

no swelling in either; and scarcely ever produces those little pustules which occasion such smarting and itching to Europeans recently arrived. But the native and the White suffer equally from the sting, till the insect has withdrawn its sucker from the skin. After a thousand useless essays, M. Bonpland and myself tried the expedient of rubbing our hands and arms with the fat of the crocodile, and the oil of turtle-eggs, but we never felt the least relief, and were stung as before. I know that the Laplanders boast of oil and fat as the most useful preservatives; but the insects of Scandinavia are not of the same species as those of the Orinoco. The smoke of tobacco drives away our gnats, while it is employed in vain against the *zancudos*. If the application of fat and astringent* substances preserved the inhabitants of these countries from the torment of insects, as Father Gumilla alleges, why has not the custom of painting the skin become general on these shores? Why do so many naked natives paint only the face, though living in the neighbourhood of those who paint the whole body?†

We are struck with the observation, that the Indians of the Orinoco, like the natives of North America, prefer the substances that yield a red colour to every other. Is this predilection founded on the facility with which the savage procures ochreous earths, or the colouring fecula of anato and of chica? I doubt this much. Indigo grows wild in a great part of equinoctial America. This plant, like so many other leguminous plants, would have furnished the natives abundantly with pigments to colour themselves blue like the ancient Britons.‡ Yet we see no American tribe painted with indigo. It appears to me probable, as I have already hinted above, that the preference given by the Americans to the red colour is generally founded on the tendency which nations feel to attribute the idea of beauty to whatever characterises their national physiognomy. Men whose skin is naturally of a brownish red, love a red colour. If

* The pulp of the anato, and even the chica, are astringent and slightly purgative.

† The Caribs, the Salives, the Tamanacs, and the Maypures.

‡ The half-clad nations of the temperate zone often paint their skin of the same colour as that with which their clothes are dyed.