

times of great scarcity? In Egypt, in the thirteenth century, the habit of eating human flesh pervaded all classes of society; extraordinary snares were spread for physicians in particular. They were called to attend persons who pretended to be sick, but who were only hungry; and it was not in order to be consulted, but devoured. An historian of great veracity, Abd-allatif, has related how a practice, which at first inspired dread and horror, soon occasioned not even the slightest surprise."*

Although the Indians of the Cassiquiare readily return to their barbarous habits, they evince, whilst in the missions, intelligence, some love of labour, and, in particular, a great facility in learning the Spanish language. The villages being, for the most part, inhabited by three or four tribes, who do not understand each other, a foreign idiom, which is at the same time that of the civil power, the language of the missionary, affords the advantage of more general means of communication. I heard a Poiñave Indian conversing in Spanish with a Guahibo, though both had come from their forests within three months. They uttered a phrase every quarter of an hour, prepared with difficulty, and in which the gerund of the verb, no doubt according to the grammatical turn of their own languages, was constantly

* "When the poor began to eat human flesh, the horror and astonishment caused by repasts so dreadful were such that these crimes furnished the never-ceasing subject of every conversation. But at length the people became so accustomed to it, and conceived such a taste for this detestable food, that people of wealth and respectability were found to use it as their ordinary food, to eat it by way of a treat, and even to lay in a stock of it. This flesh was prepared in different ways, and the practice being once introduced, spread into the provinces, so that instances of it were found in every part of Egypt. It then no longer caused any surprise; the horror it had at first inspired vanished; and it was mentioned as an indifferent and ordinary thing. This mania of devouring one another became so common among the poor, that the greater part perished in this manner. These wretches employed all sorts of artifices, to seize men by surprise, or decoy them into their houses under false pretences. This happened to three physicians among those who visited me; and a bookseller who sold me books, an old and very corpulent man, fell into their snares, and escaped with great difficulty. All the facts which we relate as eye-witnesses fell under our observation accidentally, for we generally avoided witnessing spectacles which inspired us with so much horror."—*Account of Egypt by Abd-allatif, physician of Bagdad, translated into French by De Sacy, p. 360—374.*