

*Rìgh Eilifacs**

DONALD A. MACDONALD

Well, chuala mise mar a bha sìod-ach ann, fear agus bha e pòsda agus 's e cosnadh a bh'aige, 's ann ag iasgach a bhiodh e . . . † Agus 'n uair a gheibheadh e móran do dh'iasg bhiodh e 'ga chreic ri muinntir a' bhaile a bha 'san àite. Agus cha robh duine teaghlach aige.

Well, tha e colach leam gun do dh'fhàs an t-iasgach car gann air—gu robh e 'fàs gann, an t-iasg. Agus bha e 'latha bh'ann a sheo, bha e muigh ag iasgach agus bha e air ruith air na h-iolachan cho math 's a bh'aige 's a b'abhast dha deagh iasgach fhaighinn orra agus . . . cha d'fhuair e móran. Agus bha e dìreach a' pasgadh nan dorgh agus . . . e 'falbh dhachaidh 'n uair a dh'fhairich e plumb aig deireadh na geòladh, na ga brith gu dé seòrsa bàta bh'aige, agus thug e sùil sìos rathad an deiridh agus bha seann duine sin-ach agus e 'm barr na bh'as cionn nan aclasan dheth.

"Chan eil thu," ors esan, "a' faighinn an iasgaich idir, a dhuin'," ors esan.

"O chan eil," ors esan.

"'N dà," ors esan, "ma bheir thu dhòmh-s'," ors esan, "a' rud a dh'iarras mi ort," ors esan, "gheibh thu 'n t-iasg," ors esan, "cho math 's a bha thu 'ga fhaighinn reimid," ors esan.

"O chan eil fhiosam," ors . . . a' fear eile, "bheil a lethid sin-ach agam-sa bheir mi dhuibh," ors esan.

"O chan eil," ors esan, "ach bithidh e agad," ors esan, "ma ghabhas tu mo chomhairle-sa."

"Dé," ors an t-iasgair, ors esan, "a bha sin?" ors esan.

"Do cheud mhac," ors esan.

"O," ors an t-iasgair, ors esan, "tha mi cinndeach," ors esan, "gu faod mi sin," ors esan, "ma bhios e ann."

"*Well*," ors esan, "geall thusa," ors esan, "gun toir thu dhòmh-s' e," ors esan, "an aois a chóig bliadhna deug," ors esan.

"O nach fhaod mise sin," ors an t-iasgair, ors esan. "Tha mi cinndeach nach bi lethid ann co-dhiùbh," ors esan.

"*Well*," ors esan, "cuir thusa mach na duirgh," ors esan, "agus," ors esan, "a cheud bheothach," ors esan, ". . . a gheibh thu," ors esan, "cuiridh tu air leth e agus bheir thu dhachaidh dhut fhéin e, dha'n bhean," ors esan. "Bheir thu dhachaidh chon na mnathadh e," ors esan, "agus," ors esan, "cumaidh tu rithe 'n t-iasg," ors esan, "e

* A translation follows on p. 9.

† Hesitations or slight stumbles are indicated by . . . in the Gaelic text.

fhéin agus an grùdhan, òrd dhe'n iasg," ors esan, "agus òrd dhe'n ghrùdhan," ors esan, "còmhla ris," ors esan, "gos an teirg e," ors esan.

Well . . . dh'fhalbh am bodach. Dh'fhalbh an t-iasgair 's dh'fheuch e mach an dorgh 's cha do thàrr e chur sios 'n uair a laigh deagh chnapach do bheothach air. Thug e staigh e agus 'n uair a thug e far an dubhain e dh'fhalbh e agus rug e air 's thilg e . . . suas air leth ann an toiseach a' bhàt e. Co-dhiùbh thòisich e ri iasgach agus ma dheireadh gos a robh a taosg gos 'ith as a bhàta a bh'aige, agus bha . . . 'n oidhche 'tighinn. Chaidh e air tìr co-dhiùbh agus bha daoine 'ga fheictheamh mar a b'abhast dhaibh airson iasg agus chreic e 'n t-iasg ach . . . an aon bheothach a bh'ann a sheo. 'S e . . . 'n aon bheothach a fhuair e thàrradh dha fhéin, agus thug e leis dhachaidh e agus dh'iarr e air a bhean—dh'innis e dhi mar a bha 'n gnothuch, 's dh'iarr e air a bhean am beothach ad a chumail air leth dhi fhéin agus i 'n grùdhan a thoirt as agus i bhith bruich òrd dhe fhéin agus òrd dhe'n ghrùdhan còmhladh agus . . . i fhéin a bhith 'ga ghabhail.

'S ann mar seo-ach a bha, co-dhiùbh . . . Ghabh a' chailleach e; 's theirg an t-iasg 's thòisich am bodach ri iasgach 's bha e 'faighinn do dh'iasg mar a thairrheadh e. Agus gu dé rinn a' chailleach a seo-ach ach . . . am boirionnach—a bhean a bh'aige, 's i . . . air tighinn go aois, ach fàs trom. Agus fo latha go latha bha 'n gnothach a' dol air aghaidh . . . ors ma dheireadh rug i leanabh gille dha.

Well, bha 'n gille niste . . . bha 'm pàisd ann a shin 's bha 'n ùine 'dol seachad 's bha 'm pàisde 'fàs ors ma dheireadh co-dhiùbh gun tànaig e go am sgoileadh agus bhiodh e 'dol dha' sgoil. Chan eil fhiosam co-dhiùbh bha i fada na goirid bhuaithe, co-dhiùbh, ach bhiodh e 'dol innte. Agus 'n uair a bha e 'tcannadh ris . . . suas ma cheithir bliadhn' deug na ioma sin-ach, cha robh oidhche thigeadh e dhachaidh nach biodh athair 's a mhàthair a' caoineadh. Agus bha e 'cur neònachas uamhasach air gu dé bha toirt orra bhith 'caoineadh, agus bhiodh e 'faighneachd dhaibh gu dé bha 'dol 's, ò, cha robh sion, agus co-dhiùbh chaidh an gnothuch air aghaidh mar seo-ach gos a robh e na cóig bliadhn' deug—mach 's a staigh ma na cóig bliadhn' deug—agus thanaig e 'n oidhche bha seo-ach dhachaidh agus bha iad ag obair air caoineadh.

"*Well*," ors esan, "tha e colach," ors esan, "gur ann a chionn," ors esan, "mise bhith tighinn dachaidh," ors esan, "tha sibh a' caoineadh," ors esan, "a chuile h-oidhch'," ors esan, "ach," ors esan, "tha mise gos 'ith clìor is a' sgoil," ors esan, "agus 'n uair a bhios mi clìor 's a' sgoil," ors esan, "bidh mi 'gar fàgail," ors esan.

"'N dà, 's duilich leam," ors a mhàthair, ors ise, "gu feum thu fàgail," ors ise.

Agus dh'innis iad a seo dha, dha'n ghille, facal air an fhacal mar a bha.

"O seadh," ors esan. "Tha e colach," ors esan, "gu bheil mis' air mo thoirt seachad," ors esan, "brith co aige tha mi," ors esan, agus: "ach," ors esan, "'n uair . . . a dh'fhàgas mise 'sgoil," ors esan, "tha mi 'fàgail seo," ors esan, "agus gheibh mi mach," ors esan, "gu dé ma dheighinn a' ghnothuich."

Well, co-dhiùbh bha e mach as a' sgoil agus a' latha bh'ann a sheo-ach rinn e airson falbh. Dh'fhalbh e cuideachd agus cha robh sion a dh'fhios aige có 'n taobh a bheireadh e aghaidh na cà rachadh e, ach co-dhiùbh thug e aghaidh air falbh 's tharruinn e.

Rànaig e baile seo-ach a bha sin agus bha daoine 'tachairt ris 's bha daoine 'foighneachd dheth co as a bha e 's co as a thànaig e 's bhiodh e 'g innse. Agus dh'innis e do dh-aon duine a bh'ann a sheo-ach, co-dhiùbh mar a . . . Dh'fhoighneachd an duine seo dheth cà robh e 'dol. Dh'innis e nach robh sion a dh'fhios aige cà robh e 'dol agus dh'innis e dha mar a thachair an gnothuch 's mar . . . a thanaig an duine bha seo-ach am barr aig deireadh na geòladh a bh'aig athair agus mar a dh'iarr e a cheud mac air agus mar a gheall athair—bha e cho cinndeach co-dhiùbh, 's iad air tighinn go aois, nach biodh mac ann—mar a gheall e seachad e agus a chuile sion ma dheaghainn.

“O seadh,” ors a' fear seo. “Tha eagal orm, a ghràidhein,” ors esan, “gu bheil thu ann an droch lamhan,” ors esan, “gur e,” ors esan, “a' Fear Millidh fhéin,” ors esan, “. . . a bha am barr,” ors esan, “aig deireadh geòla d'athar,” ors esan, “agus gur h-ann aige tha thu. Ach,” ors esan, “'s e 'rud a nì thu,” ors esan. “Tha daoine as a' bhail' tha seo-ach,” ors esan, “daoine,” ors esan, “tha triùir ann,” ors esan, “agus 'se crèithich¹ a their iad riuth',” ors esan, “agus chan eil iad a' deanamh car,” ors esan, “ach ag ùrnuigh,” ors esan, “fad an t-siubhail,” ors esan, “agus brith,” ors esan, “co as tha 'm biadh a' tighinn uc',” ors esan, “tha e 'tighinn uc',” ors esan, “a àit-eigin, agus,” ors esan . . . “Chan ann còmhlaidh a tha iad,” ors esan. “Tha iad ann an uigheachan dha chéile,” ors esan, “far a bheil iad, ach,” ors esan, “tadhail aig a cheud fhear,” ors esan, “feuch gu dé chomhairle bheir e ort.”

Well, 's ann mar seo-ach a bha. Dh'fhalbh an gille 's fhuair e beul-ionnsaichidh fo'n fhear seo . . . càite robh 'n t-àite. Rànaig e co-dhiùbh 's rànaig e taigh a' chrèithich a bha seo. Bhual e 'n dorus 's thanaig a' seann duine bha seo-ach a nuas 's dh'iarr e air tighinn a staigh. Chaidh e staigh agus:

“Seadh,” ors a' fear a bha staigh, “co as a thàna' tu?” ors esan.

Dh'innis e, 's dh'innis e dha o thùs go éis mar a thànaig e—mar a thachair an duine 's a chuile sion ri athair. Agus thug e uige leabhraichean 's thòisich e air leabhraichean, a' leughadh—'ruith romhpa 's a' coimhead air a feadh agus co-dhiùbh, seo-ach:

“'N dà,” ors esan, “chan eil mise 'faicinn sion a seo,” ors esan, “do bhonn 'sa' bith air rudan, ach tha fhiosam,” ors esan, “gur h-ann,” ors esan, “aig an Fhear-Millidh a tha thu,” ors esan, “gur a h-è bh'ann,” ors esan, “gur h-e 'n t-Abharsair fhéin . . . a bha sin,” ors esan.

“Ach,” ors esan, “tha fear cil’,” ors esan, “agus 's e 's sine na mis’,” ors esan. “Tha e,” ors esan, “coiseachd lath' as a seo,” ors esan, “agus math dh'fhaoidt’,” ors esan, “gu faigh thu mach a sin e,” ors esan, “gum bi barrachd fiosraichidh aig an fhear seo agus a th'agam-s’,” ors esan.

Ach co-dhiùbh, seo-ach, aig am suipearach, co-dhiùbh, thanaig calamain, agus bha suipeir an dithis ac', uige.

“O *well*,” ors . . . an Crèitheach, ors esan, “tha deagh chomharra seo,” ors esan. “Tha do shuipeir air tighinn a seo,” ors esan, “còmhla ri mo shuipeir-s’,” ors esan.

Well, ghabh iad a suipeir 's chaidh iad a chadal 's a làirne-mhàireach 'n uair a dh'éirich iad, 's a fhuair iad air dòigh le biadh 's a chuile sion, dh'fhalbh an gille.

“Nist,” . . . ors an crèitheach ris, ors esan, “ma thilleas tu,” ors esan, “bco . . . an taobh seo,” ors esan, “gu bràch,” ors esan, “na deirg seachad orm-s’,” ors esan.

“O cha téid,” ors an gille. “Ma thig mise rathad seo,” ors esan, “tadhlaidh mi agaibh-se.”

“Glé cheart,” ors esan, “ma-tha. Bu mhath leam,” ors esan, “fhaighinn a mach gu dé mar a theid dhut.”

Well, dh’fhalbh an gille ’s dh’fhàg e slàn aige agus ann am beul anmoch na h-oidhche rànaig e taigh an fhir eile. Bhuail e ’n dorus co-dhiùbh ’s . . . thanaig a’ leth-sheann fhear a bha seo-ach a nuas co-dhiùbh ’s dh’iarr e air tighinn a staigh. Chaidh e staigh.

Well, dh’innis e. Dh’fhoighneachd e co as a thànaig e ’s dh’innis an gille. Thòisich e air innse na h-eachdraidh—mar a thànaig e chon an t-saoghail seo ’s man a chuile sion ’s . . . am bodach a chunnaig athair aig a gheòla ’s mar a rinn e, ’s a chuile sion a dh’iarr e air a dheanamh; agus gu robh e raoir ann an taigh a’ chrèithich a bha seo-ach agus nach d’fhuair e sion—gu robh e ’ruith air leabhraichean ùine mhór dhe’n oidhch’ agus nach d’fhuair e sion . . . a dh’innseadh gu dé ghabhadh deanamh ris, agus gu robh e ’falbh feuch a faigheadh e e fhéin a shaoradh . . . air dhòigh air choireigin. *Well*, thòisich a’ fear seo, ’n uair a fhuair iad biadh, thòisich a’ fear seo e fhéin air leabhraichean agus bha e ’g obair air leabhraichean airson treis mhór dhe’n oidhche ’s:

“O, ma-thà,” ors esan, “chan eil sion a dh’fhiosrachadh as na leabhraichean a th’agam-s’ a seo,” ors esan, “. . . na bu mhutha na bh’aig an fhear eil’,” ors esan, “ach,” ors esan, “tha fear eil’,” ors esan, “ma choiseachd lath’ as a seo-ach,” ors esan, “agus tha e.” ors esan, “fad,” ors esan, “na’s fhèrr na mis’,” ors esan, “agus math dh-fhaoidt’,” ors esan, “gu faigh thu mach aig an fear sin,” ors esan, “gu dé ’n dòigh a ghabhas tu na gu dé ’n t-innleachd a nì thu,” ors esan, [“? chum a bhith orra] shaoradh, ach,” ors esan . . .

Ach aig am suipcarach a sin thanaig a bhiadh uige mar a thanaig e raoir còmhla ri biadh a’ chrèithich agus:

“O seadh,” ors an crèitheach. “O, *well*,” ors esan, “tha mi smaoindeachadh,” ors esan, “gun téid . . . glé mhath dhut,” ors esan. “Tha do shuipeir air tighinn a seo-ach,” ors esan, “mar a tha i air tighinn ugam-s’,” ors esan, “agus,” ors esan, “na biodh droch mhisneachd agad idir,” ors esan, “ach tha mi smaoindeachadh gun téid glé mhath dhut fhathast,” ors esan.

Agus chaidh iad a chadal, co-dhiùbh, ’s a làirne-mhàireach ’n uair a dh’éirich iad ’s a fhuair iad biadh, rinn an gill’ air son falbh.

“Nist,” ors an crèitheach, ors esan, ris, “ma thilleas tu,” ors esan, “gu bràch,” ors esan, “air a’ rathad seo,” ors esan, “na deirg seachad orm-sa.”

“O cha téid,” ors an gille, “mi seachad oirbh idir,” ors esan. “Ma thilleas mise bco mar seo,” ors esan, “tadhlaidh mi agaibh-se,” ors esan.

“O seadh,” ors an crèitheach, “ma-thà,” ors esan. “Bu mhath leam fhaighinn a mach,” ors esan, “gu dé mar a rachadh dhut,” ors esan.

Agus, co-dhiùbh, dh’fhalbh e agus fcasgar a’ latha sin rànaig e taigh an fhir eile agus, ’n uair a rànaig e taigh an fhir sin, bhuail e ’n dorus ’s thanaig a’ fear seo a nuas

's dh'fhosgail e 'n dorus dha 's dh'iarr e air tighinn a staigh. Bha 'fear seo gu math na bu shine na càch, agus dh'fhoighneachd e co as a thànaig e, 's dh'innis e—gu robh e air tighinn a taigh a' chrèithich a bha siod, gur ann a chuir e 'n oidhche raoir seachad agus an oidhche roimhe sin gu robh e 'n taigh an fhir eile agus roimhe sin gur ann as . . . an taigh a dh'fhalbh e, agus dh'innis e dhaibh (*sic*) an eachdraidh o thùs go éis, mar a thànaig e agus . . . a' rud a chunnaig athair 's a chuile sion a dh'iarr a' rud a chunnaig e air—am bodach a chunnaig e air tighinn am barr aig deireadh na geòladh.

Well—agus thòisich a' fear seo e fhéin. Thug e uige leabhraichean 's thòisich e orra agus bha e . . . 'g obair orra go treis mhath dhe'n oidhche. Ach, co-dhiùbh, aig am suipearach, thànaig . . . na calamain agus a suipeir aca—go chéile.

“O,” ors an crèitheach, ors esan, “biodh misneachd agad-s’,” ors esan. “Tha do shuipeir a seo,” ors esan, “air tighinn,” ors esan, “mar tha mo shuipeir-s’,” ors esan, “agus tha thu ceart gu leòr fhathast co-dhiùbh,” ors esan. “Tha,” ors esan, “ar deagh mhisneachd againn. Tha mi smaoindeachadh gun teid dhut glé mhath,” ors esan.

Agus 'n uair a fhuair iad an t-suipeir seachad co-dhiùbh, lean esan air na leabhraichean gos na ruith e orra as a lethoir agus:

“*Well*,” ors esan, “chan eil mise 'faicinn,” ors esan, “sion,” ors esan, “ma dheaghainn,” ors esan, “rud dhe'n t-seòrsa sin ann a sheo, idir,” ors esan, “ach,” ors esan, “'se 'rud a nì thu màireach,” ors esan: “tha fear ann a sheo-ach,” ors esan, “'s chan eil e fad' 'sa' bith air falbh,” ors esan, “ris an can iad Rìgh Eilifacs,” ors esan, “agus tha e fhéin a nist,” ors esan, “air tighinn go laighe leapadh,” ors esan, “agus,” ors esan, “tha leab' aig,” ors esan, “as an Droch Aite agus 'n uair a bha e fhéin gu math,” ors esan, “bhiodh e dol 'ga coimhead an dràsda 'sa rithist,” ors esan, “ach,” ors esan, “tha cù aige 'n dràsda,” ors esan, “agus 's e bhios a' dol ann, agus,” ors esan, . . . “na faigheadh tu,” ors esan, “ann am *plan* an duine sin,” ors esan, “'s gu faigheadh tu falbh còmhla ris a' chù,” ors esan, “'s gu faigheadh tu,” ors esan, “chon an t-saoghail eil’,” ors esan, “dh'fhaoidte gu faigheadh tu do shaoradh a sin,” ors esan.

Well, cha robh air a seo-ach ach seo fhéin, co-dhiùbh. Làirne-mhàireach ghluais iad 's fhuair iad air dòigh 's dh'fhalbh an gille agus:

“Nist,” ors an crèitheach, ors esan, “feuch nach téid sibh seachad orm-sa 'n uair a thilleas tu,” ors esan.

“O cha téid,” ors an gille, “Ma thilleas mise beò . . . 'n taobh seo,” ors esan, “tadh-laidh mi agaibh-se,” ors esan.

Dh'fhalbh e nise 's fhuair e beul-ionnsaichidh far a robh taigh Rìgh Eilifacs . . . bho'n chrèitheach agus rànaig e 'n taigh co-dhiùbh agus chaidh e staigh agus bha duin' ann a shin 's e air lcabaidh agus dh'fhoighneachd e dha co as a thànaig e. Dh'innis e dha—gu robh e 'n taigh nan crèitheach a bha seo, gur h-iad a stiùir ann a sheo e agus dh'innis e dha mar a bha o thùs go éis.

“O scadh,” . . . orsa Rìgh Eilifacs, “tha deagh sheans,” ors esan, “ceart gu leòr,” ors esan, “'s ann aig an Fhear Mhillidh a tha thu,” ors esan, “ach,” ors esan. . . . “Bha mise mi fhìn,” ors esan, “'dol a . . . sin-ach,” ors esan. “Bha leab' agam ann,” ors

esan, “agus bha mi ’dol ann,” ors esan, “. . . fhad’s a b’urrainn dhomh,” ors esan, “ach tha ’n cù tha seo agam,” ors esan, “theid e ann an diugh,” ors esan, “agus falbh-aidh tusa còmhla ris a màireach,” ors esan, “agus bheir e ann thu agus chù thu,” ors esan, “dé ghabhas deanamh riut a sin,” ors esan.

Well, ’s ann mar seo-ach a bha. Chuir e seachad an oidhche sin an taigh Rìgh Eilifacs agus a làirne-mhàireach, co-dhiùbh, dh’ fhalbh e . . . rinn e deiseil agus fhuair e e ’s dh’ fhalbh e fhéin ’s an cù. Thug an cù leis esan. Agus rànaig iad a’ saoghal eile agus ’s e cheud fhear a chunnaig e co-dhiùbh, ’s e Mac Dé a chunnaig e agus thanaig e far a robh E.

“Seadh,” ors Esan, “tha thu air tighinn.”

“Tha,” ors an gille.

“O,” ors Esan, “’s luideach a rinn d’athair,” ors Esan.

“O *well*,” ors an gill’, ors esan, “chan eil comas air tuilleadh,” ors esan.

“Ach,” ors Esan, “feuchaidh sinn,” ors Esan, “ri d’fhaighinn air do shaoradh,” ors Esan, “. . . bhuaithe,” ors Esan. “Chan eil còir ’sa’ bith aig or’-sa ann an dòigh,” ors Esan. “Cha do rinn thus’,” ors Esan, “. . . dad a chron,” ors Esan, “a gheibheadh e greim ort,” ors Esan, “ach,” ors Esan, “’s e d’athair thug seachad thu,” ors Esan, “agus leis a sin,” ors Esan, “. . . feuchaidh sinn,” ors Esan, “gu faigh sinn . . . orra shaoradh thu, ach theid sinn,” ors Esan, “. . . leat,” ors Esan, “far a bheil e,” ors Esan, “feuch gu dé ni e riut.”

Agus dh’ fhalbh Mac Dé ’s thug e leis e ’s chaidh e far a robh ’n Deomhain.

“*Well*,” orsa Mac Dé ris, ors Esan, “tha gille seo,” ors Esan, “a fhuair thu,” ors Esan, “agus chan eil còir agad air idir,” ors Esan. “Cha do rinn an gille sion riamh,” ors Esan, “. . . a gheibheadh tu greim air ann an dòigh ’sa’ bith,” ors Esan, “agus ’s e athair thug dhut e,” ors Esan, “agus . . . chan eil comas ’sa’ bith aig a’ ghill’ air a sin,” ors Esan, “agus leis a sin,” ors Esan, “saor an gille seo,” ors Esan.

“O, cha saor,” ors esan, “cha saor mi idir e,” ors esan. “Bha ’n gille sin agam-s’,” ors esan, “air a ghealltainn dhòmh-s’,” ors esan, “ma’n deach a ghineadh am broinn a mhàthair,” ors esan.

“O tha fhiosam,” ors . . . Mac Dé ris, “gu robh, ach saor thusa ’n gill’,” ors Esan, “neo cuiridh mise leithid seo a sheineachan eil’ ort,” ors Esan.

“Ged a chuireadh tu orm,” ors esan, “a chuile seine b’urrainn dhut,” ors esan, “cha . . . saor mi ’n gill’,” ors esan.

“*Well*, mar a saor thu ’n gill’,” orsa Mac Dé ris, ors Esan, “cuiridh mi ann a . . . leaba Rìgh Eilifacs thu,” ors Esan.

“*Well*,” ors esan, “ni mi rud ’sa’ bith,” ors esan, “ach . . . na cuir a sin mi,” ors esan. “Ni mi rud ’sa’ bith a dh’iarras tu orm fhad’s . . . nach cuir thu ’sin mi,” ors esan.

“*Well*,” ors Esan, “chan eil mi ’g iarraidh ort,” ors esan, “ach an gille seo a shaoradh,” ors Esan, “nach bi . . . cuid na gnothach agad ris as an dòigh seo.”

“O *well*,” ors esan, “nì mise sin,” ors esan. “Tha e clìor is mis’,” ors esan.

Agus: “*Well*, a nist,” orsa Mac Dé, ors Esan. “Tha thu ceart gu leòr a nist,” ors Esan. “Faodaidh tu bhith falbh a nist,” ors Esan.

Well, thanaig an cù, co-dhiùbh, an cù bh’aig Rìgh Eilifacs, agus dh’fhalbh e fhéin agus mac an iasgair. Agus rànaig iad . . . taigh Rìgh Eilifacs agus bha ’m bodach a sin-ach air leabaidh.

“Seadh,” ors esan, “’s dé mar a chaidh dhut?”

Dh’innis an gille dha facal air an fhacal mar a bha eadar . . . iad fhéin ’s a chuile sion . . . a’ Fear Millidh ’s Mac Dé ’s a chuile sion . . . gos ma dheireadh gun do rànaig e gun d’ mhaoidh e air gun cuireadh e ann a leaba Rìgh Eilifacs e agus gur ann an uairsin a shaor e e.

“Och, och,” ors esan, Rìgh Eilifacs, “bidh mis’,” ors esan, “marbh a nochd,” ors esan.

Agus: “O cha bhì,” ors an gille.

“O bithidh,” ors esan, “agus fanaidh tus’ ann a sheo a nochd,” ors esan. “Na biodh eagal ’sa’ bith ort,” ors esan, “agus a màireach,” ors esan, “’n uair a gheibh thu air dòigh,” ors esan, “adaigh tein’,” ors esan, “math—deagh theine math,” ors esan, “agus caithidh tu mis’ ann,” ors esan, “dha’n tein’,” ors esan, “agus,” ors esan, “fanaidh tu,” ors esan, “gos an teid mi ’nam luathaidh,” ors esan, “’s cumaidh tu ’n teine ’dol,” ors esan, “gos . . . (?nach) bi sion ann ach torr luatha, nach bi cnaimh na sion dhiom-s’ ann,” ors esan. “Agus,” ors esan, “cumaidh tu sùil a mach,” ors esan, “agus thig trì fithich,” ors esan, “as an airde tuath,” ors esan, “agus thig trì chalamain as an airde deas,” ors esan, “agus,” ors esan, “ma’s e na fithich as luaithe bhios agam-s’,” ors esan, “na na calamain,” ors esan, “na gabh turus rium,” ors esan. “Fàg a’ luatha far a bheil i,” ors esan. “Ach,” ors esan, “ma’s e na calamain,” ors esan, “as luaithe bhios agam,” ors esan, “na na fithich,” ors esan, “cruinnichidh tu,” ors esan, “a’ luath agam,” ors esan, “agus tiodhlaigidh tu i.”

“O *well*,” ors an gill’, ors esan, “nì mise sin,” ors esan.

Well, ’s ann mar seo-ach a bha, co-dhiùbh. Brith co-dhiùbh chaidh e chadal ’s gos nach deachaidh, co-dhiùbh, thànaig a’ latha. Agus bha Rìgh Eilifacs marbh. Dh’ fhalbh e agus thòisich e air togail teine agus thog e teine muigh agus thog e teine math cuideachd agus ’n uair a thog e ’n teine fhuaire e esan a shlaodadh a mach agus a chur dha’n teine—agus bha e ann a shin a’ gabhail ’s a’ leaghadh ’s a’ falbh . . . leis an teine, ors ma dheireadh nach robh ann ach torradan beag do luathaidh. Agus bha ’n tein’ air a dhol as.

Well, thòisich e seo—bha e ’coimhead uige ’s bhuaithe feadh na h-iarmailt . . . feuch a faiceadh e nist an tigeadh an gnothuch a bha ’n duine ’g ràdha. Agus, an Dia, shaoil leis a seo as an airde tuath gu fac’ e trì . . . rudan dubha, beaga dubh’ ann . . . a’ tighinn agus bha e ’ga *watch*-adh mar seo-ach ’s rinn e seo-ach a mach gur e eòin a bh’ann. Agus bha e sior choimhead as an airde deas agus cha robh tuar air sion nochdadh agus bha e—rud a bh’as an airde tuath a’ tighinn—bha iad a’ tighinn gu math. Ach thug e sùil a seo as an airde deas agus chunnaig e trì rudan eile ’tighinn as an airde

deas agus ma bha 'n fheadhainn a bha 'tighinn as an tuath a' falbh gu math 's ann a bha 'falbh gu math iad seo . . . ors ma dheireadh, thànaig iad, na trì calamain, dìreach, agus chlap iad iad fhéin timchioll na luathadh. Agus thànaig na trì fithich as an deaghaidh.

"Siùdaibh," ors na fithich, ors esan [*sic*],² "togaibh a mach as a sin," ors esan. "'S ann dhuinn'," ors esan, "a bhuineas . . . seo."

"O chan ann. Chan eil teagamh," ors na calamain, ors esan, "nach ann dhuibh a bhuineadh e reimhid," ors esan, "ach chan ann dhuibh a bhuineas e 'n diugh idir," ors esan.

"O, 's ann dhuinn," ors esan, "a bha e 'g obrachadh riamh," ors na fithich.

"O, 's ann," ors na calamain, "ach 's ann dhuinne rinn e 'n car ma dheireadh, agus leis a sin," ors à-san, "bith . . ." [end of track A: contd. on track B].

Agus: "'S ann dhuinne rinn e 'n car ma dheireadh," ors na calamain, "agus leis a sin," ors esan, "bitheadh sibhse 'falbh as a seo."

Well, dh'fhalbh na fithich agus dh'fhalbh na calamain iad fhéin agus 'n uair a dh'fhalbh iad, fhuair esan deiseil agus chan eil fhiosam cà na chuir e luath' aige ach, co-dhiùbh, thiodhlaig e 'luatha aig Rìgh Eilifacs agus dh'fhàg e slàn aig a' chù agus dh'fhalbh e.

Bha e nist a' cumail roimhe agus chùm e dìreach air taigh a' chrèithich ma dheireadh as a robh e. Rànaig e sin.

"A seadh," ors an crèitheach, "tha thu air tighinn."

"Tha," ors an gille.

"Seadh, dé mar a chaidh dhut?"

Dh'innis an gille dha o thùs go éis mar a bha, agus ma dheireadh gun do mhaoidheadh a chur a leaba Rìgh Eilifacs agus gur e sin an dòigh as . . . na shaor e air deireadh e.

Agus: "O seadh," ors an crèitheach.

Agus bha iad a nist ann a shin agus iad a' seachas 's a' bruidhinn 's bha e 'tighinn air am suipearach agus cha tànaig suipeir. Agus co-dhiùbh, seo-ach, bha e anmoch ma'n tànaig na calamain.

"A dhuine, dhuin'," ors an crèitheach, ors esan, "gu dé rud," ors esan, "a bha . . . cearr a nochd," ors esan, "'n uair a tha sibh cho fad'," ors esan, "gun tighinn go daoine le suipeir," ors esan.

"O," ors na . . . calamain, ors iad, "bha greadhnachas mór againn-n' ann a Flathanas an diugh."

"Dé seo?" ors . . . an crèitheach.

"Bha Rìgh Eilifacs againn-n'," ors esan, "ann a Flathanas an diugh," ors esan, "agus rinneadh greadhnachas mór ris," ors esan, "a thaobh a dhol ann," ors esan.

Thuit an crèitheach marbh far a robh e.

"Fhalbh, fhalbh!" ors na calamain, ors esan. "Bi thusa falbh as a seo-ach," ors esan. "Na fan idir," ors esan. "Gabh do shuipeir," ors esan, "'s bi tarrainn," ors esan. "Na fan a seo-ach idir," ors esan.

Well, ghabh an gille shuipeir agus dh'fhalbh e. Rànaig e taigh a' chrèithich eile brith gu dé 'n t-am dhe'n oidhche na mhaduinn a rànaig e e. Rànaig e e, co-dhiùbh, 's fhuair e steach 's . . . rinn a' fear seo toileachadh mór ris, 's dh'fhoighneachd e . . . dé mar a chaidh dha.

Dh'innis e dha 's dh'innis e dha ma Rìgh Eilifacs 's mar a bhàsaich e 's mar a thiodhlaig e e 's mar a thànaig e chon a' . . . gun tànaig e raoir a thaigh a' chrèithich a bha seo agus . . . 'n uair a chual' an crèitheach a bha seo—ach gu robh Rìgh Eilifacs ann a Flathanas, gun do thuit e marbh far a robh e, agus gun do dh'iarr na calamain air e falbh, gun fuireach idir.

“O seadh,” ors an crèitheach, “. . . rinn iad glé mhath,” ors esan. “Rinn thu math gu leòr,” ors esan. “'S è,” ors esan, “a' farmad,” ors esan, “a th'air a chur sìos,” ors esan, “. . . ach,” ors esan, “bidh esan ann a leab’,” ors esan, “Rìgh Eilifacs,” ors esan, “'s bidh Rìgh Eilifacs ann a Flathanas,” ors esan. “Bha e cho,” ors esan, “farmadach,” ors esan, “gun d'fhuair Rìgh Eilifacs an duine bochd,” ors esan, “gun d'fhuair e gu ruige Flathanas,” ors esan.

Agus ghabhadh aige ann a shin . . . an taigh a' chrèithich sin agus dh'fhalbh e 'n uairsin . . . a làirne mhàireach agus rànaig e 'fear cile agus chuir e seachad an oidhche sin. Dh'innis e 'n eachdraidh dha'n fhear sin e fhéin, mar a dh'eirich dha'n chuile sion a bh'ann agus chuir e seachad an oidhche sin còmhla ris an fhear sin.

Agus chaidh e 'n uairsin agus chùm e air an taigh agus 'n uair a rànaig e 'n taigh, bha athair agus a mhàthair, bha iad dall, bodhar. Agus dh'aithnich iad e ach . . . cha chluinneadh iad sion. Ach thòisich e air bruidhinn riutha agus cha robh facal a thigeadh as a bheul nach robh trian dhe'm boidhre³ 's trian dhe fradhrac a' tighinn uca, ors ma dheireadh gu robh iad a cheart cho math 's a bha iad riamh agus dh'fhalbh mis' as agus thug mi m'aghaidh air an taigh 's dh'fhàg mi mar sin iad. Chan eil fhiosam dé 'n corr a thachair.⁴

TRANSLATION

The King of Eilifacs

Well, I heard that there was once a man and he was married and he made his living by fishing. And when he got a lot of fish he used to sell it to the people in the village that was in that place. And he had no family.

Well, it seems that the fishing got rather poor—that the fish was getting scarce. And one day he was out fishing and he had covered the banks as well as he could, where he used to get good catches, and he had not got very much.

And he was just folding away his lines and going home when he heard a splash at the stern of his yawl or whatever kind of boat he had—and he glanced down towards the stern and there was an old man there out of the water from the armpits up.

"You're not having much success with the fishing, man," said he.*

"O, no," said he.

"Well," said he, "if you give me what I ask of you, you shall get the fish just as well as you used to," said he.

"O, I don't know," said the other, "if I have such a thing to give you."

"O, no," said he, "but you shall have it if you take my advice."

"What was that?" said the fisherman, said he.

"Your first son," said he.

"O," said the fisherman, said he, "I'm sure I can do that, if I have one."

"Well," said he, "you promise that you will give him to me when he is fifteen years of age."

"O, I might as well," said the fisherman, said he. "I'm sure that the like will never be anyway".

"Well," said he, "you cast out your lines, and the first thing you catch, you will set it aside and take it home for yourself, for your wife. You will take it home to your wife and you will keep giving her the fish, itself and the liver—a portion of the fish and a portion of the liver with it—until it is all done."

Well, the old man disappeared. The fisherman went and cast out the line and he had scarcely let it down when a good sized fish took it. He pulled it in and when he had taken it off the hook he went and took it and threw it up in a place apart in the bows of the boat. Anyway he began to fish until at the last his boat was almost full up to the gunwales; and night was falling. He went ashore, anyway, and there were people waiting for him as usual for fish and he sold the fish—all except this one. It was the only one he managed to hold on to for himself, and he took it home with him and he asked his wife—he told her how the matter was, and he told his wife to keep that fish aside for herself and to take the liver out of it and to be cooking a portion of it and a portion of the liver together and to be taking it herself.

This was how it was, anyway. The old woman took it; and the fish was all used up and the old man started fishing and he was getting as much fish as he could pull in. And what should happen now but that the old woman . . . the woman—his wife, who was well up in years, became pregnant. And from day to day the matter went on until at last she bore him a baby boy.

Well, now the boy—the child was there and time passed and the child was growing until at last, anyway, he came to school age and he went to school. I don't know whether it was far away or near at hand, but he went there, anyway. And when he was getting on for . . . approaching fourteen years of age or thereabouts, there was not a night he came home but his father and mother were crying. And it puzzled him greatly what was making them cry and he would ask them what was going on and, O, there was

* In translating, I have not attempted to reproduce all the instances of "said he" which are so much a feature of the Gaelic text.

nothing, and, anyway, things went on in this way until he was fifteen—round about fifteen—and this night he came home and they were both crying away.

“Well,” said he, “it looks as if it’s because I am coming home that you are crying every night, but I’m just about finished with school and when I am finished with school, I’ll be leaving you”.

“Indeed,” said his mother, “I am sad that you have to go,” said she.

And then they told him, the boy, word for word how the matter stood.

“O yes,” said he. “It seems that I have been given away, whoever it may be who has me in his power, but when I leave school, I am leaving here and I shall find out what this business is about.”

Well anyway, he finished with school, and this day he made ready to go. He went, too, and he had no idea which way he should turn or where he should go, but, anyway, he set about going and off he went. He came to a town, then, that was there and he was meeting people and they were asking him where he was from and where he had come from and he was telling them. And he told one man there, anyway, how . . . This man asked him where he was going. He told him that he had no idea where he was going and he told him how the thing had happened and how this man had come up at the stern of his father’s boat and how he had asked him for his first son and how his father had promised—he was so sure, anyway, now that they were getting on in years, that there would be no son—how he had promised him away and everything about it.

“O yes,” said this man, “I’m afraid, my dear lad, that you are in bad hands; that it was the Destroyer himself who came up at the stern of your father’s boat and that it is he who has you in his power. But this is what you must do. There are men in this town,” said he, “men—there are three of them, and they call them hermits and they do nothing but pray, all the time, and wherever their food comes from, it comes to them from somewhere, and you go . . . They don’t live together. They live some distance apart, where they are, but call on the first one,” said he, “to see what advice he can give you.”

Well, that was how it was. The lad went off, and he got directions from this man where the place was. He got there, anyway, and he came to the house of this hermit. He knocked at the door and this old man came down and asked him to come in. He went in and:

“Yes,” said the man who was in the house; “where have you come from?” said he.

He told [his story] and he told from start to finish how he had come—how his father had met the man and everything. And he [the hermit] took down books and he began to read books—going through them and searching here and there in them and, anyway, then:

“Indeed,” said he, “I can see nothing here that is of any use for [such] matters, but I know that it is the Destroyer who has you in his power, that it was he, that it was the Adversary himself there. But there is another, and he is older than me. He is a day’s

walk from here and it may be you will find the answer there, that this man may have more information than I have."

But anyway, now, at supper-time, doves came and they brought him supper for both of them.

"O well," said the hermit, said he, "here is a good omen. Your supper has come here along with mine."

Well, they had their supper and went to sleep and next day when they got up and got things in order, with food and everything, the lad went off.

"Now," said the hermit to him, said he, "if you ever come back alive this way, do not pass me by."

"O no," said the lad. "If I come this way," said he, "I shall call on you."

"Very well, then," said he. "I should like to find out how you got on."

Well, the lad went and said goodbye to him and late at nightfall he came to the house of the other one. He knocked at the door, anyway, and this man getting on in years came down and asked him to come in. He went in.

Well, he told [his story]. He asked where he had come from and the lad told him. He began to tell the story—how he came into this world and everything and about the old man his father had seen at the boat, and what he had done and everything he had asked him to do; and that he had been last night in the house of this hermit and how he had found out nothing—that he had gone through books for a great part of the night and that he had found nothing to tell him what could be done about him, and that he was journeying to see if he could get himself set free somehow. Well, this man started, when they had eaten, this man too started on books, and he worked at the books for a good part of the night and:

"O well," said he, "there is no information in the books I have here, any more than the other man had, but there is another one about a day's walk from here and he is far better than I am and it may be that you will find out from him what way you can take or what plan you can devise [?so that you may be] set free, but," said he . . .

But at suppertime, then, his food came to him as it had come last night along with the hermit's food, and:

"O yes," said the hermit, "O, well," said he, "I think you will be quite successful. Your supper has come here as mine has come and do not despair, for I think you will be quite successful yet."

And they went to sleep, anyway, and next day, when they got up and had eaten, the lad got ready to go.

"Now," said the hermit to him, said he, "if you ever come back this way, do not pass me by."

"O no," said the lad, "I shall not pass you by," said he. "If I come back alive this way, I shall call on you."

"Very well, then," said the hermit, said he. "I should like to find out how you got on."

And he went off, anyway, and on the evening of that day he came to the house of the other one, and when he came to his house, he knocked at the door and this man came down and opened the door and asked him to come in. This man was a good deal older than the others, and he asked him where he had come from and he told him—that he had come from the house of that hermit, that he had spent last night there and the night before that, that he had been in the other one's house and that he had come from home before that and he told them [*sic*] the story from start to finish, how he had come and what his father had seen and everything that the thing he had seen had asked of him—the old man he had seen coming up at the stern of his boat.

Well, this man also started—he took down books and started to read them and he worked at them till a good part of the night was spent. But, anyway, at supper-time the doves came bringing their supper to both of them.

“O,” said the hermit, said he, “have courage. Your supper has come here, like mine, and you are all right so far anyway. We have been given good encouragement. I think you will get on quite well,” said he.

And, anyway, when they had got supper over, he went on with the books until he had gone over them one after the other, and:

“Well,” said he, “I can see nothing about anything of that kind here at all, but here is what you will do tomorrow. There is a man here, and he is not very far away, who is called the King of Eilifacs, and he is bedridden now, and,” said he, “he has a bed in the Evil Place and when he was fit himself, he used to go to see it now and again, but he has a dog now and it is the dog that goes, and if you could get to know that man and you could get to go with the dog and get to the other world, perhaps you could get yourself set free there”.

Well, that was that, anyway. Next day they got up and got everything in order and the lad went and:

“Now,” said the hermit, said he, “see that you do not pass me by when you come back.”

“O no,” said the lad. “If I come back alive this way, I shall call on you,” said he.

He went off then and he got directions for the house of the King of Eilifacs from the hermit and he came to the house, anyway, and went in, and there was a man there lying in bed and he asked him where he had come from. He told him, that he had been in the houses of these hermits, that it was they who had directed him here, and he told him how the matter was, from start to finish.

“O yes,” said the King of Eilifacs, “there is a good chance, right enough, that it is the Destroyer who has you in his power, but I myself used to go there. I had a bed there, and I used to go there as long as I was able, but I have this dog, and it is able to go there now, and you will go with it tomorrow and it will take you there and you will see what can be done for you there.”

Well, so it was. He spent that night in the house of the King of Eilifacs and, anyway, next day he set off . . . he got ready and got it (the dog) and he and the dog set off.

The dog took him along. And they came to the other world, and the first person he saw, anyway, it was the Son of God that he saw and he came to Him.

"Well," said He, "you have come."

"Yes," said the lad.

"O" said He, "your father did a very foolish thing," said He.

"O well," said the lad, said he, "it can't be helped now."

"But," said He, "we shall try to get you set free from him. He has no right to you in a way. You did no wrong at all that he could get you into his power, but it was your father who gave you away, and because of that we shall try to get you set free . . . but we shall go to him . . . with you to him, to see what he will do about you."

And the Son of God went and took him with Him and went to the Devil.

"Well," said the Son of God, said He, "here is a lad you got hold of and you have no right to him at all. The lad never did anything that you should get him in your power in any way and it was his father who gave him to you, and the lad is not at all to blame for that and so you release this lad."

"O, I will not," said he. "I will not release him at all. This lad was mine, promised to me before he was conceived in his mother's womb."

"O, I know he was," said the Son of God, "but you release the lad or I shall put so many other chains on you."

"Though you should put on me every chain you could," said he, "I shall not release the lad."

"Well, unless you release the lad," said the Son of God, said He, "I shall put you in the bed of the King of Eilifacs."

"Well," said he, "I shall do anything, but do not put me there. I shall do anything you ask as long as you do not put me there."

"Well," said He, "I am asking nothing of you except that you should release this lad—that you shall have nothing at all to do with him in this way."

"O well," said he, "I shall do that. He is free of me," said he.

And: "Well, now," said the Son of God, said He, "you are all right now. You are free to go now."

Well, anyway, the dog came, the dog that belonged to the King of Eilifacs, and he and the fisherman's son set off. And they came to the house of the King of Eilifacs and the old man was there lying in bed.

"Well," said he, "and how did you get on?"

The lad told him word for word what had passed between them and everything . . . the Son of God and the Destroyer and everything, until at last he came to the point where He threatened to put him in the bed of the King of Eilifacs, and that it was then that he had set him free.

"Alas, alas," said he, the King of Eilifacs, "I shall be dead tonight."

And: "O, no," said the lad.

"O yes, I shall," said he, "and you shall stay here tonight. Have no fear," said he,

“and tomorrow, when you have got things in order, kindle a good fire, a good strong fire, and you shall throw me in it, into the fire, and you shall wait till I am burnt to ashes and you shall keep the fire going till there is nothing left but a heap of ashes so that no bone or any part of me is left. And you shall keep a look-out,” said he, “and three ravens will come from the north and three doves will come from the south, and if it is the ravens that get to me first, before the doves, take nothing to do with me. Leave the ashes where they are. But if the doves get to me first before the ravens, you shall gather up my ashes and you shall bury them.”

“O well,” said the lad, said he, “I shall do that.”

Well, anyway, so it was. Whether he went to sleep or not, the day came, anyway. And the King of Eilifacs was dead. He went and started to build a fire. And he built a fire outside, and built a good fire too and when he had built the fire he managed to drag him outside and put him in the fire—and he was there burning and melting, and wasting away with the fire until at last there was nothing but a little heap of ashes. And the fire had gone out.

Well, now he began—he was looking far and near in the sky to see if it would happen as the man had said.

And, here, suddenly it seemed to him, in the north, that he saw three black things, little black things there, coming, and he kept watching them now and he made out that they were birds.

And he kept looking south and there was no sign of anything appearing and it—what was coming in the north—was coming fast. But now he took a look to the south and he saw three other things coming from the south and if the ones coming from the north were moving fast, these were really moving, until at last they came, the three doves, there, and they clapped themselves down around the ashes. And the ravens came after them.

“Go on,” said the ravens, said he [*sic*],² “get out of there. This belongs to us.”

“O no it doesn’t. There is no doubt,” said the doves, said he, “that he belonged to you before, but it is not to you he belongs today.”

“O, it was for us,” said he, “that he was working all his life,” said the ravens.

“O yes,” said the doves, “but it was for us that he did his last deed, and so,” said they . . . [end of track A. Contd. on track B]. And “It was for us that he did his last deed,” said the doves, “and so,” said he, “you get away out of here.”

Well, the ravens went away and the doves went away too and when they had gone, he got ready and I do not know where he put his ashes but he buried the ashes of the King of Eilifacs, anyway, and he said farewell to the dog and went away.

He kept going now and made straight for the house of the hermit where he had last been.

“O well,” said the hermit, “you have come.”

“Yes,” said the lad.

“Well, how did you get on?”

The lad told him how it was from start to finish, and how at last it had been threatened that he [the Devil] would be put in the bed of the King of Eilifacs and that that was how he had set him free at last.

And: "O yes," said the hermit. And now they were there talking away and it was getting on for supper-time. And no supper came. And, anyway, it was late at night before the doves arrived.

"Man, man," said the hermit, said he, "what was wrong tonight that you are so late in coming to people with their supper?"

"O," said the doves, said they, "we had great rejoicing in Heaven today."

"How was that?" said the hermit.

"We had the King of Eilifacs in Heaven today," said he, "and he was greeted with great rejoicing because he had got there."

The hermit fell down dead on the spot.

"Away, away!" said the doves, said he. "You get away from here. Do not stay. Have your supper and be off. Do not stay here at all."

Well, the lad had his supper and set off. He came to the house of the other hermit, whatever hour of the night or morning it may have been when he got there. He got there anyway and got in and this one gave him a great welcome, and he asked him how he had got on.

He told him and he told him about the King of Eilifacs and how he had come to . . . that he had come last night to the house of this hermit and when this hermit had heard that the King of Eilifacs was in Heaven, that he had fallen down dead on the spot, and that the doves had told him to go, not to stay there at all.

"O yes," said the hermit, "they did very well," said he. "You did quite right," said he. "It is envy that has put him down, but he will be in the bed of the King of Eilifacs and the King of Eilifacs will be in Heaven. He was so envious," said he, "that the King of Eilifacs, poor man, had got into Heaven."

And he was well cared for there, in the house of that hermit and he went off then next day and came to the other one and spent that night there. He told the story to that one too, how it had all turned out, and he spent that night along with that one.

And then he went and made for his home and when he got home his father and mother were blind and deaf. And they recognised him but they could hear nothing. But he began to talk to them and with every word that came out of his mouth, part of their hearing and part of their sight came back to them³ until at last they were as well as they had ever been and I came away from there and headed for home, and I left them like that. I don't know what happened afterwards.⁴

I recorded this version of *The Devil's Contract* (AT 756B) from Donald Alasdair Johnson⁵ of Ardmore, South Uist in April 1971 (SA 1971/54A-B1). Mr Johnson had first told me part of the story in July 1970, saying that he thought it would all come

back to him, given time. A few days later he recorded a full text for myself and Angus John MacDonald⁶ (SA 1970/193B). It is very close to the text printed here but the present one is, on balance, the better telling of the two.

AT 756B is distinctly rare in Scottish Gaelic tradition.⁷ The only other full version known to me is one published by my colleague John MacInnes in *Scottish Studies* 7 (MacInnes 1963: 106-14). That text was written down in Eriskay in 1933 by Mr Donald MacDonald, being an item in a manuscript collection of tales which he made for the Irish Folklore Commission.

Mr Johnson learned the story from his father, Iain Mór mac Dhomhnaill 'ic Iain 'ic Raghail, who was born in Eriskay of South Uist stock but moved to South Uist as a young man and settled there for the rest of his life.

The immediate and obvious inference is that Eriskay could be an important common factor in the provenance of both versions, and that they could well derive from a common source not very far back. A closer examination, however, reveals important differences and suggests that they are probably derived from two distinct oecotypes. The following table summarises the main points of the story. 'A' is the hypothetical archetype as outlined in the Aarne-Thompson Classification (Thompson 1961: 260-1), 'B' is the present text and 'C' the 1933 Eriskay text.

A

I. *Journey for the Contract.* (a) A boy who has been sold to the Devil before birth journeys to Hell to get back the contract.
 (b) A hermit, from whom he has asked the way, directs him to a robber, his brother.
 (c) The robber takes him to Hell.

B

I. A fisherman with no children promises his first son to an old man, who appears out of the sea (the Devil), in exchange for good fishing.⁸ He feeds his wife with fish as instructed by the Devil and a son is born.⁹ The boy journeys to secure his release.

A man directs him to a hermit who directs him to an older hermit who directs him to another yet older. Doves bring the hermits' food from Heaven. The oldest hermit directs him to the King of Eilifacs. The King of Eilifacs is now too old and infirm to guide the boy to Hell though he used to go to see the bed prepared for him there. However he sends his dog to guide the boy to the other world.¹⁰

C

I. A young priest gives a written promise of marriage to an evil spirit in the guise of his former sweetheart. He realises he has come under the power of an evil spirit. His father directs him to Michael Scot, a noted magician who uses the Devil as a horse: Michael Scot directs him northwards. He meets an old man who directs him to the entrance to Hell.

Contd. over

II. *The Fires of Hell* (a) In Hell the youth obtains his contract and (b) sees the fiery bed or chair prepared for the robber.

II. In the other world the boy meets Christ who takes him to Hell. The Devil defies threats but finally releases the boy on being threatened that he will be put in the bed of the King of Eilifacs.

II. The spirit of the girl is summoned to the door of Hell among many others of the same name. She at first refuses to give up the contract but finally gives it up when threatened by 'the person working the (door)-chain', that she will be put in Michael Scot's bed.

The priest is shown the bed, with green flames on one side, ice on the other.

III. *The Penance*. Thereupon the robber does penance until his staff puts forth fresh blooms and fruit; assured of forgiveness, he dies happy. Cf. Type 756C.

III. The boy returns to the King of Eilifacs and tells his story.¹¹ The King of Eilifacs says he will die that night. The boy is to burn his body next day. Three ravens will come from the North and three doves from the South. If the ravens are first to the ashes, the ashes are to be scattered. If the doves, the ashes are to be carefully buried. The doves are first. The doves and ravens dispute. The ravens go off and the boy buries the ashes.¹²

III. The priest returns to Michael Scot and tells him of the bed. Michael Scot says he will do penance on his knees till he dies. When he dies the priest is to burn his body. A raven and a dove will come. If the raven takes some of his ashes the rest are to be scattered to the winds. If the dove, they are to be carefully buried. The dove and raven dispute. The dove takes up some of the ashes and the priest buries the rest.

IV. *The Hermit*. (a) The hermit is astonished but reconciles himself to God's judgment; or (b) blasphemes God and is damned.

IV. The boy returns to the house of the oldest hermit and tells his story. The doves are late in coming with food and say they have been delayed by celebrations in Heaven for the arrival of the King of Eilifacs. The hermit falls down dead. The boy spends the night with the next hermit who tells him that envy has been the downfall of the oldest hermit who will now be in the bed of the King of Eilifacs in Hell and the King of Eilifacs will be in Heaven. The boy spends the next night with the first hermit and then returns home. His father and mother are deaf and blind but as he tells his story they recover their health.

IV. A hermit lives in a cave and has his food brought from Heaven by a bird. One day the bird is late and says it was delayed by celebrations in Heaven for the arrival of the soul of Michael Scot. The hermit is enraged and disappears in a blaze of fire. He got Michael Scot's place in Hell and Michael Scot got his place in Heaven.

Among other motifs listed by Thompson (*loc. cit.*) as relevant to the story are the following:

- (1) S211 Child sold (promised) to devil (ogre).
- (2) F81.2 Journey to Hell to recover Devil's contract.
- (3) N843 Hermit as helper.
- (4) H1235 Succession of helpers on quest. One helper sends to another who sends to another, *etc.*
- (5) Q561 Bed (kettle, seat) heating in Hell for certain person.
- (6) J172 Account of punishments prepared in Hell brings about repentance.
- (7) Q521.1.1 Penance: crawling on knees (and watering a dry staff until it blooms).
- (8) Q172.2 Man admitted to Heaven for single act of charity.
- (9) E756.3 Raven and dove fight over man's soul.
- (10) Q312.3 Punishment for finding fault with God's forgiveness of sin.

Of these, B lacks (6) and (7)

C lacks (1), (3) and, assuming that Michael Scot is admitted to Heaven for his penance, rather than his help to the priest, (8).

B and C share (2), (4), (5), (9), (10).

A comparison of the summary outlines in the table makes it clear that B and C differ from each other considerably in plot as well as in matters of detail. B is clearly closer to A than C is. Further, B and C each have certain features in common with A which B and C do not share with each other. This is further confirmed by the motif structure.¹³

The most obvious difference between B and C is, of course, in section I which deals with the manner in which the hero falls into the Devil's power. Here B agrees with A on the promise of the unborn child to the Devil. However, the episode of priest and marriage contract as found in C is not simply an isolated aberration. It occurs, for instance, in some Irish versions.¹⁴ Irish versions also feature the Devil being used as a steed. John MacInnes (*loc. cit.*), commenting on the latter motif,¹⁵ has suggested tentatively the possibility of a Gaelic-Irish oecotype of 756B. The episode of priest and marriage contract could be used to supply further backing for this hypothesis.

To sum up briefly, the evidence outlined above suggests that B and C are derived from divergent branches of 756B, B being closer to the general archetypal structure and C possibly representing a Gaelic-Irish oecotype. This, however, does not necessarily mean that both could not have existed side by side in Eriskay. Even in such a small homogeneous community, family tradition, for example, could well maintain a flourishing independent existence for its own particular version of a story for generations. It does, however, strongly suggest that Duncan MacInnes, the teller of C, and Iain Mór Johnson did not learn their story from the same source.¹⁶

What does strike me as remarkable is, granted the existence of two such fine versions of 756B in Eriskay and Uist in the middle of this century, why more texts of this tale have not been noted in the course of more than a hundred years of field-work.¹⁷

The name *Rìgh Eilifacs* is a curious one. "The King of Halifax" is what immediately comes to mind. In a version corresponding so closely to the archetype one would certainly expect this character to be a robber or similar evildoer. The answer may lie in a saying that was current in Uist within my own memory: *Cuiridh mi dha na Hailifacs thu* ["I shall send you to (the) Halifax"]. Variants of this serio-comic threat or imprecation are also well attested from other Hebridean areas. I am indebted to the Rev. William Matheson for the suggestion that this probably refers to the prison of Halifax, Virginia, where loyalist prisoners, many Highlanders among them, were interned during the American War of Independence in rather grim conditions.

On this assumption, I think it possible that *Rìgh Eilifacs* may mean something like "The Prison King" or "The Robber King" in much the same way as one might refer to a notorious criminal as "The King of Peterhead" or "The King of Dartmoor." Whether this be the real explanation or not, the idea appeals to me.

Appendix

I am grateful to my colleague Dr. A. J. Bruford who has supplied the following information based on N. P. Andrejev's study of AT 756B (Andrejev 1927):

Andrejev's study has to some extent been outdated by subsequent collection. It is based on 226 versions, chiefly Slavonic, including only two from Ireland and one from Scotland, whereas 261 versions and closely related tales are listed in *The Types of the Irish Folktale* (Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen, 1963). It may, however, be worth noting that Andrejev (1927:290) suggests Brittany as the ultimate source of the story, and that not only is our version (B) in general close to the "Western redaction" and especially the Breton forms of it, but that the Scottish and Breton versions alone seem to share the episode of the raven(s) and dove(s). This may well prove to exist in Irish versions, but the three known to me (see note 14: one each from Munster, Connaught and Ulster) contain neither it nor the characteristically "Western" final motif of the indignant hermit sent to the sinner's place in Hell. The Scottish versions differ from the Breton only in two minor particulars: the (last) hermit and the sinner (regularly a robber in Breton) are not brothers—a detail which may have been lost over the years—and the sinner's place in Hell is a bed, not a seat. (Overall the bed is most common, but in the "Western redaction" a seat is usual: Irish versions, however, mention a room or a bed). It would be rash as well as unfashionable to build too much upon resemblances between a mere six versions, but this may serve as an indication of the place of the Scottish versions in an international context.

Two other brief mentions (in English from Gaelic sources) make it clear that the story was once more widespread in the Highlands: Grant Stewart (1823:86), the one Scottish version available at second hand to Andrejev, and Campbell (1900:288). In both the sinner is Michael Scot. Campbell has only the dove and raven episode, but mentions that "the

devil . . . had long been preparing a bed for Michael": Grant Stewart introduces it rather differently from our story, for the visitor to Hell is Michael Scott's enemy, sent there as a punishment, who is delighted to discover what is in store for the enchanter. Michael here has his heart cut out and exposed on a pole for the dove and raven to quarrel over. If we add to these the use of the dove and raven episode of *Coinneach Odhar* (for references see MacInnes, 1963: 115), there is more than adequate evidence for this characteristic part of the story in Scottish Gaelic tradition.

NOTES

- 1 *crèithich* [kr'ɛ:-iç] nom. plur. of *crèitheach* [kr'ɛ:-əx], see *passim*. I take this form to be from *cràibh(th)-each* by the same process of fronting and palatalisation as occurs in e.g. *bràighe* > *brèighe* [br'ɛ:-ə] in Uist. *Cràibheach* does not appear in Dwelly's Dictionary, but Dineen's Irish Dictionary gives *cráibh-theach* = 'religious', 'pious', 'devout', etc. The 1933 Eriskay text has *cràidheach*, which may also represent [kr'ɛ:-əx]. I have used *hermit* as translation as it fits the description of a holy man living alone and being fed by birds, and also because the archetype has a hermit for this character.
- 2 The alternation between 'said he' and 'said they' when the doves and ravens are speaking can be understood in terms of the storyteller's image of the situation switching from group to spokesman and back again.
- 3 Literally 'a third of their deafness and a third of their sight came back to them.' Probably a slip by the storyteller. One would expect *claisneachd*, 'hearing'. Incidentally, this motif of parents recovering their health or faculties on the return of the hero also occurs in other Gaelic tales.
- 4 Mr Johnson frequently uses a formula of this type to end a tale. It is a well-known story-telling device.
- 5 For further information on Mr Johnson and two other stories recorded from him see *Scottish Studies* 14: 133-54 and *Tocher* 2: 36-57.
- 6 Research student, see also *Scottish Studies* and *Tocher* as in 5.
- 7 Indeed Religious Tales (AT 750-849) in general are rather poorly represented in Scotland. The Irish situation presents a sharp contrast.
- 8 Interestingly enough, Mr Johnson tells a version of AT 302 (The Ogre's Heart in the Egg) with a near identical beginning—the only difference being that the unborn hero is promised to a mermaid, not to the Devil. The motif of the child promised to the Devil in return for a large catch of fish is listed by Thompson as S227 (Thompson 1957: 316).
- 9 The motif of conception from eating fish, T511.5.1 (Thompson 1957: 391) occurs in other tales, for instance *The Twins* (AT 303) and in AT 705. It occurs also in the introduction to Mr Johnson's version of AT 302 (see note 8 above).
- 10 The dog as guide on the journey to Hell is a fine touch which may be unique to this version.
- 11 As the King of Eilifacs has already seen the bed, he cannot repent and do penance on hearing it described by the hero as happens in A and C. The King of Eilifacs is therefore presumably admitted to Heaven for his single act of charity (motif Q172.2, Thompson 1957: 199) in helping the hero. This detail probably represents a deviation in B. In terms of plot, A and C are really more satisfactory here.
- 12 For reference to the occurrence of the raven and dove motif elsewhere in Scottish Gaelic tradition see MacInnes (*loc. cit.*).
- 13 Even where B and C share motifs there is sometimes a difference. In B there are three hermits who act as guides, whereas there is only one in C, who comes in at the end. The hermits in B are old, older and oldest and the King of Eilifacs is a very old man. This is the 'sending to the older' type of

motif, F571.2 (Thompson 1956: 171) which does not apply to the succession of guides in C. In C, but not in B, the hero sees the bed in Hell and it is described. There are three doves and three ravens in B as against one of each in C.

- 14 See *Béaloidéas* I (1929) 304–5: 'Brian Bráthir' (in Séamus Ó Duilearga, 'Measgra Sgéal ó Uibh Ráthach'); *Béaloidéas* XXI (1951–2) 65–73 and 73–8: 'An Seomra i nIfreann' *a* and *b* (in Séan Ó Súilleabháin, 'Scéalta Cráibhtheacha'); *etc.*
- 15 For references see MacInnes (*loc. cit.*).
- 16 There is, however, one instance of near verbal identity where the doves and ravens are disputing.
 B: "O, 's ann," ors na calamain, "ach 's ann dhuinne rinn e 'n car ma dheireadh . . ."
 C: "'s ann," ars' an calman, "ach 's ann dhomh-sa a rinn e an car mu dheireadh."
 This may indeed indicate local contact of some kind between the two versions.
- 17 For two summary versions in English see Appendix.

REFERENCES

- ANDREJEV, N. P.
 1927 *Die Legende vom Räuber Madej*. FF Communications No. 69. Helsinki.
- CAMPBELL, J. G.
 1900 *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. Glasgow.
- GRANT STEWART, W.
 1823 *Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland*. Edinburgh.
- MACINNES, JOHN
 1963 'Sgeulachd Mhicheil Scot.' *Scottish Studies* 7: 106–14.
- Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN, SEÁN and CHRISTIANSEN, R. TH.
 1963 *The Types of the Irish Folktale*. FF Communications No. 188. Helsinki.
- SA
 School of Scottish Studies Sound Recording Archive.
- THOMPSON, STITH
 1956 *Motif Index of Folk-Literature* Vol. 3. Copenhagen.
 1957 *Motif Index of Folk-Literature* Vol. 5. Copenhagen.
 1961 *The Types of the Folktale*, Helsinki.