

Little Shemogue, N. S.

Nov. 22, 1960.

Mr. Thomas Raddall

Liverpool, N. S.

Dear Sir:

Our class at the Regional Memorial School at Port Elgin has recently finished reading the selection "The Gruleet" taken from your book, "Zambou and Other Stories". We were greatly interested, and discussed the transmigration of souls and instincts in animals and humans, but it still left us with many questions unanswered. We are most interested to know how much of the story is fact and how much fiction.

If you are not too busy, you would indeed make a class very happy if you made this story clearer for us.

Sincerely yours,
Patsy Stright.

November 26, 1960

Miss Patsy Stright,
Little Shemogue, N.B.

Dear Patsy,

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. Then one said, "She is one of the Ancient Ones --the Sa-ak-a-wach-kik". I took it as a joke, and possibly it was, although nobody laughed.

In those days, more than thirty years ago, I had a hobby of hunting for ancient Indian camp sites, both inland and on the coast. Once, at a place called Indian Gardens, I was shown a little stone amulet of the kind I described later in my story. Part of it was missing. The site was fifteen miles up the Mersey River, a place where many Indians used to gather for the winter in the olden time. In spring they paddled down to the sea and scattered to small fishing camps for the summer. I found a number of these summer camping sites, each marked by a low mound of clam shells mixed with bird, fish and animal bones, and containing stone arrowheads, scraping tools, bits of broken pottery etc. Whenever I dug into one of these heaps I had a hope in the back of my mind that I might find the missing portion of the amulet I had seen at Indian Gardens; but I never did.

Once an archaeologist came to see me. He had heard that I was interested in the ancient inhabitants of Nova Scotia. I showed him the relics I had found and took him to Indian Gardens. We talked a good deal about the Prehistoric Indians, and one of the things we discussed was the Indian belief in the transmigration of souls. A year or two after that I found myself discussing this belief 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 meetings, and the feeling that I was actually in touch with the remote past whenever I dug into one of the old camp sites, came the story which I called The Amulet. It is fiction. It is, I think, a good example of the way a writer's mind works, assembling various scenes and people and experiences, and then asking itself the question, "Given these facts, what might have happened?"

Sincerely,