

SHELL OBJECTS.

Somewhat similar to the beads, and often used for the same purpose in a measure, was the *wampum*, or white shell money of the Indians. It was made in two forms, discoidal and cylindrical. Woven into belts, it served as a girdle, and special patterns were sometimes made to confirm bargains and ratify treaties between various tribes. The arrangement of the bars and other portions of the design had special significations, the recollection and interpretation of which were entrusted to a chief known as the "Fire Keeper," who was solemnly bound not to permit the belts to go out of his care without the permission of his tribe in council assembled. Treaty belts of wampum were from three to six feet in length, and from six inches to a foot wide. The Mohawks, on the Tuscarora reserve, near Brantford, still own some of the belts that were the joint property of the Six Nation Indians, previous to the American war, but none of the specimens are very ancient, as the cylindrical wampum of which they are composed is evidently of European manufacture, although made from shell. A considerable quantity of the same kind was found a few years ago in a cave on the Grand river, near Elora, and it was quite evident that the workmanship was that of the "Pale Face."

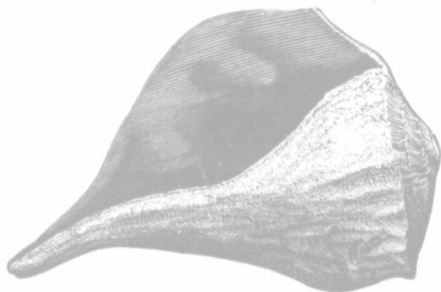


FIG. 88. (1-16 size.)

The discoidal, or flat form, is less common. It is made from a large univalve found on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Fig. 88 is a specimen that was found at Penetanguishene, and presented to the Institute thirty-two years ago, by Dr. Richardson, in 1856. We have specimens from Nottawasaga, and from the Dwyer farm, in Beverly, illustrating nearly all the steps in the manufacture of this wampum from the whole shell to the finished article.

These show us (Fig. 89) that after portions of the shell had been broken off, they were cut partly through on both sides, so that strips from three-eighths to about five-eighths of an inch wide might be formed. These were again cut across to make square blocks—a hole was bored in the middle from both sides, and the corners were ground down until the finished article was perfectly circular.



FIG. 89. (1-16 size.)

Many specimens of this "shell money" are so accurately made as to suggest that European traders imitated it as they did stone beads.

Another variety of wampum was made either of a black shell, or of a purple colored shell, and we learn from the writings of early settlers in New England that this dark or black wampum was estimated at several times the value of the more common white article.