



[Iain Sheoc - Cheated of His Wages (mid-19th century)]

It was customary for crofting families in Lewis in the 19th century to employ a maid and sometimes a manservant as well, as may be seen from the census figures for that period. Among the duties of the maid servant in Lochs was carding and spinning the household wool for tweed and blanket making. The manservant duties were agricultural work as well as participating in line fishing and other fishing in the winter. The wages were little more than their keep and their training. That in itself was important where there were large families and one less to feed.

John Macleod, 1842-1924, 'Iain Sheoc', from Calbost worked for a year with a family from Lemreway as a young man. He was planning to emigrate to the Hudson Bay area of Canada and wanted to save a little money before he left. When the time came to leave the service of the Lemreway man after working very conscientiously for a whole year, Iain Sheoc asked for his wages and to his surprise he was told he did not contract for wages when he came and therefore there were no wages for him. 'Cha do chuir thu ceann air tuarasdal nuair a thainig thu agus mar sin chan eil tuarasdal ann dhut'.

It is not clear whether his employer was taking advantage of Iain or trying to teach him a valuable lesson before he departed to a foreign land. Iain was of a mild and generous disposition and the old rascal employer might have felt that he would get away with it. Iain spent some years in Canada and he returned and married Mary Macmillan, 14 Gravir and raised a family of 5 boys and 2 girls. He used to say he never lacked in money since he was cheated in Lemreway.

A similar thing happened to Alasdair Macleod, 'Alasdair Louis', 9 Marvig, in Lemreway, but he took effective steps to remedy the situation by leaving quietly in the small hours of the morning with one of the employer's best cows. No one ever came for the cow.

[ends]

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