

tained its original lustre, not having been extracted by means of fire.”*

It is evident, therefore, that the Indians obtained their pearls, in part at least, from their river-muscles, many of which are known to be margaritiferous.† These mollusks undoubtedly were used as food by the aborigines, who ate alligators, snakes, and other animals less tempting than the contents of fluviatile shells. Indeed, I learned from Dr. Brinton, who was attached to the Army of the Cumberland during the late civil war, that muscles of the Tennessee river were occasionally eaten “as a change” by the soldiers of that corps, and pronounced no bad article of diet. Shells of the *Unio* are sometimes found in Indian graves, where they had been deposited with the dead, to serve as food during the journey to the land of spirits. In many parts of the North American inland heaps of fresh-water shells are seen, indicating the places where the natives feasted upon the mollusks. Atwater has drawn attention to such accumulations on the banks of the Muskingum, in Ohio.‡ Heaps of muscle-shells may be seen in Alabama, along the rivers wherever Indians used to live. Thousands of the shells lie banked up, some deep in the ground.§ Dr. Brinton saw on the Tennessee river and its tributaries numerous shell-heaps, consisting almost exclusively of the *Unio virginianus* (Lamarck?). In all instances he found the shell-heaps close to the water-courses, on the rich alluvial bottom-lands. “The mollusks,” he says, “had evidently been opened by placing them on a fire. The Tennessee muscle is margaritiferous, and there is no doubt but that it was from this species that the early tribes obtained the hoards of pearls which the historians of De Soto’s exploration estimated by bushels, and which were so much prized as ornaments. It is still a profitable employment, the jewelers buying them at prices varying from one to fifty dollars.”|| *Kjoekkenmoeddings* on the St. John’s river, in Florida, consisting of river-shells, were examined by Professor Wyman, and described by him; he saw similar accumulations on the banks of the Concord river in Massachusetts, and was informed by eye-witnesses that they are numerous in California.¶ On Stalling’s Island, in the Savannah river, more than two hundred miles above its mouth, there stands a mound of elliptical shape, chiefly composed of the muscles, clams, and snail-shells of the river. This tumu-

* Garcilasso de la Vega, *Conquête de la Floride*, Vol. II, p. 296.

† As Mr. Isaac Lea, of Philadelphia, informs me, pearls are found in various species of the *Unionida*, more frequently in *Unio complanatus*, *Margaritana margaritifera*, and *Anodonta fluviatilis*. But they occur occasionally in all the species of this family. Very large and valuable pearls have been found in New Jersey.

‡ *Archæologia Americana*, Vol. i, p. 226.

§ Pickett, *History of Alabama*, Charleston, 1851, Vol. I p. 12.

|| Brinton, *Artificial Shell-Deposits in the United States*, Smithsonian Report for 1866, p. 357.

¶ Wyman, *Fresh-Water Shell-Heaps of the St. John’s River, East Florida, Salem, Massachusetts*, 1868, p. 6.