

21 OCT 1962

October 21, 1962

Dear Connor,

My story "The Amulet" is fiction, based upon certain actual things, scenes and people. Many years ago I saw a withered old woman sitting on the floor of a shack, the home of a Micmac Indian family. She took no part in the conversation. When I asked the younger people who she was, they hesitated, and then one of them said "She is one of the Ancients -- the Sa-ak-a-wach-kik". I took it as a joke, although they didn't laugh.

In those days I had a hobby of hunting for ancient Indian camp sites, both inland and on the coast. Once, at a spot called Indian Gardens on the Mersey River, the biggest known camp site in Nova Scotia, I was shown a little stone amulet such as the one I described in my story. Part of it was missing. Indian Gardens had been a place where a large tribe spent the winters. In the spring many of them paddled their canoes down the river, and spent summer in small fishing camps along the coast. Every time I searched in one of these coastal sites I hoped to find the missing portion of the amulet, but I never did. Of course I found a good many arrowheads, hide-scrapers, pieces of pottery, etc.

Once I was visited by an archaeologist. He had heard that I was interested in the prehistoric Indians of Nova Scotia, and that I had dug in several of their camp sites. I showed him what I had found, and we talked a lot about the Indians of the olden time. One of the things we talked about was the Indian belief in the transmigration of souls. I mentioned the amulet I had seen, and wondered if it had anything to do with that belief. About a year after that, I found myself discussing these same things with a retired minister, and I mentioned the old lady who was said to be one of the Sa-ak-a-wach-kik.

Out of all these searches, and odd meetings and talks, and out of the feeling that I was in actual touch with the remote past and its mysteries whenever I pprobed in one of the old camp sites, came the story which I called the Amulet. It is, I think, a good example of the way a writer's mind works, subconsciously using the assorted scenes and experiences that come to his notice, and then asking himself the inevitable question, "Given these facts, what might have happened?"

Would you mind looking inside the front pages of "The Golden Caravan" and telling me the name of the publishers, the date of publication, and the name of the editor or editors? "The Amulet" has been printed in a good many collections, and I seem to have missed making a note of this one.

Sincerely,

Connor Rae Doak, Esq.,
Ingelow, Manitoba.