

November 23, 1957

Dear Miss MacGlashen,

My story "The Amulet" is fiction. 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, and when I asked the younger people who she was they hesitated, and then one of them said "She is one of the Ancient Ones -- the Sa-ak-a-wach-kik". I took it as a joke, and probably it was, 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; and once, at a place called Indian Gardens, I was shown a little stone amulet of the kind described in my story. Part of it was missing. The site was up the Nersey River, long since abandoned by the Indians, a place where they used to gather in winter. Each spring they paddled down the river and scattered up and down the coast, and I have found a number of shell heaps, the remains of their summer camps. Every time I searched in one of these old kitchen-middens I had in the back of my mind a hope that I might find the lost portion of that amulet which I had seen at Indian Gardens. I never did, although of course I found many pot shards, arrow heads and other things of that sort.

Once I was visited by an archaeologist. He had heard that I was interested in the ancient inhabitants 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 good deal about Indians of the olden time. One of ^{the} things we talked about was the Indian belief in the transmigration of souls, and I mentioned the amulet as having something to do with that belief. He thought it quite possible, and wished me luck in my search for the other half. Then, a year or two after that, I found myself discussing the subject of transmigration 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 things, these searches and odd meetings, and the feeling of being actually in touch with the remote past whenever I probed 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 itself the inevitable question, "Given these facts, what might have happened?"

Sincerely,

Miss Sara MacGlashen,
Mount Allison University,
Sackville, N.B.