

Do Mhor Ni'c 'Illeathain .

Nighean do Alasdair Mac'Illeathain a bh' ann an Arasaig.

To Mor MacLean.

A daughter of Alasdair MacLean who was in Arisaig.

From "Gaisge nan Gaidheal" by Iain MacDhughail (1870), pp33 - 38.

The spelling of parts of the text has been modernised and the text translated by Gordon Barr. Sections where the meaning is not clear to him are shown in red.

An turas thug mi dh' Arasaig
Gun tug mi gràdh as luaidh,
Do rìghinn shuairc nam blàth-shùl,
A's bòi'che tuar na càcha leam,
'S am bheil an uaisl' air tàrmachadh –
'S an nàdur 's an robh 'n stuaim:
Fialaidh, glic, le ciall, 's le meas –
Làn fhiosrach mar bu dual.

Gur h-iomadh mais' tha fàs ort,
'S gur lìonmhor àgh a's buaigh –
Gun uabhar no gun àrdan,
Cho snuadh-mhor ri Diana,
Gun chron, gun ghiamh r'a àireamh ort,
O d' bhàrr gu d' shàil r'a luaidh –
Beusach, màlda, 's fiamh do ghàir ort,
Ged bhiodh càch fo gruaim.

Do chuailean donn an òrdugh,
Gu cuimir, seòlt 'an cuaich;
Do ghruaidhean mar na ròsan –
Do bhràighe mar an neòinein,
'S am beul o'm binn thig òran,
Mar smeòrach ann am bruaich;
Rìomhach, òrdail, finealt', eòlach,
Foghlaimt', air bheag uail.

Do shùilean mar an àirneag,
A' sealltainn àlainn uat;
Nuair bhiodh tu anns a' bhàn-thaigh,
A' coimhead ann an sgàthan,
Chan fhacas na thug bàrr ort,
'An àileachd 'san Taobh-tuath –
Do dheud cho snaighte ris na dìsnean,
'S mar an ìbhri 'n snuadh.

Do chalpannaibh glan, lionta,
Deas, fìor-mhath, mar bu dual;
Air chumadh 'bhradain fhìor-uisge,
'An cuan ri grèin a's lith-gheal dheth,
A' ceapadh chuileag innleachdach,
Am braise strì le 'chluain –
Troigh chruinn, chòmhnard 's i gun sgòd,
Nach dochainn bròg le gnaig.

On the trip I made to Arisaig, how I gave the swiftest affection to the maiden of the warm eyes, for me the most beautiful appearance compared with the others, and in whom nobility has been bred – it is a nature in which there was modesty, generous, wise, having sense and respect and as fully informed as can be expected.

How much beauty grows on you and how good fortune and success are frequent for you – no haughtiness and no arrogance, as comely as Diana, with no fault and no blemish in number on you, to be praised from your top to your heel, modest, coy, and an expression of laughter on you, even if others would be in gloom.

Your brown locks of hair are in order, shapely and set in curls. Your cheeks are like the roses, your chest like that of a daisy, and at the start of the music, a song will come out like thrushes on banks – splendid, orderly, elegant, knowledgeable, educated and with little vanity.

Your eyes are like little sloes, looking out beautifully from you. When you would be in the lady's house looking in a mirror, nothing will be seen which will be better than you, the beauty in the North. Your teeth are as polished as dice and like ivory in appearance.

Your calves are clean, full, quick and extremely good, as to be expected, in the shape of salmon of spring water, like the sun in an ocean with a white colour from it, catching artful flies, and striving boldly with the pasture – a round foot, smooth and with no corner, a shoe with a crackling noise which will not hurt.

Bu ghrinn leam air an ùrlar thu,
Le mùirn air do chuir suas;
Gu h-èibhinn, aotrom, ionnsaichte,
Neo-èisleineach, brisg, dlùth-cheumach,
Neo-mhearachdach 's gach cùrsa dheth,
'S glan tionndadh anns gach cuairt;
A' freagradh fonn nam pong ro-lùghar,
'Sa chrùit-chiùil ri fuaim.

Do chneas cho geal 's an fhaoileann
A' snàmh ri taobh a' chuain;
Nuair thèid thu ann ad aodach,
Gun chearb aig càch ri fhaotainn ort –
A' d' ghùn don t-sìod is daoire,
Nach cuirte saor a suas;
A's fiamh a loinn mar ghrian a' soillseadh,
No mar dhaoimean uaine.

Meur grinn thu air an t-snàthaid
Le tàlanntan a fhuair –
Air fuaigheal agus faitheamadh,
'S gach fasan thig on Bhàn-rìgh'nn:
Nuair ghlacadh tu 'm *piano*
Bu ghàirdeachas do m' chluais –
Gu ceòlmhor, èibhinn, stòlda, ciatach,
Anns gach beus thug buaidh.

'S ro mhath thu air an sgrìobhadh
Le ite pinn no cruaidh;
'S math d' eòlas anns na h-àitheantaibh,
'S mòr d' fhòghlum anns a' Ghràmar,
'S cha mhios' air leughadh Gàidhlig thu,
On 's i bu tràithe fhuair;
'S bu mhath do làmh a bhuain air àilean,
Thoirt gu làr nan sguab.

'S tu 'n chinneadh stàtail, rìoghail,
Bu dìlse chur na ruaig;
Gu reachdmhor, feachdmhor, lìonmhor –
Gu sròlach, bratach, pìobach –
Gu snaipeach, sgaiteach, pìeach,
A bhuidhneadh cìs le buaidh –
Foinneamh, fearail, smearail, làidir,
Cuanta, dàicheil, cruaidh.

Na **Leathanaich/ leithnich**nach trèigeadh,
'S nach gèilleadh do luchd-fuath;
Gu neartmhor, beachdar, euchdach, –
Nach feachdte, 'n gleachd nan streupaid,
Le meartuinn cheart 's le gèire,
Bu mhath am feum 's gach uair;
Caoibhneil, càirdeil, aoigheil, bàigheil –
Ri luch-gràidh gun chruas.

You were the most elegant for me on the floor
and had tenderness on being taken up –
amusing, light, educated, unsorrowful, crisp,
stepping tightly, unmistakable in each direction,
turning cleanly on each round, and answering
the tunes of very strong notes when the
musical instrument is sounding.

Your skin is as white as a gull's when
swimming on the sea. When you come in your
clothing, there is no rag of others to be got on
you, and your gown is of the dearest silk which
will not be put on free. The hue of her beauty
is like the sun shining, or like green diamonds.

With the talents you got, you are an elegant
finger on the needle. There is every fashion of
sewing and hemming that will come from
queens. When you take to the piano, it would
be rejoicing to my ear – tuneful, amusing,
serious and attractive in each base that came
from it.

And you are so good at writing with a feather,
a peg or steel. Your knowledge of orders is
wide, your knowledge of grammar is large and
you are no worse in reading Gaelic, and you
get it quickly. And your hand would be good to
cut on a meadow and put sheefs of corn to the
ground.

You are the clan chief who is stately, and most
royal and most trustworthy to bring about
pursuit energetically, forcefully, and in
numbers – with banners piercing, armed with
pikes which would successfully win homage,
and be stately, manly, spirited, strong, robust,
graceful and hard.

It's the people of **Leathan/ the big ones** who
would not give up and who would not yield to
hateable people. Powerfully, observantly and
heroically, they will not be bent in the struggle
of the skirmishes. With proper reaction and
with sharpness, their use would be good all the
time, courteous, friendly, generous, kind and
with no harshness for loved ones.

'S beag iongnaidh thu bhi sàr-mhaiseach
'S na pàrantaibh on d' ghluais;
Bu dreachmhor, ceart a' chàraid iad,
Le aoighealachd, a's bàighealachd;
Bhiodh taighean-taisge làn aca,
'S bu phailt air àiridh 'm buar;
Gu h-imeach, càiseach, baineach, blàthach,
Laoghach, blàr a's ruadh.

Gur taitneach cliù an àrmainn sin
Is brathair dhut¹ ra luaidh:
'N Gleann-Forsalain 'an tàmhachd,
Gu socair, coltach, sàr-chumbach –
Chan fhacas anns a' Ghàidhealtachd
Na thu air bàrr 's gach uair;
A' falbh 'na bhòtainn' mar bu chòir,
A' toirt nan dròbh a Thuath.

¹ Iain Mac 'Illeathain, a bha 'na thuathanach agus
'na Fhear-malairt ann an Gleann-Forsalain 'am
Mùideart anns a' bhliadhna 1844.

Gun soirbhich leis gu dìlinn
Le beannachd phrìseil sluaigh –
Nam bochd, 's nan nochd, 's nan dìleachdan,
Nam bantrach, 's nan dìleagan,
'Ga leantainn ann an dìomhaireachd,
Air muir 's air tìr 's gach cuairt:
On 's duin' e dh'fhàs làn iochd a's gràidh,
Gu dèirceach, bàidheil, suairc'.

Gun dèan mi nis a chrìochnachadh
Le firinn, 's i bheir buaidh,
A dh' innseadh dreach na rìbhinne,
A h-aoighealachd, a fìnealtachd,
A caoimhnealachd, a mìleantachd,
A sìobhaltachd 's gach uair:
'S mo bheannachd fhèin a chaidh gun trèigsinn.
Leat 's gach ceum 'an gluais.

For you and the parents from whom you came,
there is little surprise, to being truly beautiful.
They were a proper, comely pair, with
generosity and kindness. They would have full
store-houses, and on a shieling their herd
would be plentiful, abounding in butter, cheese
and milk, flowery and abounding in white-
faced and ginger calves.

How delightful is that hero and that brother of
yours¹ who is to be praised. In Glen Forslan in
tranquillity, calmly and well-shaped, you can
only be seen on top at all times in the
Highlands. Going away in his boots was
necessary when taking the droves to the North.

¹ Iain MacLean who was a farmer and a
businessman in Glen Forslan in Moidart in
1844.

How he will thrive for ever, with valuable
blessing of the people – the poor, the stripped,
the forlorn, the widows and the blossoms,
following him in secrecy on sea, on land and
on every trip, because he is a man who grew up
full of compassion and love, charitably, kindly
and affably.

Let me end now with truth, and it will bring
success, to describe the appearance of the
maiden, her hospitality, her elegance, her
kindness, her bravery and her civility at all
times. **It is my own farewell compliment that I
myself will not ever abandon you and each
step will be on the move.**