

saw among the Indians of the parts traversed by them. Pearls, however, belonged to the things most desired by the Spaniards, and the accounts relating to them, perhaps, may be somewhat exaggerated. The following passage from Garcilasso de la Vega is of particular interest:

"While De Soto sojourned in the province of Ichiaha,* the cacique visited him one day, and gave him a string of pearls about two fathoms (*deux brasses*) long. This present might have been considered a valuable one, if the pearls had not been pierced; for they were all of equal size and as large as hazle-nuts.† Soto acknowledged this favor by presenting the Indian with some pieces of velvet and cloth, which were highly appreciated by the latter. He then asked him concerning the pearl-fishing, upon which he replied that this was done in his province. A great number of pearls were stored in the temple of the town of Ichiaha, where his ancestors were buried, and he might take as many of them as he pleased. The general expressed his obligation, but observed that he would take away nothing from the temple, and that he had accepted his present only to please him. He wished to learn, however, in what manner the pearls were extracted from the shells. The cacique replied that he would send out people to fish for pearls all night, and on the following day at eight o'clock (*sic*) his wish should be gratified. He ordered at once four boats to be dispatched for pearl-fishing, which should be back in the morning. In the mean time much wood was burned on the bank, producing a large quantity of glowing coals. When the boats had returned, the shells were placed on the hot coals, and they opened in consequence of the heat. In the very first, ten or twelve pearls of the size of a pea were found, and handed to the cacique and the general, who were present. They thought them very fine, though the fire had partly deprived them of their lustre. When the general had satisfied his curiosity, he retired to take his dinner. While thus engaged, a soldier came in, who told him that in eating some of the oysters caught by the Indians, a very fine and brilliant pearl had got between his teeth, and he begged him to accept it as a present for the governess of Cuba.‡ Soto very civilly refused the present, but assured the soldier that he was just as much obliged to him as though he had accepted his gift: he would try to reward him one day for his kindness and for the regard he was showing to his wife. He advised him to keep his (intended) present, and to buy horses for it at Havana. The Spaniards, who were with the general at that moment, examined the pearl of this soldier, and some, who considered themselves as experts in the matter of jewelry, thought it was worth four hundred ducats. It had re-

* The province and town of Ichiaha, or Ichiaha, have been located in that part of Northern Georgia where the Oostanaula and Etowah rivers unite, and form the Coosa river. (See Theodore Irving's "Conquest of Florida," second edition, p. 242; also McCulloh's "Researches," p. 525.)

† The Indians used to pierce them with a heated copper wire, a process by which they were spoiled.

‡ Doña Isabel de Bobadilla, De Soto's wife.