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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

Some account of the Chirichuanos of Peru and of the Medi-
cines sold by them, by Wm. Roberts Esq. Member of the
Medico-Botanical Society of London. March 1831.

The following remarks I submit to the notice of the Medico-
Botanical Society, not so much for their utility, as to show
the state of Medicine in some parts of South America
existing at the present time. During a residence in
Peru I had opportunities of collecting information relative
to this class of people. The Chirichuanos are by some
called the Travelling Doctors of Peru and are Indians
of Upper Peru, or as now termed Bolivia, their principal
business when at home is to communicate the Curacas, where
they collect the different herbs, seeds, roots, &c. which
gain them a living, sending them, & giving advice
upon the different diseases met with during their
journeys. Their advice and knowledge of diseases only
extend to the remedies they happen to have with them; the
remedies are but few & seem to be as well known to us,
their names and supposed virtues, to their customers as
to themselves. Some idea may be formed of the distances
they travel, when it is stated that they go from Upper Peru
to Buenos Ayres a distance of more than 2000 miles, &
thus are to be met with likewise all over the Coast of
Lower Peru; & these journeys are chiefly performed on
foot. At first travelling seemed to go together with asses laden,
and at certain points they diverge, some taking one road, some
another; at times one only, may be met with, with a large
Wattleb string across the Shoulder, containing the remedies
each done up in a little bag. These Indians are of the
middle size, of a dark copper colour, rather coarse features,
& what does not add to their beauty is the continual
chewing of the "Coca" (leaves of the Erythroxylon peruvicum,
with a strong alkaline ash) which gives to the teeth and
mouth a dirty green colour, & unpleasant odour. Their dress
is composed of a coarse cotton shirt without a collar,
small cloaths made wide behind, a pair of coarse cloth
of the wool of the Llama, sometimes stockings are worn

but without feet, sandals of hide, a large brimmed hat
of the work of the Shama or Vicuña, the never failing &
useful Poncho, and lastly, a little Bag for roasted Indian
Corn, Charqui or dried Beef, a few capiscums and a gourd
for holding water. Thus equipped he is ready for a journey
of any distance, and any sort of country. Their dress once
put on, very rarely comes off until even out, and black
is their favourite colour. Their language is one of
the aboriginal dialects, pretty well defined and is
termed the Aymara. They understand Spanish, but
some of them speak it also in differently. They are
not looked upon generally by the better informed folks
in large towns, as having any pretensions to the know-
ledge of medicine, but, his purchased of them, Gum
Copal, Gum Thun or Insouc and some other resins
kinds for the churches; Alum, Sulphur & a few such
like things, but, in the country & villages where from
populous towns, much credit & belief is given to
their remedies. They sell them at moderate prices and
Advice gratis. On a Christmas entering a town it is
soon known, & in a short time he is surrounded, when for
every malady he has a cure & for ever the a salve.

From what I have seen of them, they seem perfectly to
understand their calling, & somewhat wider than their
customers. Their principal trade is in selling charms.
These are seeds & perforated, & hung round the neck, but
I have noticed are many. The most valued article they might
bring from Upper Peru, is the Peruvian Bark, this would
sell at a great price, towards the coast, where Agues of
a very bad cast are very common: indeed in many of
Provinces of Peru towards the South, the Bark is hardly
known, where it is known, it is given in powder in
large doses, mixed with old wine with repeated draughts
of lemonade & certainly is a sovereign remedy.

These Christmases sometimes perform the operation
of bleeding, this is done with a very crude sort of remedy, made
by fixing into a piece of wood a chip of glass, placing it
on the vein & giving til a neck with the fore finger on the thumb,
something like the instrument & method used in bleeding
horses. The following are the names & of most of the
articles that compose their Travelling Shop and as to their
utility, in my humble opinion, be that they do little good
or harm, some of the medicines may have properties to
recommend them if administered in proper doses and
in proper quantities.

- Jaco** - Bole, principally of Rinde of Soom.
- Salvia** - good for the Ague, this is a term for a cold the substance is ^{five secretions} either taken, or the leaves moistened with Saliva and applied to the temples. It is a species of Sage.
- Yournua**. bark of a tree, powdered and taken as snuff in head ache.
- Piedra Biscal**. This seems to be some inert earthy body, it is directed to be ground & taken in warm water for the heartburn -
- Quena Quena**. Seeds seemingly of a species of *Stemona*, decoction of it used in head aches and tercianas or Agues.
- Contrayerva**. A species of *Dorstenia*, infusion in water given in pains of the Stomach -
- Chacaire**. Given in pains of the Stomach, powdered and taken in warm water. This is the sacrament of a Bird called "Coco" -
- Suelda con Suelda**, ground into powder & then fried in fat, made into Plasters for broken bones - It takes its name from the Spanish word *Soldado* to mend or soldier -
- Huachanca**. From a species of *Convolvulus*, probably *Salvia* is used as a purgation, the dose is marked in the Specimen -
- Corro or Corru** Powdered and mixed with fat & urine, used to rub the bones when painful - seems to be the seeds on the back outside of a species of the *Helicosternus* or *Serris* Tree -
- Charma**. Some little shells mixed at times with the above. (It accompanies the above.)
- Vocat**. For Bad Eyes, the leaf is chewed & the eyes anointed with the Saliva &c. the bad eyes during the operation must be closed looking at the Sun -
- Colquimilla**. This is *Alum*; when in iteb or humbles on the skin the parts affected first washed with Urine, & then the Alum in fine powder sprinkled over the parts -
- Chunchumantana**. For heart burn -
- Ymate**. For Scurvy, powdered and taken in water; seems to be a species of *Veratrum*.
- Rasa de la China** or *Chinche Root* used in gonorrhoea, when the menses do not flow regularly - given as a decoction -
- San Juanillo** or *Saint John*, an agreeable bitter, chewed for tooth ache.
- Vintment of Saint Peter**. Was, greater &c. The Chunchuanos say several rare herbs enter into its composition -
- Acete de Maria** or *Marys Oil*, a small quantity, used as a plaster applied to the navel of females, during child birth, to give easy labour.
- Pelo de Uteruica**. Fat of a wild animal called the *Uteruica*

rubbed round the waist of women in labour, said to facilitate it. —

Parches. Patches or plasters, these are of various materials, but principally of leaves of favourite plants, sometimes the 'Coca, Soy, Senal, &c. These are moistened with Saliva & applied to the temples in head aches &c. At times some ointments are prepared from the leaves with Fat & wax. —

Charms. These are of various descriptions, such as the Talisman, Fairies, small red berries, another, a large black seed. These worn prevent people from Colds and Coughs. — Lardstone if worn by either sex ensures the Love of those they are attached to. Said likewise to attract Lovers. Another property is attributed to this substance, that of keeping Evil Spirits from the wearer. There are other charms against Witches, Ghosts, &c. Some against Poison likebites & Chylores are recommended in cases of Holpaga on the Boreas, but of such Party and useless substances, that they need not be mentioned here. — These are nearly all the remedies that compose the Wallet or Travelling Shop of the Chirichuanos, & very precious to be of any real utility. —

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to the Museum
and 92nd April
1831.
By William A. Blandy Esq.

Original

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at the University of
Cambridge