

masters of that vast country; if, without having been impeded by Christian settlements, they could follow freely the development of their barbarous institutions; the worship of the *botuto* would no doubt become of some political importance. That mysterious society of the initiated, those guardians of the sacred trumpet, would be transformed into a ruling caste of priests, and the oracle of Tomo would gradually form a link between the bordering nations.

In the evening of the 4th of May we were informed, that an Indian, who had assisted in dragging our bark over the portage of Pimichin, had been stung by a viper. He was a tall strong man, and was brought to the mission in a very alarming state. He had dropped down senseless; and nausea, vertigo, and congestions in the head, had succeeded the fainting. The liana called *vejuco de guaco*,* which M. Mutis has rendered so celebrated, and which is the most certain remedy for the bite of venomous serpents, is yet unknown in these countries. A number of Indians hastened to the hut of the sick man, and he was cured by an infusion of *raiz de mato*. We cannot indicate with certainty what plant furnishes this antidote; but I am inclined to think, that the *raiz de mato* is an apocynæ, perhaps the *Cerbera thevetia*, called by the inhabitants of Cumana *lingua de mato* or *contra-culebra*, and which they also use against the bite of serpents. A genus nearly allied to the *cerbera*† is employed in India for the same purpose. It is common enough to find in the same family of plants vegetable poisons, and antidotes against the venom of reptiles. Many tonics and narcotics are antidotes more or less active; and we find these in families very different‡ from each other, in the aristolochiæ, the apocynæ, the gentianæ, the polygalæ,

* This is a *mikania*, which was confounded for some time in Europe with the *ayapana*. De Candolle thinks that the *guaco* may be the *Eupatorium satuireifolium* of Lamarck; but this *Eupatorium* differs by its lineary leaves, while the *Mikania guaco* has triangular, oval, and very large leaves.

† *Ophioxylon serpentinum*.

‡ I shall mention as examples of these nine families; *Aristolochia anguicida*, *Cerbera thevetia*, *Ophiorhiza mungos*, *Polygala senega*, *Nicotiana tabacum*, (one of the remedies most used in Spanish America), *Mikania guaco*, *Hibiscus abelmoschus* (the seeds of which are very active), *Lanpujum rumphii*, and *Kunthia montana* (*Caña de la Vibora*).