

Africa, in the islands of Bunck and Los Idolos, eat a earth of which he had himself eaten, without being incommoded by it, and which also was a white and friable steatite. These examples of earth-eating in the torrid zone appear very strange. We are struck by the anomaly of finding a taste, which might seem to belong only to the inhabitants of the most sterile regions, prevailing among races of rude and indolent men, who live in the finest and most fertile countries on the globe. We saw at Popayan, and in several mountainous parts of Peru, lime reduced to a very fine powder, sold in the public markets to the natives among other articles of food. This powder, when eaten, is mingled with *coca*, that is, with the leaves of the *Erythroxyton peruvianum*. It is well known, that Indian messengers take no other aliment for whole days than lime and *coca*: both excite the secretion of saliva, and of the gastric juice; they take away the appetite, without affording any nourishment to the body. In other parts of South America, on the coast of Rio de la Hacha, the Guajiros swallow lime alone, without adding any vegetable matter to it. They carry with them a little box filled with lime, as we do snuff-boxes, and as in Asia people carry a betel-box. This American custom excited the curiosity of the first Spanish navigators. Lime blackens the teeth; and in the Indian Archipelago, as among several American hordes, to blacken the teeth is to beautify them. In the cold regions of the kingdom of Quito, the natives of Tigua eat habitually from choice, and without any injurious consequences, a very fine clay, mixed with quartzose sand. This clay, suspended in water, renders it milky. We find in their huts large vessels filled with this water, which serves as a beverage, and which the Indians call *agua* or *leche de llanka*.*

When we reflect on these facts, we perceive that the appetite for clayey, magnesian, and calcareous earth is most common among the people of the torrid zone; that it is not always a cause of disease; and that some tribes eat earth from choice, whilst others (as the Ottomacs in America, and the inhabitants of New Caledonia, in the Pacific) eat it from want, and to appease hunger. A great number of

* Water or milk of clay. *Llanka* is a word of the general language of the Incas, signifying fine clay.