

the Amazon, Guallaga, and Brazil, can be procured, without being confounded together, from the places where they are prepared. Since the discovery of prussic acid,* and many other new substances eminently deleterious, the introduction of poisons prepared by savage nations is less feared in Europe; we cannot however appeal to ostrongly to the vigilance of those who keep such noxious substances in the midst of populous cities, the centres of civilization, misery, and depravity. Our botanical knowledge of the plants employed in making poison can be but very slowly acquired. Most of the Indians who make poisoned arrows, are totally ignorant of the nature of the venomous substances they use, and which they obtain from other people. A mysterious veil everywhere covers the history of poisons and of their antidotes. Their preparation among savages is the monopoly of the *piaches*, who are at once priests, jugglers, and physicians; it is only from the natives who are transplanted to the missions, that any certain notions can be acquired on matters so problematical. Ages elapsed before Europeans became acquainted through the investigation of M. Mutis, with the *bejuco del guaco* (*Mikania guaco*), which is the most powerful of all antidotes against the bite of serpents, and of which we were fortunate enough to give the first botanical description.

The opinion is very general in the missions that no cure is possible, if the *curare* be fresh, well concentrated, and have staid long in the wound, to have entered freely into the circulation. Among the specifics employed on the banks of the Orinoco, and in the Indian Archipelago, the most celebrated is muriate of soda.† The wound is rubbed

* First obtained by Scheele in the year 1782. Gay-Lussac (to whom we are indebted for the complete analysis of this acid) observes, that it can never become very dangerous to society, because its peculiar smell (that of bitter almonds) betrays its presence, and the facility with which it is decomposed makes it difficult to preserve.

† Oviedo (*Sommario delle Indie Orientali*) recommends sea-water as an antidote against vegetable poisons. The people in the missions never fail to assure European travellers, that they have no more to fear from arrows dipped in *curare*, if they have a little salt in their mouths, than from the electric shocks of the *gymnoti*, when chewing tobacco. Raleigh recommends as an antidote to the *ourari* (*curare*) the juice of garlick. [But later experiments have completely proved that if the poison has once fairly