



[Fear na Mònach - The Peat Man]

Bha Latha Eile aig Fear na Mònach

Mar iomadh bodach eile bha Seonaidh, a rugadh agus a thogadh ann an Eòrapaidh, miannach air gun ionnsaicheadh a h-uile balach a bh' anns an teaghlach aca mar a bhuaineadh agus mar a dh'àraicheadh iad mòine. Cha robh e math gu leòr gun deidheadh cùisean a dheanamh mar siud na mar seo - dh'fheumadh a h-uile dad a bhith 'na àite fhèin.

Cha robh Seonaidh airson na puill aca-san a bhith càmh agus cearbach - agus gum bitheadh e fhèin agus a theaghlach am beul a' bhaile - bha e airson deanamh cinnteach gu robh iad dìreach, air an snaidheadh, agus gach ceap air a chur gu reidh ann an iochdar a' phuill gun fhios nach deidheadh ath-bhlàr a tharraing ann uair-eigin.

Dh'ionnsaich e dha na balaich gu lèir gum feumadh tuigse a bhith aca dha'n tairisgeir, mar a spothadh iad am fàd, airson a dheanamh na b' fhasa dha'n fhear a bha a' cur a mach, mar a' ghearradh iad na bruidean, airson poll ùr a' chomharrachadh, agus gum fàgadh duine 'òirleach sheasg' mur an robh e a' gearradh le fad na sgithinn. Dh' fhaodadh tu bhith cus an taobh eile cuideachd, chanadh Seonaidh, agus sgiath dhubh fhàgail air an fhàd le bhith feuchainn ri cus a thoirt leat còmhla.

Bha e an ìre mhath cinnteach gu robh fios aig an teaghlach gu lèir air na piosan eadar-dhealaichte dha'n tairisgeir - an làmh, an smeachan, an t-sàil, a' chrò agus an sgian - agus gu robh fios aca cuideachd air cò an làmh bu chòir a bhith gu h-àrd nuair a bhitheadh iad a'buain.

Bha modh agus riaghailtean an cois na h-obrach cuideachd agus bha Seonaidh a stèineadh sin dhaibh a h-uile turas a bha iad anns a' pholl. Cha'n fhaodadh am fear a bha a' buain a bhith a' dol ro luath, air dhòigh agus nach deigheadh aig an fhear a bha a' cur a mach cumail ris. Nam bitheadh, bhiodh fàd fuar air a' charcaire aca. Nam bitheadh duine dha na balaich aigesan a' buain a' chaorainn cha'n fhaodadh iad a bhith a' dol ro luath a bharrachd, oir 's tric thuit Seonaidh, leis an dearbh obair sin, 'a bhitheadh fear a' chaorainn a' cur a' chaoich air fear a' bhàrr-fhoid'. Cha robh e modhail nas mò a bhith ag radh ri fear a' bhàrr-fhoid, 'Cuiridh mi às an fhàd thu,' agus an obair aigesan tòrr na bu duilghe.

Cha robh Seonaidh ge tà cho cinnteach gu robh tuigse aig lain, am balach a b' òige, air 'rathad an isein' agus gu robhas a' fàgail seo - trì neo ceithir a dh' òirlich eadar an gàrradh agus beul a' phuill - gus nach salaicheadh am fear a bha a' cur a mach na mònach e fhèin le bhith a' srucadh ris a' ghàrradh. Chuir e fa chomhair fhèin gun robh e a' dol a dh' ionnsachadh sin dha an ath latha bhitheadh iad anns an riasg.

Mhìnich Seonaidh do lain mu 'rathad an isein' agus dh' àithn e dha a bhith a' fàgail na dhà neo thri òirlich a bha seo eadar bàrr a ghàrraidh agus beul a' phuill. Rinn lain mar a chaidh iarraidh air.

Ach mar a bha an latha a' dol air adhart bha a' mhòine agus gàirdeannan lain a' fàs na bu truime agus cha robh e a' cur a mach na mònach le buileach an t-aon loinn 'sa bha e anns a' mhadainn.

Chronaich athair e agus an deidh anail bheag a leigeil lean iad orra. Cha robh ùine fhada air a dhol seachad gus na thòisich cùisean a' dol rudeigin ceàrr air lain a rithist agus gun gu lèor rùm aige ga fhàgail airson gàrradh ceart a dheanamh. Rinn Seonaidh gnùsd - 's gun e airson càil a leigeil seachad. 'Cuimhnich,' ars esan, 'an rud a thuit mi riut - "rathad an isein".' Thionndaidh lain air falbh agus e a' feuchainn ri druim goirt a dheanamh còmhnaid, 'Athair,' thuit e, 'thoireadh an t-isean taigh mòr na croiche air'.

An dùil an cumadh e cuimhne air 'rathad an isein'?

'An t-ionnsachadh òg an t-ionnsachadh boidheach'.

The Peat Man

Like many old men Johnnie, who was born and brought up in Eoropie, hoped that all the boys in his family would learn how to cut and prepare peats. It wasn't good enough to do things this way or that - everything had to be done according to strict rules of tradition.

Johnnie did not want their peat banks to be squint or ragged - resulting in him and his family being the object of village gossip - he wanted to make sure that the banks were dead straight, shaped correctly, and each turf laid neatly at the base of the bank, ready, should another layer be cut in future.

He taught all the boys that they had to understand how the peat cutter worked, how to slice the peat so as to make it easier for the person that was throwing, how they should cut the bottom half so that a new bank could be measured up, and how a 'spare inch' could be left if they didn't cut the peat the exact length of the blade. You could go too far the other way as well, Johnnie would say, and a black ridge be left on the peat as a result of cutting too thick.

He was pretty sure that the whole family knew the different parts of the peat cutter - the handle, the chin, the heel, the join and the blade - and that they also knew which hand should be the upper when they were cutting.

There were manners and rules with the job as well and Johnnie would constantly remind them of these each time they were in the peat bank. The one that was cutting could not go too fast, in case the one that was throwing couldn't keep up with him. If he did go too fast they would end up with a stray peat in the ditch. If any of his boys were cutting the little fragment peats they weren't allowed to go too fast either, because Johnnie would often say, 'that the man cutting the little peat fragments was blinding the man doing the turf edging'. It was also bad manners to say to the man doing the turf edging, 'I'll put you off your peat cutting,' as his work was a lot harder.

But Johnnie wasn't so sure that Iain, the youngest boy, understood about 'the bird walkway', which meant that you would leave this - three or four inches between the bottom edge and the face of the peat bank - so that the man throwing wouldn't get himself dirty by leaning on the bottom edge. He was going to make sure that he would teach him this the next day they were in the peats.

Johnnie explained to Iain about the 'bird walkway' and he ordered him to leave two or three inches between the bottom edge and the face of the peat bank. Iain did as he was told.

But as the day wore on the peats and Iain's arms were getting heavier resulting in him not throwing the peats in the same good order as he was in the morning.

His father reprimanded him and after taking a little breather they carried on. It wasn't long before things started to go wrong for Iain again and he wasn't leaving enough room to make a good edge. Johnnie moaned - not wanting to have anything out of place. 'Remember,' he said, 'What I told you - "the bird walkway".' Iain turned away and trying to straighten his sore back said, 'Father, to hell with the bird'.

Do you think he would remember 'the bird walkway'?

'Learning young is the best learning'.

[ends]

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Date:

Original document title: Bha Latha Eile aig Fear na Mònach - The Peat Man

Location in physical archive: Series K, File 4, Section 83

NRAS reference: NRAS 4336/1/9/4

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