the hand is cut off for an unexplained reason; the heroine catches it and keeps only a ring which is on it to identify the victim, as here a relative (her sister), when she tells her story over a week later. This probably represents the basic form of the incident—the ring is essential to identify the victim, who is known to the hearers of the heroine's story. In our version, however, the ring appears as the motive for cutting off the hand, and this is prepared by the mention of a room full of rings; but it is presumably already off when the heroine gets the hand—unless we suppose that the hand was thrown to the dogs so that they should eat away the flesh and leave the ring, as no other means would get it off!
- ¹⁰ Or *teich' ac'*, "to escape from them"—"aca?" is written above *-achd* in the MS.
- ¹¹ I have omitted '*S cha'n 'eil ann ach bruadair*, which is repeated here in the MS. but bracketed in pencil: possibly an alternative. Compare with this the formula in *Mr. Fox*, where the story is similarly told as a dream: "It is not so, nor it was not so."
- ¹² *Mr. Fox*: "But it is so, and it was so,
And here the hand I have to show!"
- ¹³ The twelve servants, of whom only one has any pity for the victim, are closer to the continental versions where the bridegroom is leader of a robber band than to *Mr. Fox*. In the Kerry tale there is a single servant who helps and finally marries the heroine, but the details are quite different.

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