

REPORT OF THE TRIAL OF SARRACENIA PURPUREA, OR THE PITCHER PLANT, IN SMALL-POX.

By J. F. MARSON, F.R.C.S.,

SURGEON TO THE SMALL-POX AND VACCINATION HOSPITAL, LONDON.

[*Read June 1, 1863.*]

A COMMUNICATION, seemingly of great promise, from Mr. Chalmers Miles of the Royal Artillery, was read sometime since before a meeting of this society, on the use of *sarracenia purpurea* in small-pox. The specimens of the plant which accompanied the communication were submitted to me for trial at the Small-pox Hospital, the root being the part of the plant particularly recommended for use.

The public generally and the profession ought to feel very much obliged to Mr. Miles for the great trouble he took in bringing the subject before them. And although I shall not, unfortunately, be able to report favourably on the use of this plant in small-pox, I feel that Mr. Miles is just as deserving of our thanks for the great trouble he has taken; and for the expense I have no doubt he has been put to in gaining the particulars stated in the communication in question, as if the remedy had succeeded ever so well.

The root was said to be the part of the plant that, when made into a decoction, afforded the best form of giving the medicine. There was about enough for three persons only in the canister transmitted by Mr. Miles to this country from Nova Scotia, and given to me. I had, therefore, to make up my mind what were the most desirable cases of small-pox to test its efficacy in. I fixed on, first, a malignant case, one of those attended with hæmorrhage from the mucous surfaces; second, a severely confluent case, such as my experience has taught me usually dies, owing to the great amount of eruption; and third, if possible, a corymbose case, one of those rather rare and nearly always fatal cases of small-pox.

To give the remedy a fair trial, it was necessary to have the cases on which to try it in the early stage of the disease, during the first few days of eruption.

There was but little small-pox in London at the time the

plant was first submitted to me for trial; and, although I was on the watch for such cases as I have mentioned, several months elapsed before I had a suitable opportunity of trying the efficacy of the alleged remedy. Of course, I wished to meet with the cases I had fixed on free from any suspicion of their having been vaccinated; this was absolutely necessary, because I know what great influence vaccination has in altering what may be called the normal course of small-pox by modifying it. After several disappointments, unnecessary further to detail, small-pox became epidemic in the autumn of last year, and the opportunities became numerous of trying the sarracenia.

About the same time Mr. Miles returned to this country, and he was good enough to write to me and place at my disposal any amount of the sarracenia I might require, to be forwarded through the agency of Messrs. Savory and Moore.

I tried the decoction of sarracenia made from the root by simmering an ounce in a pint and a half of water for four hours, until reduced to a pint; and a quarter part was usually given for a dose twice a day, for two days or more. I also gave in some cases the liq. sarraceniæ supplied by Messrs. Savory and Moore. In all, fifteen patients have been treated with the sarracenia, selected for their severity, as I have described; such cases as I believe would not get well under ordinary treatment. They have all died.

The cases were selected on admission in the early stage of the disease, on account of the severe symptoms manifested, and because I felt it was of no use to try the efficacy of the sarracenia on mild cases, or vaccinated cases, that I knew very well would recover without anything being done for them beyond the ordinary care of such cases, by giving salines if required, occasional aperients, and suitable diet, etc.

I cannot say that the sarracenia had any effect whatever. It did not save life; it did not modify in the least the eruption of small-pox; it did not influence any of the secretions; it did not increase the secretion of urine; in only one instance it seemed to act on the bowels, this seeming effect might, however, easily have been from other causes.

The particulars of the fifteen cases taken daily at the time of the trial of the sarracenia are appended to this report; they would be, perhaps, rather tedious to the members of the society for me to read them now in detail, but I will run over two or three of the cases to show how the notes were taken.

Two cases have been admitted into the hospital that had

taken a decoction of the leaves and stems of the sarracenia before admission. The first, a very mild case, having four vaccine cicatrices, was highly modified, I believe, by the vaccination. The second case was confluent, was without vaccination; not severely confluent, and was wholly unmodified. They both recovered. The recovery might, perhaps, by some be attributed to the sarracenia, but I believe it had nothing to do with it. The vaccinated case was, as I have said, very mild, due, I believe, to the vaccination. As to the second case, about half our confluent unvaccinated cases recover with ordinary treatment.

In conclusion, I may state, that had I found the sarracenia do any good I should have taken an earlier opportunity of reporting the fact to the profession. As it failed I thought it well to defer this report, that others might without bias try the plant during the present epidemic of small-pox, and favour us with their opinion of its reputed power of controlling the course of small-pox in its severe forms.

APPENDIX.

Cases of Small-pox treated with Sarracenia, 1862.

1. Margaret Clayton, 18 years of age; small-pox, confluent, with menorrhagia; unvaccinated; was admitted into the Small-pox Hospital Oct. 8, 1862. Fourth day of illness, second of eruption. Took a quarter of a pint of the dec. sarraceniæ at one o'clock at night, Oct. 8, and a quarter of a pint, in two doses, the following day. She would not afterwards take any more, and died Oct. 12th.

2. Mary Ann Berkeley, 11 years; small-pox, malignant; unvaccinated; admitted Oct. 22. Fourth day of illness, second of eruption. Took two ounces of the dec. sarraceniæ, made from that sent by Messrs. Butler and M'Culloch, every six hours until the pint was consumed, beginning on the day of admission. Died Oct. 25, in the evening; seventh day of illness, fifth of eruption.

3. John Maddox, 11 years; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated, admitted Oct. 22; fifth day of illness, second of eruption. Took the same evening two oz. dec. sarraceniæ (Butler and M'Culloch), and continued it every six hours until the pint was consumed. Died Oct. 28; eleventh day of illness, eighth of eruption.

4. Elias Hook Folson, 48 years, a machinist, from Massachusetts; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated; admitted Nov. 6; eighth day of illness, fifth of eruption. Took the dec.

sarraceniæ, that sent by Mr. Miles, in quarter pint doses, beginning the day of admission, twice the following day, and one dose the succeeding day. Died Nov. 13; fifteenth day of illness, and twelfth of eruption.

5. John Hutchings, 18 years, baker; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated; admitted Nov. 18; fifth day of illness, second of eruption. Began the dec. sarraceniæ the following day. Took two quarter-pints one day, and two quarter-pints the following day. Died Nov. 25; twelfth day of illness, ninth of eruption.

6. George Dedman, 25, labourer; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated; admitted Dec. 2; fifth day of illness, third of eruption. Began the dec. sarraceniæ same day, took one dose quarter-pint, two doses following day, and one the next. Died Dec. 10; thirteenth day of illness, eleventh of eruption.

7. William Blake, 17, baker; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated; admitted Dec. 3; fifth day of illness, second of eruption. Began the dec. sarraceniæ next day; took two quarter-pint doses, and the remainder the following day. Died Dec. 20; twenty-second day of illness, and nineteenth of eruption.

8. Charles Baldock, 19, footman; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated; admitted Dec. 11; fourth day of illness, second of eruption. Began the dec. sarraceniæ Dec. 12 and took the pint on that and following day, continued it through another pint, and died Dec. 21; fourteenth day of illness, twelfth of eruption.

9. John Jones, 25, draper's assistant; small-pox, confluent; vaccinated in South Wales in infancy, no cicatrix. Began the dec. sarraceniæ the following day (Dec. 12); admitted 11th; seventh day of illness, fifth of eruption. Took the pint of decoction during the two days, 12th and 13th Dec., and continued it through another pint. Died Dec. 15; eleventh day of illness, ninth of eruption.

10. John Zambra, 33, confectioner; small-pox, confluent; vaccinated near Como, one indifferent cicatrix; admitted Dec. 11; second day of eruption. Began the dec. sarraceniæ Dec. 14, and continued it to a double dose, two pints. Died Dec. 18; eleventh day of illness, ninth of eruption.

11. James Harvey, 21, labourer; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated; admitted Dec. 19; sixth day of illness, fourth of eruption. Began dec. sarraceniæ same day. Died Dec. 28; fifteenth day of illness, thirteenth of eruption.

12. Thomas Underwood Josslyn, 22, draper's assistant;

small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated (cut twice for cow-pox in Essex without effect); admitted Jan. 19, 1863; eighth day of illness, sixth of eruption. Began the day of admission with a drachm of liq. sarraceniæ every four or five hours—a drachm being stated to be a full dose. Took three bottles, in all an ounce and a half of the liq. sarraceniæ; no effect. Died Jan. 24; thirteenth day of illness, eleventh of eruption.

13. Ann Oliver, 30, barmaid; small-pox, confluent, hæmorrhagic; vaccinated at Lymington, two indifferent cicatrices; fifth day of illness, third of eruption, Jan. 24. Began the following day with a drachm of liq. sarraceniæ every four or five hours. Took an ounce and a half of the liq. sarraceniæ. No effect. Died Jan. 28; ninth of illness, seventh of eruption.

14. Thomas Couchman, 35, stone sawyer; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated; admitted Jan. 31, 1863; eighth day of illness, sixth of eruption. Began the liq. sarraceniæ day of admission, one drachm for a dose every five or six hours—took six drachms. Died Feb. 5.

15. James Underwood, 39, labourer; small-pox, confluent; unvaccinated; admitted Jan. 31; sixth day of illness, fourth of eruption. Began dec. sarraceniæ, same day; took six drachms. Died Feb. 5.

Note.—The second and third cases only took the decoction of sarracenia supplied by Messrs. Butler and M'Culloch, a mixture of root, stalks, and leaves. All the rest of the cases took the sarracenia first sent by Mr. Miles, or that supplied at his request by Messrs. Savory and Moore.
