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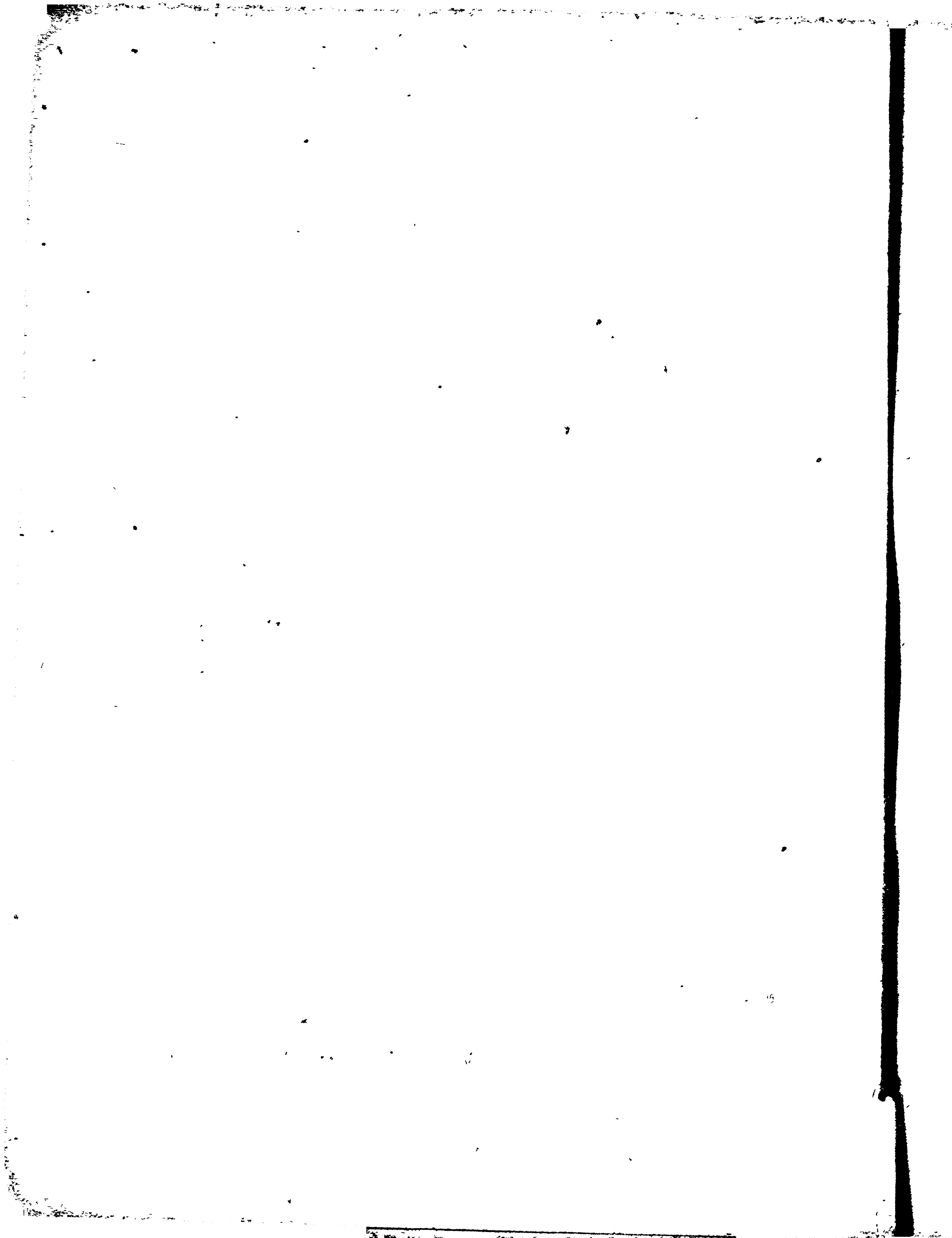

WAMPUM,

A PAPER PRESENTED TO

THE NUMISMATIC AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

OF PHILADELPHIA.

BY

ASHBEL WOODWARD, M.D.,

OF FRANKLIN, CONN.,

CORRESPONDING MEMBER

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At a Stated Meeting of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia, held January 2, 1868, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

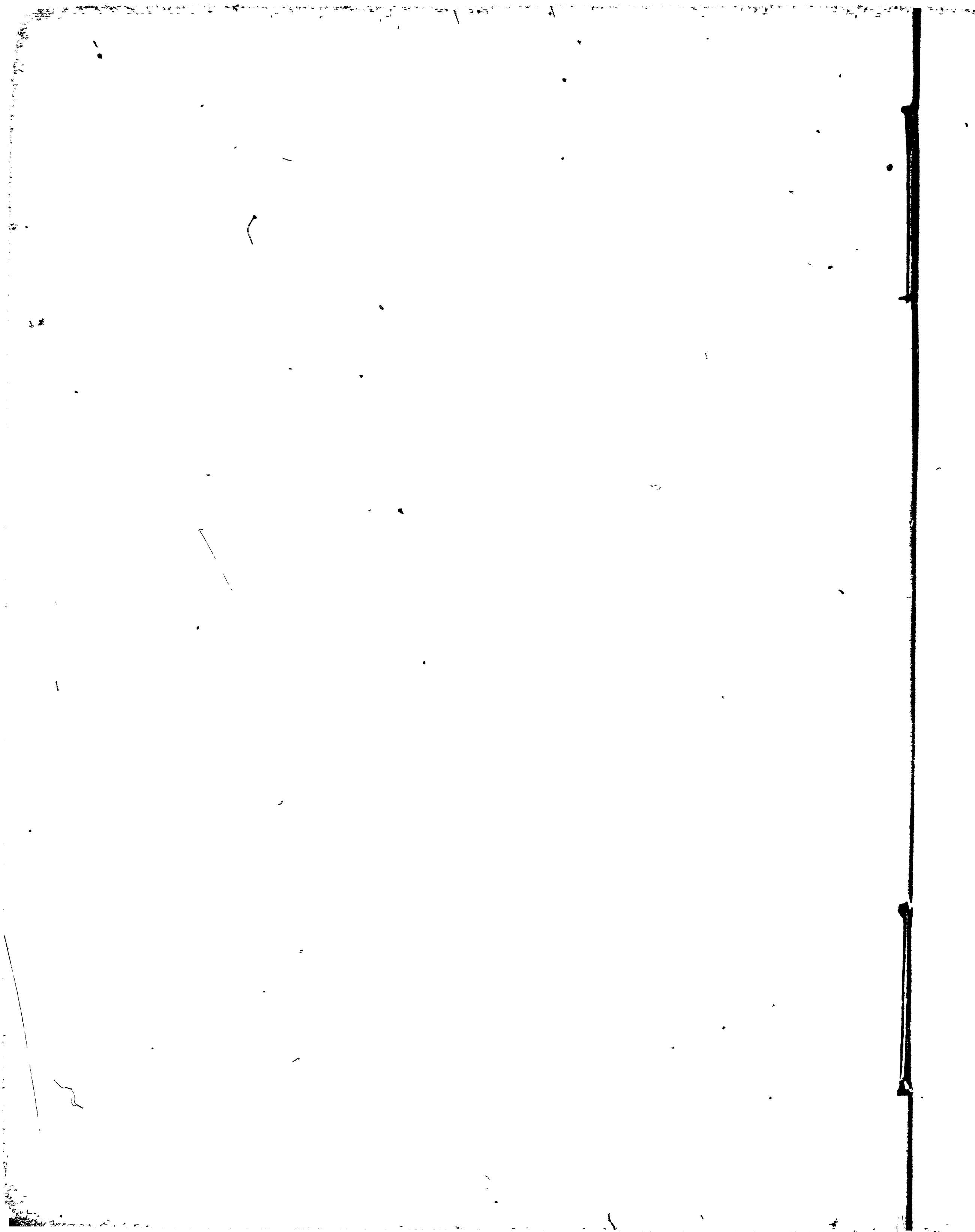
Resolved, That the thanks of this Society are due and are hereby tendered to Ashbel Woodward, M.D., of Franklin, Conn., for his very able and interesting research upon "Wampum" this evening read before the Society.

Resolved, That said paper be referred to the Publication Committee.

Attest,

HENRY PHILLIPS, JR.,
Corresponding Secretary.

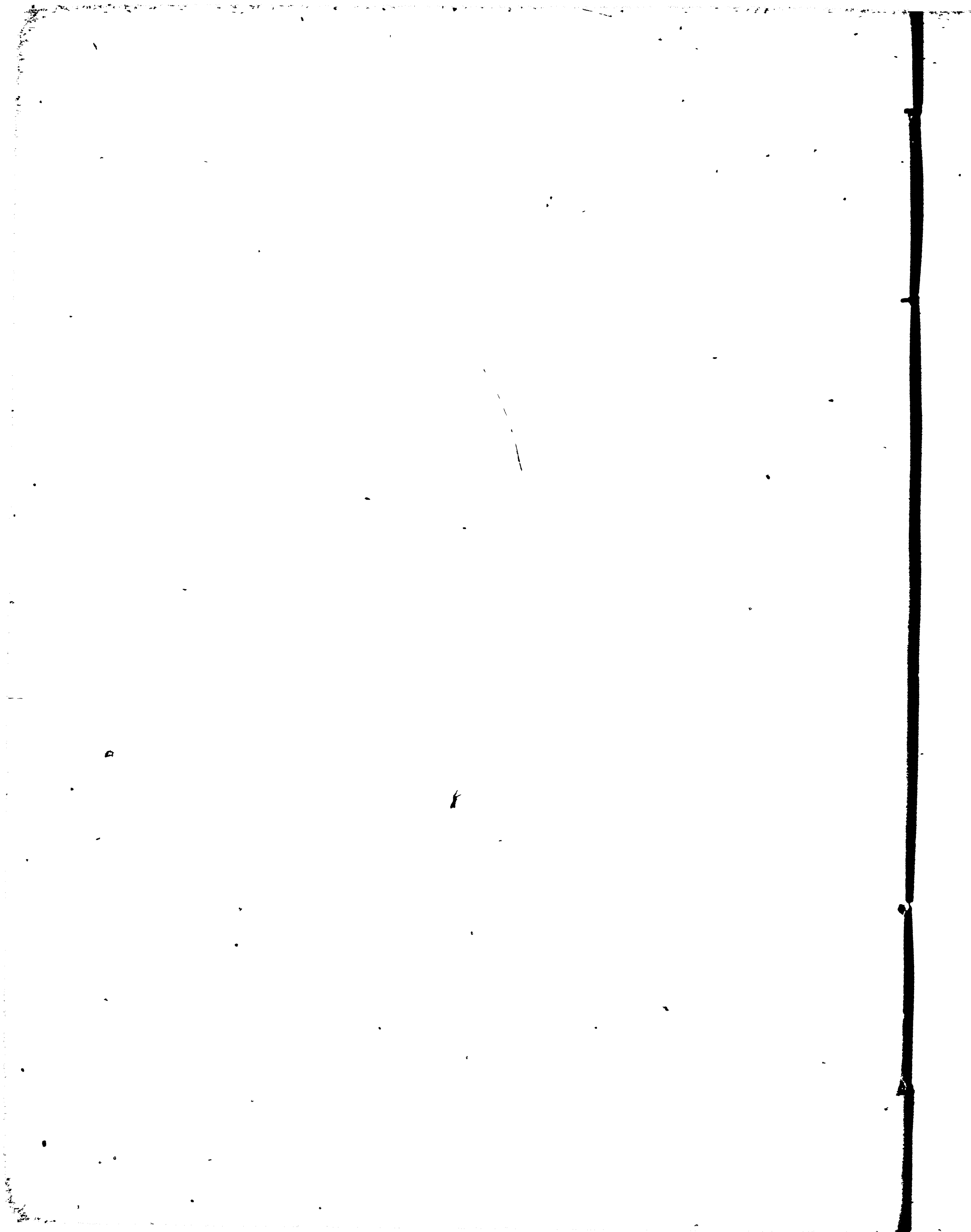
38384



NOTE.

The following pages constitute an Essay read before the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia in January 1868. It was intended for publication in the second volume of the Transactions of the Society, but as the appearance of this volume has been unexpectedly delayed, it has been thought best to allow the Essay to appear separately.

Franklin, Conn., January, 1878.



WAMPUM.

When Columbus, on his second voyage to the New World, landed upon Cape Cabron, Cuba, the cacique of the adjacent country meeting him upon the shore offered him a string of beads made of the hard parts of shells as an assurance of welcome. Similar gifts were often made to the great discoverer, whenever the natives sought to win his favor or wished to assure him of their own good will. These shell beads were afterwards found to be in general use among the tribes of the Atlantic coast. At the close of the sixteenth century the English colonists found them in Virginia, as did the Dutch at the commencement of the following century in New York, the English in New England and the

French in Canada. The pre-historic inhabitants of the Mississippi valley were also evidently acquainted with their manufacture, as remains of shell beads have been found in many of the mounds which survive as the only memorials of that mysterious people.

These Indian beads were known under a variety of names among the early colonists, and were called, *wampum*, *wampom-peage*, or *wampeage*, frequently *peage* or *peake* only, and in some localities *sewan* or *zewand*. But generally sewan prevailed among the Dutch, and wampum among the English. These names were applied without distinction to all varieties of beads. This confusion arose naturally enough from the scanty acquaintance of the whites with the Indian language. The word wampum [wompam],[1] which

[1] Trumbull in his notes in the Narragansett Club Reprint of Roger Williams's *Key*, says: "*Wom pam* was the name of

has since become a general term, was restricted by the Indians to the white beads. It was derived from *wompi*, "white." The other or dark beads were called *suckáubock*, a name compounded of *súcki*, "dark colored," and *bock*, "shell." The name *Mowhakes*, compounded of *mowi*, "black," and *hock*, "shell," was also sometimes applied to the dark beads. It thus appears that the Indians divided their beads into two general classes, the *wompam*, or white beads, and *suckáubock*, or dark beads. Both white and black consisted of highly polished, testaceous cylinders, about one-eighth of an inch in diameter and a quarter of an inch long,

the white beads collectively; when strung or wrought in girdles they constituted '*wanôm-peg* [Roger Williams], the *wampon-peage* of Wood and other early writers."

Peage or *peake* signified simply "strung beads," and *wampom-peage* accordingly signified "strings of white beads."

The English were doubtless led to consider *wampum* a generic word, because they heard it oftenest used, *wampum*

drilled length-wise and strung upon fibres of hemp or the tendons of wild beasts. *Suckáuhock* was made from the stem of the *venus mercenaria*, or common round clam, popularly known as the quauhaug; *wampum* from the column and inner whorls of the *Pyrula carica* and *Pyrula canicalata* [1] [Lam.], species known as Winkles or Peri winkles among fishermen, and the largest convoluted shells

being much more abundant than *suckáuhock*. Their error has however long since received the sanction of usage. But as far as our own knowledge extends there was no comprehensive word for all shell beads in use among the Indians. *Sewan* had perhaps very nearly such a use in certain localities, but the real meaning of the word *sewan* appears from the following note in the Narragansett Club Reprint of Roger Williams's *Key*: — "*Seahwhóog*, 'they are scattered' [Elliot]. From this word the Dutch traders gave the name of *sewared* or *zeewand* [the participle, *seahwhóun*, 'scattered,' 'loose'], to *all* shell money just as the English called all *peage*, or string beads, by the name of the white or *wampom*."

[1] Sometimes from the *Buccinum undulatum* [Möll], found from Nantucket to Labrador, and occasionally perhaps from the

of our New England coast.[1] These shells were found in great abundance along the sea shore, lying either upon the mud, or just beneath the surface, and were wrought in the following manner. The desirable portions of the shells were first broken out into small pieces of the form of a parallelopiped; these were then drilled and afterwards ground and polished. Possessing no

Natica heros [Say] found from New York to Labrador, and the *Natica duplicata* found from Florida to Massachusetts bay.

In this connection the writer would acknowledge his indebtedness to Hon. J. Hammond Trumbull, a gentleman who has given much time and talent to the investigation of matters of Indian history.

[1] Many writers have asserted that wampum was worked out of the inside of the Great Congue shell. This view is evidently erroneous, as the Great Congue, *Strombus gigas* [Linn.], is not found on the Atlantic coast, north of Florida and the West Indies, except in the fossil state.

The assertion that wampum is an Iroquois word, meaning a "muscle," is doubtless equally unfounded.

better tools, the Indians made shift to bore them with stone drills,[1] implements which hardly correspond with the delicacy and exactness exhibited by the specimens of original wampum that have come down to us. The process of polishing and shaping was equally painful and laborious, for rubbing with the hand over a smooth stony surface, was the only method which the rudeness of the Aborigines could devise. Yet the finished beads, whether attached in thick masses to garments, or strung in long flexible rows, were very comely and without a trace of the tawdriness, which is so characteristic of uncivilized peoples. The suckáuhock with its varying shades of purple

Roger Williams [*Key*, chap. xxiv], who certainly had fine opportunities for observation, and our other most trustworthy authorities, state that the *Suckáuhock* was made from the clam shell, and the *wampum* from the shells of the Periwinkle, and such was unquestionably the case.

[1] Roger Williams's *Key*, chap. xxiv.

was particularly beautiful. Its value was double that of the white and the darker its color, the more highly it was prized. But the laborious method of production imparted no trivial value to both varieties.

It seems almost incredible that the Indian could produce so clever an article with his rude implements. Some have conjectured that the specimens produced before the natives obtained awl blades from the colonists were very inferior to their later productions. One writer[1] even goes so far as to suggest, that, before the advent of Europeans, Indian beads consisted mostly of small pieces of wood, stained white or black. The fact is, however, that the manufacture of wampum dates back at least to the time of the mound builders, for quantities of beads similar in form to the more modern article, and proved by

[1] Gordon, *Hist. of Penn.*, Appendix F.

chemical tests and structural peculiarities to be similar in material, have been exhumed from the ancient mounds of the west.[1]

Other species besides the wampum and suckáu-hock crept into local use among the different tribes. The Iroquois in their civil and religious ceremonies employed a variety named *otekóa,* and made from spiral fresh water shells of the genus *unio.* This as may be inferred from its uses was held in the highest esteem, and no other could be employed in the different stages of the ceremonial.[2] In New England and perhaps elsewhere, an inferior kind made evidently from shells too small and thin to be wrought into the cylindrical beads, circulated to a limited extent. The separate pieces were round and flat, about an eighth

[1] See Schoolcraft's report on the Grove Creek Mound in vol. 1, of *Transactions of the Am. Ethnological Soc.*

[2] *League of the Iroquois*, p. 120.

of an inch broad and a sixteenth of an inch thick, white and black were strung alternately, but the strings, though arranged with considerable nicety, lacked wholly the finish and flexibility of the regular article. In Virginia *roenoke* was current. This consisted of small rough fragments of cockle shells, which were drilled and strung. The last two varieties were only used to a limited extent, even in the region of their manufacture. Here, as elsewhere, the cylindrical wampum was the standard, and the dearest to the Indian of all his treasures. Indeed such was the value set upon it, that attempts were often made to counterfeit it, an unallowed shell being fraudulently used in the manufacture of the white, while the black was imitated from a kind of stone. Yet the habitual caution and keenness of the Indian made it difficult to palm off the spurious article upon him.

As wampum was made from marine shells,[1] it was naturally manufactured by the sea shore tribes, and in localities determined by the abundance of raw material. Here the shells were stored up in some convenient spot during summer, to be worked out in winter when the rigors of the season should deter the men from their ordinary out door pursuits.[2] Probably but little was produced north of the Narragansetts [Rhode Island], as the necessary shells were scarce beyond Cape Cod. The Narragansetts were themselves great producers, and tradition claimed for their tribe the honor of the invention of wampum. But the Long Island Indians were by far the greatest producers along our northern coast. Their sandy flats and marshes teemed with sea life, and, when the Dutch first came to New Amsterdam,

[1] The otekóa of the Iroquois was the only exception of which we know.

[2] Roger Williams's *Key*, chap. XXIV.

their island went by the name of *sewan hacky*, or the "land of the sewan shell," so numerous were the sewan manufactories upon it. Without doubt production was stimulated beyond its natural limits by the demand from powerful tribes from the main land, who found it easier to exact wampum as tribute from their weak neighbors, than personally to engage in its laborious coinage. Hazard, in his collection of state papers, states, that the Narragansetts frequently compelled large tributes in wampum from the Long Island Indians. The Pequots also for many years prior to 1637, exacted large annual contributions from the same tribes while they were still further subject to the levies of the imperious Mohawks. Thus the mint of wealth at their very doors became to its possessors the source of untold misery. Constant fear kept them toiling at the mines, while the scanty proceeds of their labor only quickened the

greed of their savage masters. The number and extent of the sewan manufacturies upon Long Island may be inferred from the frequent and immense shell heaps left by the Indians in all of which scarcely a whole shell is to be found. Occasionally the whole shells were carried over to the main land and there wrought. From Sewan-Hacky down the Atlantic coast and along the gulf, the shaded covers and quiet banks were doubtless dotted with wampum manufactories, for there was a great demand constantly to be met.

The inland tribes were of course unable to produce their own wampum, and depended for their supply upon the coast tribes. A brisk trade thus arose between the coast and interior. Hides and furs were brought down to clothe the denser population of the shore, and wampum carried

back in exchange.[1] Often, however, the inland tribes were able to pounce down and wring this precious material from its carriers in the form of tribute.

Wampum is often spoken of as "Indian money." This expression if referring to colonial times is perfectly proper, but must be received with caution in the consideration of ante-colonial days. The barbarian, dwelling in independent isolation, satisfies the majority of his wants by direct effort and not by an interchange of services, nor till civilization has considerably advanced can we look for any general system of exchanges with the mutual dependence and mutual benefits which such a system involves. So attractive an article as wampum was doubtless eagerly sought in barter, and would readily procure for its possessor whatever else he might desire. Indeed we know

[1] Roger Williams's *Key*, chap. xxiv.

that it was the means of an extensive trade between the coast and the interior, the inland Indians bringing down hides and furs to be exchanged for the wampum of the shore. All this, however, was in the way of barter, and we cannot hence infer that the idea of a medium or money crept into the limited circle of the redman's wants and satisfactions. His circumstances did not demand and would not therefore suggest it. Wampum was the gold of the aborigine. But he had yet to learn that the value of gold resides not alone in its glitter. The ancient Peruvians dwelt amid mountains of gold, but the idea of a circulating medium never dawned upon them. In like manner, the Indian had never learned that use of his golden wampum which was the first to suggest itself to the white man. He made and valued it for other purposes.

A fondness for personal display and decoration

are characteristic of uncivilized life, and wampum was well adapted to satisfy this weakness of the Indian. It was every where used for adornment of the person. The humblest proudly wore his trifle, while the more favored ones were wont to decorate themselves in countless gay and fantastic ways. It was oftenest worn about the neck in strings of the length of a rosary, the number of strings being determined by the means or social position of the wearer.[1] Bracelets and necklaces were other forms in which it was frequently displayed. With the females, head-dresses, consisting of bands of wampum twined about the head and gathering up their abundant tresses, were an especial delight. A border of beads greatly enhanced the value of any garment, and

[1] For an excellent illustration of the different modes of wearing wampum, see the plates in that admirable work, *Harriot's Virginia*, written in 1586, and published in 1590, in the first volume of De Bry's *Voyages*.

outer clothing was usually thus ornamented. Indeed the wealthy and powerful wore cloaks, as also aprons and caps, thickly studded with wampum wrought into various fantastic forms and figures. Says that old voyager, John Josselyn, "Prince Phillip, a little before I came to England [1671], coming to Boston, had on a coat and buskins thick set with these beads in pleasant wild works." The moccasin was also, as at the present day, the recipient of much taste and skill.

More of a luxury and confined mostly to sachems and sagamores was the wampum belt, alternate white and purple strings attached in rows to a deerskin base, and worn as a belt about the waist, or thrown over the shoulders like a scarf. Ordinary belts consisted of twelve rows of one hundred and eighty beads each, but they increased in length and breadth with the social importance of the wearer. As many as ten thousand beads are

known to have been wrought into a single war belt four inches wide. The regular alternation of white and purple rows was not always adopted, but birds and beasts and such other rustic fantasies as suited the owner's taste, were often interwoven with the different colors. One of King Philip's belts surrendered by the Sagamore Annawon to Capt. Church, was nine inches wide, of sufficient length when placed about Capt. Church's shoulders to reach to his ancles, and curiously inwrought with figures of birds, beasts and flowers. From another belt of no less exquisite workmanship and designed to be worn about the head, two flags fell in graceful folds upon the shoulders. A third and smaller one had a star embroidered upon its end, and was to be worn upon the breast. The haughty old chief was wont to adorn his person with these insignia when he sat in state among his subjects. They symbolized, by striking

emblems, his might and prowess, and kindled in beholders feelings and emotions that royal pomp and purple could not awake. The idea of gaudiness is apt to associate itself in our minds with Indian trappings, but we must confess that the simple grace and force of these rustic adornments would put to shame many a glittering article of more modern wear.

But wampum strings and belts subserved other equally important uses. They were among the Indian race the universal bonds of nations and individuals, the inviolable and sacred pledges of word and deed. No promise was binding unless confirmed by gifts of wampum. The young warrior declared his passion for his Indian maid, by presenting wampum chains and belts, and her acceptance of the proffered present sealed the marriage compact.[1] Like tokens accompanied

[1] Trumbull's *Hist. of Connecticut*, I, p. 50.

every weighty message, and little reliance was put upon the messenger who brought not with him such assurances of good faith.[1] They cemented friendships, confirmed alliances, sealed treaties, and effectually effaced the memory of injuries.[2] A curious ceremonial had grown up in their presentation on state occasions. When ambassadors set out for another nation, they bore before them the calumet, or pipe of peace, in evidence of their pacific purpose and to secure protection for their journey, and also belts of wampum to be sub-

[1] "It is obvious to all who are the least acquainted with Indian affairs, that they regard no message or invitation, be it of what consequence it will, unless attended or confirmed by strings or belts of wampum, which they look upon as we our letters or rather bonds.—*Letter of Sir Wm. Johnson*, 1753. *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*, vol. II, p. 624.

[2] As late as 1720, a belt was brought into Connecticut from some place at the south called Towattowan, and circulated very generally among the Indians, to the alarm of the colony, "the

mitted in confirmation of their proposals, or, if their people had been worsted in battle to atone for injuries and purchase peace. In the great council assembled to receive them, the orator of the embassy rose and unfolded the object of their visit, corroborating each important statement and proposal at its close by laying down wampum belts. If his words were pleasing, and the presents taken from the ground in evidence thereof, similar presents were given in return, and the

assembly caused some inquiries to be made into the mystery, and an Indian, named Tapanranawko, testified that the belt was in token that at each place where it was accepted, captive Indians would be received and sold. He said that it would be sent back to Towattowan, which was a great way to the south, and was inhabited by a large tribe of Indians. The assembly resolved that the Indians should be directed to send it back whence it came, and should be charged not to receive such presents in future without giving notice to the magistrates."—DeForest's *Hist. of Indians of Conn.*, p. 349.

contract sealed with the smoking of the calumet and the burial of the hatchet in the midst. Among the Six Nations, whenever the council failed to adjust the difficulty or when for any other reason peace was to be interrupted, war was proclaimed by striking a tomahawk painted red and ornamented with black wampum, into the war post in each village of the league.[1]

To illustrate what we have said, we subjoin the following account of an interview between Sir William Johnson, the noted Indian agent and the Six Nations, among whom this ceremony survived even after their decline. "At a meeting of the Six Nations and their allies at Fort Johnson, Feb. 18, 1756, Sir William Johnson said:
Brethren of the Six Nations,

I have heard with great concern that a war party of the Senecas, the most remote nation of

[1] *League of the Iroquois*, p. 339.

the confederacy, have had a considerable misunderstanding with their brethren the English to the southward, which has been fatal to some of that nation. I am extremely unable to express my sorrow for that unhappy affair, and as the hatchet remains fixed in your heads, I do with the greatest tenderness and affection remove it thence. A belt.

Brethren,

With this belt I cleanse and purify the beds of those who fell in that unfortunate affair from the defilement they have contracted. A belt.

Brethren,

I am informed that on that occasion you lost three of your powerful warriors. I do with this belt cover their dead bodies that they may not offend our sight any more and bury the whole affair in oblivion. A belt.

ANSWER OF THE SIX NATIONS AND THIER ALLIES.

Brother Warraghiaygey,

We the sachems and warriors of the Seneca nation return to you our sincere thanks for your great affection in drying our tears and driving sorrow from our hearts, and we in return perform the same ceremony to you with the like hearty affection. A string of wampum.

Brother Warraghiyagey,

We are sensible of your goodness expressed to us in removing the cause of our grief and tenderly taking the axe out of our heads. A belt.

After several more speeches and presentations by the Senecas, the other nations in turn presented belts. In 1748, the general had given them a large belt upon which was an emblem of the Six Nations joined hand in hand with the English. This the speaker then took and said:

Brother Warraghiyagey,

Look with all attention on this belt and remember the solemn and mutual engagements we entered into when you first took upon you the management of our affairs. Be assured we look upon them as sound and shall on our part punctually perform them as long as we remain a people. A prodigious large belt.

Taking up another large belt formerly given them by the governor of New York, he said :

Brother Warraghiyagey,

We hope our brethren, the English, will seriously remember the promises made us by this belt and exactly perform them, and we promise to do the same though we have no record but our memories. A very large belt."[1]

[1] Documents relating to the *Colonial History of New York*, vol. VII, p. 44.

The belts received at treaties, councils and other assemblies were entrusted for presentation to the care of one individual, usually the sachem, who was expected to keep in mind the occasion and purport of each, which he could readily do by the aid of the devices emblematic of the event it signalized that were traced upon each.[1] Thus a belt presented to Sir Wm. Johnson by the Six Nations, had wrought upon it the sun, the emblem of light, and symbols of the Six Nations. It signified that their minds were now illumined by the clear bright light of truth and their intention to abide in the light.[1] In a belt presented at Easton, His Majesty King George was figured taking hold of the king of the Six Nations with one hand, and the king of the Delawares with the other. A belt presented by the Indians of Eastern Maine as a pledge of their friendship and

[1] *League of the Iroquois*, p. 120.

fidelity to the United States and the king of France was explained as follows: The belt was thirteen rows wide to represent the United States, and had upon it a cross indicating France, and several white figures denoting the different Indian villages.[1] The Indian like other young languages drew closer to nature than the dusty abstractions of civilization. It was highly figurative and the majority of its words referred directly to familiar external sights. The tribes of each nation of the Iroquois were known respectively as the Wolf, Bear, Beaver, Turtle, Deer, Snipe, Heron and Hawk. The significant names of chiefs are known to all, and whoever is familiar with Indian oratory will readily recollect its garb of bold and striking metaphors. These features, while imparting energy to the language, at the same time

[1] *Eastern Maine and Nova Scotia in the Revolution*, Kidder, p. 286.

made it easy to convey its meaning by picture writing or symbolism, the only mode of writing which the aborigine possessed.[1] Thus, too, it was easy to put upon a belt a few significant characters which by the principle of mental association should clearly depict the salient features of an event or of a series of events. Such belts carefully preserved served as the annals of a nation. They were the only authentic history of the past, recalling the treaties, councils, triumphs and domestic celebrations of former generations. At stated times their custodian, the sachem, was accustomed to gather the younger warriors about him, and unfolding to them the secrets locked up

[1]It is interesting in this connection to notice the manner in which the chiefs affixed their names to early deeds. In the deed of New Haven given by the Quinnipiacs [see Appendix IV, DeForest's Indians of Conn.], may be seen as autographs, an arrow, a bow, a drawn bow, a war club, a tobacco pipe, a snake, a wolf (apparently), a wild fowl, etc., etc.

in these mysterious records, instruct them in the history and engagements of their tribe. The old soldier's breast glowed with honest pride, as he recounted to his young braves the exploits of their sires, or exhibited the proud tokens of submission forced from some ancient enemy, and most of all when he came to dwell upon scenes conspicuous for his own valor and reddened by his blood. And as the impetuous youths drank in the glorious story of their father's might and valor on the war path, there sprang up within them a patriotism "that grew by what it fed on." In the extensive confederation of the Iroquois, Hono Wenato, an Onondaga sachem, was the hereditary keeper of the wampum. Whenever the grand council met to fill a vacancy in the sachemship of a tribe of any nation, it was his duty publicly to repeat to the new sachem their ancient laws and usages, and to unfold to him the structure and principles of

the league, as recorded in the belts committed to his charge.[1]

Wampum played an important part in religious as well as civil ceremonies. On occasions of great public calamities, it formed the most acceptable sacrifice that could be offered to the terrible Hobbamocko, the author of evil, and it entered largely into the mystic rites of all those weird assemblies that gathered under the shades of the forest. When evil threatened or its farther progress was to be stayed, as also after great triumphs and abundant harvests, the Indians gathered from far and near to celebrate their mysteries. They danced for days, painted and clad in hideous guise, about a great fire, the throne of the divinity, and with wild and frantic yells cast from time to time into the flames furs and weapons, and that choicest of their treasures the costly wampum.

[1] *League of the Iroquois*, p. 119.

Nay it was even whispered in the early time, that little children gaily adorned with wampum were led into the midst and thrust into the fiery embrace of the hissing god.[1] The practice of the Iroquois was less fearful, among whom a string of white wampum was hung around the neck of a white dog suspended to a pole and offered as a sacrifice to the mighty Haweuneyn. The wampum was a pledge of their sincerity, and white an emblem of purity and of faith. In the same nation, previous to "giving thanks to the Maple," and their other stated festivals, the people assembled for the mutual confession of their sins. "The meeting was opened by one of the 'keepers of the faith,' with an address upon the propriety and importance of acknowledging their evil deeds to strengthen their minds against future temptations. He then took a string of white wampum in his

[1] President Stiles's *Itinerary*, unpublished.

hand, and set the example by a confession of his own faults, after which he handed the string to the one nearest to him, who received it, made his confession in like manner, and passed it to another. In this way the wampum went around from hand to hand, and those who had confessions to make, stated wherein they had done wrong, and promised to do better in the future. Old and young, men, women and even children, all united in this public acknowledgment of their faults, and joined in the common resolution of amendment. On some occasions the string of wampum was placed in the centre of the room, and each one advanced in turn to perform the duty as the inclination seized him. A confession and promise without holding the wampum would be of no avail. It was the wampum which recorded their words and gave their pledge of sincerity. The object of the confession was future amendment."[1]

[1] *League of the Iroquois*, page 188.

Wampum was the tribute paid by the vanquished in war, as also the means by which threatened wars were often averted. The Long Island Indians for many years paid an annual tribute to the Pequots, a powerful tribe dwelling in Eastern Connecticut.[1] It is commonly supposed that these tribes were also tributary to the Six Nations. To the same great power were subject the clans between the Hudson and the Connecticut, and every year two aged but haughty Mohawks might be seen going from village to village to collect the tribute that was their due. It is asserted that as late as 1756, a small tribe near Sugar Loaf mountain made an annual payment to this nation of £20 in wampum. Individual as well as national obligations were similarly satisfied. Like the early German, the Indian set a marketable value on human life, and a suitable present of wampum

[1] Thomson's *Long Island*, p. 62.

on the part of the murderer, if accepted, freed him from the vengeance of the dead man's friends, for the wampum belt washed away all traces of the bloody stain.[1] Perhaps desire for another's wampum sometimes prompted him to such foul deeds, as it did the white man,[2] though happily the Indian seldom stooped to theft.

Thus in the rude civilization of the aborigine wampum filled a space accorded to no one article in our own. Through life it faithfully met all his varied wants, and when he came to die, his friends placed it about his dead body,[3] that it

[1] *League of the Iroquois*, p. 331.

[2] It is stated in *Winthrop's Journal* [p. 147 and after], that four servants of Plymouth were condemned and hung upon their own confession of having murdered an Indian to obtain his wampum.

[3] In the tomb, apparently of a chief, in the Grove creek mound, 1700 beads were found around the remains of a skeleton, and such deposits are frequently found in opening old graves.

might befriend him on his journey to the spirit land, and on his arrival there gain for him admission to the realms of the god Kiehtan, the abode of the blessed.

The shrewd commercial instinct of the Dutch colonists was quick to profit by wampum in their dealings with the aborigines. Happily its most extensive producers dwelt at their very doors. They obtained from the Long Island tribes in return for knives, scissors, hatchets and the like, great quantities of this novel coinage, and then exchanged it with the Indians of the mainland for hides and furs, often plunging far into the interior and drawing thence products which gold could never have won from their possessors. Did common trifles fail, wampum was the unfailing reserve whose charms the savage was powerless to resist. With such an adjutant trade became doubly flourishing and lucrative. Posts sprang up

along the Hudson, in the valley of the Connecticut and as far south as the Schuylkill, through all of which ceaseless revenues poured into the coffers of the Dutch West India Company. Connecticut, alone, annually furnished to her traders ten thousand beaver skins.[1] In all this traffic wampum played a leading part, so much so in fact that fur trade and wampum trade became synonymous terms.

Toward the close of September, 1627, Isaac de Rasieres was dispatched from New Amsterdam on an embassy to the English colony at New Plymouth. Being of a trading turn, he carried with him in his vessel among other merchandise about £50 in wampum which he managed to dispose of there.[2] Wampum was as yet comparatively unknown in Massachusetts bay, and

[1] *Winthrop*, I, 113.

[2] Bradford's *Letters*, *Mass. Hist. Collections*, III, 54.

the colonists were ignorant of its uses. This purchase made with great reluctance, they sent to their trading house at Kennebeck, where "when the inland Indians came to know it, they could scarce procure enough for many years together." Everywhere in New England, as in the Dutch provinces, wampum soon became a leading article in the Indian trade, and added greatly to its profits. Seven years after its introduction to Kennebeck, Mr. Winslow carried thence into England about twenty hogsheads of beaver, "the greater part whereof was traded for wampampeage" during the year. By 1636 this trade had grown to such proportions in Massachusetts colony that the standing colony were authorized to farm it out for the increase of the public revenues, and to establish the severest penalties for any infringement of the privileges thus granted. The traders of New England were now ranging the forests in

all directions and often plunged into them for hundreds of miles to the great alarm of the Dutch who feared that the English would monopolize all the profits of the trade, and that "they should be obliged to eat oats out of English hands."[1] From the north the French descended in great numbers, eager to share in the gains of this traffic, and often encroached upon the domains of other nations. The solitudes of the wilderness thus resounded every where to the tread of the adventurous white man, who, lured on by the hope of gain, thought not of the dangers that beset his path. It doubtless afforded the Indian no little satisfaction to welcome the haughty foreigner to his wigwam, and while dictating his own terms, to receive in payment the honored currency of his fathers. When he took his pay, he measured it off after his own fashion, the unit being the dis-

[1] *Doc. Rel.* to *Colonial History of New York*, I, 459.

tance from the elbow to the end of the little finger. According to one authority it made no difference whether a short or tall man measured it.[1] Adrian Van Tiedhoven, clerk of the court at the South river, however tells a different story, complaining bitterly "because the Indians always take the largest and tallest among them to trade with us."

But hides and furs were not the only articles which wampum purchased from the natives. It was a frequent consideration in early Indian deeds. In the records of Windsor, Conn., is preserved a deed, which conveys territory lying between the Podunk and Scantic rivers, and extending a day's march into the country, the price paid for which was fifteen fathoms of wampum and twenty cloth coats. Most of the present towns of Warwick and Coventry in Rhode Island, were purchased of

[1] Lawson's *History of North Carolina*, ed. of 1714, page 315.

Miantinomi, sachem of the Narragansetts, for one hundred and forty-four fathoms of wampum.[1]

In New England the limits of the trade were considerably extended by the quantities of wampum tribute which poured into the hands of the colonial authorities. Wampum was the commodity in which tribute was universally paid, and the stern justice of our fathers imposed this with no sparing hand upon their weak and erring neighbors. In 1634, the Pequots were fined 400 fathoms of wampum, and two years afterwards 600 fathoms more.[2] After 1637, the Long Island Indians paid a large yearly tribute to the united commissioners,[3] as did also the Block Islanders. It is often difficult, as in the present case, to see the justice of such exactions. These Indians had

[1] Rhode Island *Colonial Records*, 1, 130.

[2] *Winthrop*, pages 147, 149 and 192.

[3] Thompson's *Long Island*, page 62.

been guilty of no unfriendly act, and the utmost urged in extenuation of the imposition was the flimsy pretence that but for an alleged protection the same sums would have gone in fealty to their red brethren. In 1644, the Narragansetts were fined 2000 fathoms, and doomed to pay yearly thereafter a fathom for every Pequot man, half a fathom for every youth and a hand breadth for every child in the tribe. As late as 1658,[1] the Pequots were fined ten fathoms a man, and one of their number imprisoned for offering refuse wampum in part payment.[2] This tribe had suffered so many and severe exactions that they were obliged to search in all directions for the material out of which to manufacture their wampum, and occasionally crossed over to Long Island for this purpose. The Montauk sachem

[1] *Hazard*, II, page 413.

[2] *Hazard*, III, page 44.

fearing that his shores would be exhausted of their shelly wealth, opposed these visits, until the Pequots succeeded in securing the interposition of the united commissioners in their behalf.[1] In 1663, the assessment upon this tribe was fixed at 80 fathoms. Such are a few of the many instances to be found in the records, showing the enormous amount of wampum paid as tribute by the natives to the early authorities of New England.

The Dutch supply was augmented in a different manner. They soon found the native manufactories inadequate to the demand and erected mints of their own, and by introducing steel drills and polishing lathes won a great advantage over the original wearisome hand processes. The French sought a still greater advantage by substituting porcelain for shells, but the Indians were not to

[1] *Hazard*, II, pages 387 and 388.

be thus easily imposed upon, and the manufacture of earthen money was soon given up.[1] It is sometimes asserted that the English engaged in making wampum, though the statement appeared to be without foundation. The Dutch, however, produced it in large quantities, and were thereby enabled to enlarge the circle of their own posts; and also to furnish liberal supplies to the traders, north and south, who ranged over the entire Atlantic coast from the St. Lawrence to the gulf. In Virginia, the Carolinas, and later in Georgia, wampum was the chief medium employed in the fur trade.

The poverty of the early settlers, added to that short sighted and now obsolete policy of Europe in the seventeenth century, which jealously sought to keep all specie within her borders, produced a general dearth of the precious metals in

[1] Thompson's *Long Island*, page 60.

the currency of the New World, and all kinds of shifts were made to eke out the scanty supply. Corn, wheat, oats, peas, poultry and the like sufficed to satisfy any obligation. But then, though answering well in cases of barter, where two mutual desires met, were far too bulky and unwieldy for general use. Naturally then recourse was had to an article in extensive use among the traders, and possessing in a measure the portability of gold and silver, and *wampum* became a constituent part of the currency. In one feature at least, the old civilization held its own beside the new. As early as 1637, wampum was made a legal tender in Massachusetts for any sum under 12d, at the rate of six beads for a penny.[1] The same year it became a legal tender in Connecticut

[1] *Records of Mass.*, 1, 238. Where only one rate is mentioned, as here, we are probably to understand the white, and deduct one-half for the black or blue.

for any amount. The general court declaring it receivable for taxes "at fousen (4) a penny."[1]

But coin grew scarcer in Massachusetts and shell money increased in value, till in 1640, the authorities were compelled to adopt the valuation of Connecticut, ordering that the white pass at four and the "bleuse" at two a penny, "and not above 12*d* at a time except the receiver desire more."[2] The public needs soon required another change, and the legality of shell currency rose to £10.[3] This novel coinage, thus regulated from time to time, answered well for money throughout the colonies, till after a while trouble arose from an unexpected source. The enormous demand at length brought upon the market beads of stone or unallowed shells, as also many rough,

[1] *Colonial Records of Conn.*, I, 12

[2] *Records of Mass.*, I, p. 302.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 329.

ill-strung specimens of the genuine article. The disorder was aggravated, because the Indians, who best understood the qualities of their wampum, would take only the genuine from the traders, while the refuse was thrown back into the circulation of the colonies. The commissioners of the United Colonies being appealed to for a remedy recommended to the separate governments to suppress this poor "peage" by law. Accordingly in 1648, the general courte of Connecticut ordered "that no peage, white or black, be paid or received, but what is strung and in some measure strung suitably, and not small and great, uncomely and disorderly mixt, as formerly it hath beene."[1] A similar order was passed in Massachusetts, where it was further enacted to prepare this Indian money for ready use, that it be "suitably strung in eight known parcells, 1*d.* 3*s.* 12*d.* 5*s.*

[1] *Col. Records of Conn.*, I, 179.

in white; 2*d.* 6*s.* 6*d.* and 10*s.* in blacke."[1] Another favorite length was the fathom, containing 360 beads and current at about 10*s.* Thus during these years shell money was current throughout New-England, and constituted, doubtless, the best and most convenient portion of the currency. The government received it for taxes, the farmer for his produce, the merchant for his wares, and the laborer for his hire. It formed a frequent item in the inventories of deceased colonists, being often the only cash mentioned. It even found its way into the coffers of Harvard college, for we read that the lease of the wampum trade in Massachusetts was attended with the obligation to take from the college the wampum which it might have on hand from time to time.[2] In the forest, likewise, it now circulated as money, for

[1] *Records of Mass.*, II, 261.

[2] *Records of Mass.*, I, 323.

the Indian was quick to copy the white man's use of his beads.

Toward the middle of the century wampum reached its highest value in New-England. Thereafter the increasing prosperity of the colonies, the domestic coinage of silver, and perhaps the too extensive manufacture of the shell money, gradually diminishing its value, drove it from circulation. In 1650, it was refused in payment of country rates in Massachusetts.[1] This action of the government naturally created distrust among the people, to counteract which it was ordered that "peage" should still "remagne pawable from man to man, according to the law in force." Close upon this followed another decree, limiting it as a legal tender to 40 shillings.[2] These laws continued in force till 1661, when wampum was

[1] *Records of Mass.*, II, 279.

[2] *Ibid*, IV, p. 36.

declared to be no longer a legal tender in Massachusetts.[1] Rhode Island passed a similar decree the next year [2] and Connecticut, probably, soon afterwards. But though wampum now ceased to be legally current, it lingered among the people for years and constituted in great part the small change of the community. As late as 1704, it was a common mode of payment in country places.[3]

Shell money was used extensively and for a long time in the Dutch colonies. Here for a while absolutely no coin was in circulation, and wampum being the feasible substitute was universally adopted. So great was the popular demand, that even the unstrung wampum, prohibited in the eastern colonies, passed at but a trifling discount.[4] For

[1] *Records of Mass.*, IV, part 2, pages 4, 5.

[2] *R. Island Colonial Records*, I, page 474.

[3] Madam Knight's *Journal*, written in 1704, page 43.

[4] *Doc. relating to the Colonial Hist of New York*, I, 474.

many years the easy-going government at New Amsterdam does not seem to have regulated the currency by law, as did its more thorough neighbors, and the amount of wampum requisite to make a stiver, was left to be determined by the parties concerned. Such a course was fraught with inconvenience to the public, and frequent petitions were made for the establishment of some uniform rate.[1]

The rate, however, which obtained by common consent, was four of the strung and six of the loose beads for a stiver.[2] But in 1641, there came from foreign parts an inundation of "nasty, rough" sewan, which drove the better sort out of circulation, "nay," so runs the record, "threatened the ruin of the country," and legislation was imperatively demanded. This inferior article was

[1] *Ibid*, p. 336.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 425.

therefore condemned to pass five for a stiver during the following month, and afterwards six, at which rate the loose, unstringed wampum, which served the community as change, subsequently circulated.[1] The importance of wampum during these years is well illustrated by the fact that the opulent West India Company in 1664, sought to negotiate a loan of five or six thousand guilders in it, wherewith to pay the laboring people, the obligation to be satisfied with *good negroes* or other goods.[2] The Dutch succumbed to superior force, but wampum still held its own. It continued to be the chief currency not only in New York, but in the many settlements to the west and south, which were then under the control of the authorities at New York. In 1672, the inhabitants of Hoanskill and New Castle on the Delaware,

[1] O'Callaghan's *New Netherland*, I, 230.

[2] *Doc. Col. Hist of New York*, II, p. 371.

having been plundered by Dutch privateers were permitted by the government at New York to lay an impost of four guilders, in wampum, upon each anker of strong rum imported or sold there.[1] A guilder, which was about six pence currency or four pence sterling, consisted of twenty stivers, and eight beads were reckoned equal to one stiver. As heretofore there was little or no certain coin in circulation and wampum passed for current payment in all cases. Indeed the country was so drained of even this currency by the Indian trade, that there was difficulty in obtaining a sufficiency. To remedy this state of affairs, the governor and council of New York were in 1673 constrained to issue their proclamation which was published at Albany, Esopus, Delaware, Long Island and the adjacent parts, commanding that "instead of eight white and four black (beads), six white and

[1] Proud's *Hist. of Pennsylvania*, I, page 133.

three black should pass for a stiver; and three times so much the value of silver."[1]

The contributions in the churches were for many years made in wampum, and the first church on the Jersey shore was built with funds contributed in this way from Sabbath to Sabbath. As late as 1683, "the schoolmaster in Flatbush was paid his salary in wheat, wampum value: He was bound to provide a basin of water for the purpose of baptism, for which he received from the parents or sponsors twelve stivers in wampum."[2] Nor ten years later had the money of the aborigines become wholly supplanted by gold and silver, for we learn that "in 1693, the ferriage of each single person from New York to Brooklyn was eight stivers in wampum, or a

[1] Hazzard's *Annals of Pennsylvania.*

[2] O'Callaghan's *New Netherland*, I, 61.

silver two-pence."[1] Further than this we are unable to trace, though we have good reason to believe that it circulated, to a limited extent, for some time thereafter.

Thus while the Indian declined in power his simple coinage passed from hand to hand, among his conquerors, in the haunts where unnumbered generations of his ancestors had trafficked it in rude barter, or offered it with solemn ceremonial, their costliest offering, to their country's gods. It was for about a quarter of a century a legal tender in New England, while among the Dutch it was during half a century often the only circulating medium, and among both Dutch and English it filled a more or less important part in the currency for nearly an entire century.

When at length the increasing wealth of the people drove wampum out of common use, it still

[1] O'Callaghan's *New Netherland*, I, *ibid.*

remained an important article in commerce. It was manufactured at New York until the commencement of the present century to be used in traffic with the Indians, for whom it had lost none of its charms, and to be carried by our whalers into the northern seas.

Treaties and compacts between the different tribes and the states, and later the general government, continued to be ratified by the interchange of wampum belts. The records of the eighteenth century abound with instances of this character. The last occasion of the kind is believed to have been at Prairie du Chien in 1825.[1]

Among the Indians of the present day wampum is unknown. The name still remains, but the trifles to which it is applied bear no resemblance to the ancient article. The glass beads now

[1] Schoolcraft's *Notes on the Iroquois.*

current as wampum and the original wampum are not less unlike, than the squalid Blackfoot of our western plains, and the proud and imperious Mohawk, beside his native stream.