

sure, and with it the removal of the facial deformity, in the simplest manner and in a short time. But the greatest advantage lies in the fact that, in case of a relapse, which may occur after every method, not excepting the obliteration of the lachrymal sac (a thing not always quickly accomplished), we have the way open for the introduction of the probe, and that patients living at a distance can be taught, or have their friends taught, how to introduce the probe, thus enabling us to prosecute the cure at our convenience.

MEDICINAL PLANTS INDIGENOUS AT PARÁ, USEFUL IN DYSENTERY AND DIARRHŒA.

By J. F. DA SILVA LIMA, M.D.*

I WAS quite flattered recently by receiving from an eminent physician of Pará, Dr. Francisco da Silva Castro, a valuable donation of three remedial agents of that Province, which have proved efficacious, in the practice of that learned colleague and diligent observer, against the bloody-flux that prevailed in the city of Belem (Pará) the past year.

Learning that an epidemic dysentery prevailed in Bahia, Dr. Silva Castro with laudable generosity hastened to furnish us with these remedies, in order to give to our many sick the advantages derived from his own experience, and to afford us an opportunity of submitting to clinical tests the virtues of these agents in the treatment of this formidable disease. The occasion, however, had passed, by the subsidence of the epidemic, when Dr. Silva Castro's offering came to hand. I hope, nevertheless, to avail myself of it in sporadic cases of this disease, not infrequent amongst us, and in due time to publish the results of the trial, should they appear likely to become useful to the profession.

But as no opportunity has yet arisen, I deem it not improper to state what these agents are, with the information received from our distinguished colleague of their effects, and his modes of administration.

I. *Marupá* or *Marupá-miri*.—On this plant Dr. Silva Castro has favored me with the following extract from his unpublished work:

"Common name—*Marupá* or *marupá-miri* (Pará, Amazonas).

"Scientific name—*Simaruba amara* Paraensis—belongs to the family of Rutaceæ. A small shrub.

"Part employed—Bark of the root.

"Action, or virtues—Tonic; and, in larger doses, emetic.

"Dose and formula—Internally; one or two drachms in decoction with a pound or more of water.

"Remarks.—Very useful in diarrhœa and dysentery; and to be recommended."

According to our colleague, the *marupá* is not only efficacious but quite infallible in the treatment of diarrhœa and dysentery; and was the therapeutic agent relied on when these diseases raged in Pará in the beginning of the year 1868, as may be seen by the following extract from his Report as Inspector of Public Health to the President of the Province. "It should be stated that the remedy most constantly used to combat this disease (dysentery), and which gave the best results, was the bark of the root of the *marupá-miri* (*simaruba amara*), one drachm to a pound of decoction, of which an ounce every two hours was given until the disease yielded—a result generally obtained in four or five days from the first administration. A diet of warm simples from chicken, fresh meat, or rice alone, materially aided recovery.

II. *Pajurá*.—Concerning this Dr. Silva Castro writes:—The *Pajurá* is the nut or seed of that name. It is derived from a large tree, which grows in low or wet lands on the borders of rivers, lakes, &c.; but I have never seen it, and therefore do not know to what family it belongs. The fruit is large and has a delicious flavor. The nut is given in powder, in scruple doses, three or four times a day in any vehicle, and is decidedly efficacious. The Indians and the people of the interior use it with great benefit. I tried it in two refractory cases, and obtained good results."

III. *Pereiorá*, or *precious bark*.—In relation to this plant Dr. Silva Castro sent me a copy of the following passages from Martius (*Systema Materiae Medicæ Vegetabilis Brasiliensis*);—"Laurineæ. *Pereiorá*," or *precious bark*, Rio-Negro (*Mespilodaphne pretiosa*). The bark of this equally great forest tree, celebrated by the name of *canella* among the inhabitants of Orinoco, aromatic in flavor, warming and sweetish, corresponds to true *canella*. Its odor is that of *sassafras*, a mixture of *canella* and roses. It contains, principally in the inner bark, a yellowish ethereal oil, heavier than water, and comparable to the oil of *canella*. Medicinal value is accorded to it principally with the bark of *sassafras*; and its use has been skilfully adjusted in decoctions, infusions, and baths, for many diseases, as, for

* *Gazeta Medica da Bahia*, Jan. 15, 1869.

instance, nervous debility, œdema of the feet, chronic catarrh, dropsy, gout, &c.

Although Dr. Silva Castro has not full confidence in all the vaunted virtues of *Pereiorá*, he nevertheless affirms that a tea-like infusion of the scraped bark, in the proportion of one ounce to a pound of water, is useful in diarrhoea and dysentery; and that the Indians of Rio-Negro give preference to the fruit, dried and given in powder. Our colleague made some trials of the infusion with beneficial results.

Having shown to my friend, Dr. Bomfim, Professor of Botany in our Medical Faculty, the three specimens sent from Pará by Dr. Silva Castro, and his letter, the Professor had the goodness to send me the following note which, for the elucidation of this point in our National *Materia Medica*, I now transcribe:

"*Marupá-miri*.—This is the *Simaruba Paraensis*, mentioned in eighth edition of the Formulary of Dr. Chernoviz, and in the *Materia Medica* of Dr. Beirao, as possessing the same medicinal properties as *Simaruba Officinalis*.

"Both plants belong to the family of *Simarubaceæ*, established in 1808 by Richard Pae, reduced by Adr. de Jussieu in 1825 to a simple species of *Rutaceæ*, and lately elevated to the rank of a botanic family by Lindley and the principal botanists of the day.

"The *Simaruba Officinalis* was introduced into Europe in 1813, having been accounted by the inhabitants of Cayenne and Guyana as a *specific* in dysenteric affections. Its valuable powers, against such diseases, were confirmed by the celebrated botanist Antonio de Jussieu during the epidemic which prevailed in Paris in 1809. Since that time it has been proclaimed, and received, as an anti-dysenteric of the first class.

"To its more active tonic properties are due these remarkable results, as well as those obtained in cases of debility of the system. It is fit, however, to state that its use ought to be advised in dysentery, only after satisfying certain general rules—after, for instance, subduing the gravel when it exists; else the perils of the disease may be augmented by exciting intense local inflammations.

"'Useful in advanced stages of dysentery and diarrhoea,' say Drs. Royle and Headland in their *Materia Medica*, fourth edition, 1866, page 356.

"As to the therapeutic uses of *Pereiorá*, the specimen sent by Dr. Silva Castro, and the clause in his letter commencing 'the

tea-like infusion of the bark,' &c., appear to me to give a sufficient idea of the plant and its properties against dysentery. An examination of the leaves proves it to belong to the variety *longifolia* or *angustifolia*.

"The fruit of the *Pajurá* shows it to be of the family of *Lauraceæ* or *Laurineæ*. It is dry, but drapelike, and within the nucleus is enclosed an embryo destitute of endosperm, similar to the embryo of the *Persea gratissima* (abacate). This embryo, reduced to powder, is that experimented on by Dr. Silva Castro, as well as that referred to in his letter.

"The *Pajurá* and the *Pereiorá* owe their good effects in dysentery and diarrhoea to an aromatic principle, that is, to an essential oil which generally exists in plants of this family."

I give publicity to the preceding statements concerning these three important remedies indigenous on the shores of the Amazons, not only in consideration of the eminent colleague who honored me with this valuable consignment, and to whom science already owes numerous interesting contributions to our National *Materia Medica*, but equally to enable other practitioners, hitherto unacquainted with these agents, to make a trial of them in dysentery and diarrhoea, and thus, by adding the results of their experience to those obtained by Dr. Silva Castro, to establish definitely the therapeutic value of these remedies in such diseases, and thence to spread abroad their adoption from a limited locality where their usefulness has rendered them a necessity.

B. E. C.

Reports of Medical Societies.

OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY OF BOSTON. SECRETARY,
HOWARD F. DAMON, M.D.

DECEMBER 5th, 1868.—The society met at the house of the President, Dr. Putnam, at 8, P.M.; the President in the chair.

CASE I.—*Puerperal Convulsions*.—Dr. Abbot reported the case.

The patient was a young, healthy, robust lady, pregnant for the second time, having aborted at an early period in her first pregnancy. She had been remarkably well during her second pregnancy, with the exception of being badly poisoned with ivy, two or three weeks previous to confinement. She awoke early in the morning and complained of intense headache, labor not having commenced, and had several convul-