

[Page 23 - George Maxwell Family Stories - The Contented Old Lady](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 28](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1981/6/1

Try the top of my tail, round ball there, between hard and soft, throw it. Bogs and lakes come. The dogs came up and had to swim the bogs and lakes. It was hard to get through. Fox said, "If they come near again, try at my right ear, hard lump there, pull it out and throw it." Dogs come up again. She threw out the hard lump. There was all sorts of sharp things, stabs, same as forks, and things. The dogs couldn't get through and there Charlotte was alongside her father's house. And I left then. During the same visit to Cape Breton, Elsie Clews Parsons recorded a very brief story told by Margaret Maxwell, Jr. She was 18 at the time, the sister of George Maxwell of Sydney. She told this small story: The Contented Old Lady An old lady was digging potatoes in her field for her dinner. Her hoe struck in a piece of iron, she dug around and found a pot of gold. She was very contented. She started for home. When she looked at the pot, it was after turning into silver. Still she was very contented. She went on, she sat down, she looked at the pot again. It was after turning into copper. Still she was very contented. She reached her door step, and looked at the pot, it was after turning into stone. She was contented for the stone to keep her front door open. She was just going to lift up the stone when it turned into a big insect. It knocked down a lovely pot of plants and jumped into a field of cabbage to eat up the insects in the cabbage. Still the old lady was contented, to have the cabbages cleared of insects. George Maxwell of Sydney: You know, I was driving cattle long years ago. Those people, those Jews used to come from Sydney here, up the country, and they'd buy the cattle in--maybe from Hawkesbury and Glenora to Orangedale--get a cow at this farm and a bull at another farm and you have them all, driving them on the road to the station. There were no trucks in those George Maxwell surrounded by part of his family at his home in Sydney, about 1974. With him are (left to right), his daughter" Ingrid Shannon, sons" George James and John William, wife Erma holding granddaughteif Lisa, and daughter Marilyn Ransom. _days, you know, to transport them. You'd have to take them to the train and load them in boxcars. We'd drive them all to Orangedale. We'd follow the roads. We used to handle about two carloads. When we'd pick up a bull that was too frisky, we used to tie his head to his front foot. And we'd walk him about a mile and then we'd take the rope off him and he'd be all right, because he'd be so tired. Every time he'd lift his foot his head would go down with it, so it didn't take long to get tired. He'd calm down then and he'd stay with the herd, you know. And I was walking. There'd be about eight of us. We'd stay out overnight in different houses. And one night I was at this woman's house. She didn't know I had any Gaelic though. The old man said to her in Gaelic, "C'aite a bheil thu dol a chur an fhear seo a chadal an nochd?"--Where are you going to put this fellow to sleep to? night? And in Gaelic she said to him. Jeez, I believe that fellow's lousy--"Cha chreid nach eil am fear ud miallach." But she put us in the spare room, took a chance on us --but we really were dirty, chasing cattle and cow manure all over you and all that. I didn't blame her a bit. So the next morning I said to Jack Munro--he was travelling with me--The old lady wasn't going to keep me last night. He said, Why? I



said. She thought I was lousy. I heard her say so in Gaelic. Well, he said, when she gets you your breakfast, be sure to thank her in Gaelic. And when I did, the old woman nearly had a fit. She lifted the apron over her head. She was Catholic, you know. She said. Holy Mary Mother of Jesus, have you got Gaelic? Of the stories E.G.Parsons collected in the 1920s, the two told by George Maxwell ' were first heard by him in Gaelic. George learned "Ten Years Before the Mast" from Sandy Gillis, a white man, of South Side, Black River, West Bay, 18 miles from Why? cocomagh. Margaret Maxwell first heard her story from a teacher. Miss MacAskill, at Marble Mountain. These stories appeared in the Memoirs of the American Folklore Society FOLKLORE FROM NOVA SCOTIA Vol. 29, 1931, and are printed here with per? mission of the American Folklore Society". ?;0:'K:i?::'??HH| (23)