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Parry CH (1786). Experiments relative to the medical effects of Turkey Rhubarb, and of the English Rhubarbs, No. I and No. II made on patients of the Pauper Charity. Letters and Papers of the Bath Society 11:431-453.

Whole Article

*Experiments relative to the Medical Effects of Turkey
Rhubarb, and of the English Rhubarbs, No. I. and
No. II. made on Patients of the Pauper Charity*

[By Dr. PARRY.]

N. B. The mark (—) in the second column signifies that the number of stools was unknown.

CLASS I.

Comparative Effects of the three Kinds.

1. Harriet Allen, aged $1\frac{1}{2}$; disease, sickness and purging after the confluent small-pox; on the 25th of April, 1785, she took eight grains of ipecacoanha, which operated well.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. II.

	Dose in grains.	Stools.	
April 26	10	3	with a little griping.
27	—	4	less watery than before.
28	10	1	before 12 at noon.
29	—	—	

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. I.

	Grains.	Stools.	
April 30	10	4	no griping.
May 1	—	3	
2	10	2	before 12 at noon with some griping.
3	—	2	with some griping.

TURKEY RHUBARB.

May 4	10	4	with considerable griping.
5	—	2	with griping.
6	—	1	
7	10	2	with griping.

7	10	5	free from complaint.
8		0	

2. Mary Best, aged 74; disease, violent pain in her stomach, increased by swallowing, with head-ach and costiveness.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

1785.			
Feb. 22		0	
23		1	
24	35	0	the powder taken at bed-time.
25		2	no griping.
26	35	0	the powder taken at bed-time.
27		4	flight griping.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

	Grains.	Stools.	
Feb. 28	35	0	the powder taken at bed-time.
Mar. 1	35	5 or 6	stools before night, after which the second powder was taken.
2		5 or 6	Pain of the stomach and head were much relieved, but afterwards increased.

TURKEY RHUBARB.

17		1	
18	35	0	no griping.
19		1	
20		1	
21		—	
22	35	3	flight griping.
23		1	
24		0	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

25	35	2	flight griping.
26		1	
27		1	
28		1	
29	35	2	flight griping.
30		1	
31		1	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

	Grains.	Stools.	
April 7	35	0	powder taken at bed-time.
8		3	with flight griping.
9		0	
10		1	
11		0	
12	35	0	powder taken at bed-time.
13		3	with flight griping.
14		0	During the past week she took every day a drachm of spirituous tincture of rhubarb, with simple bitter infusion and chalybeate wine, which after the 14th were omitted.

TURKEY RHUBARB.

15	35	0	powder taken at bed-time.
16		3	with flight griping.
17		1	
18		0	
19	35	—	powder taken at bed-time.
20		3	flight griping.

3. Hannah Foster, aged about 38: Disease, catarrh, with flatulency and costiveness.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

1785.				
Jan.	12	35	3	no griping.
	13		2	
	14		—	
April	15	35	2	flight griping.
	16		3	flight griping.
	17		1	
	18	35	—	powder taken at night.
	19		4	flight griping.
	20		1	
	21		2	
	22	35	1	powder taken at night.
	23		4	flight griping.
	24		1	

TURKEY RHUBARB.

25			2	
26	35		—	powder taken at night.
27			3	great griping.
28			0	
29	35		2	flight griping.
30			0	
31			2	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

Feb.	2	35	2	flight griping.
	3		—	
	4		—	
	5	35	2	flight griping.

4. Mary Newman, aged 15 $\frac{1}{2}$: Disease, pain in the pit of her stomach, passing through to the back, with faintness, costiveness, &c. She was ordered to bathe twice a week.

TURKEY RHUBARB.

	Grains.	Stools.	
1785.			
Mar. 15		1	
16		0	
17		1	
18	18	1	great griping.
19		0	
20		0	
21		2	
22	18	1	with great pain in her stomach and back.
23		0	
24		0	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

25	18	1	great griping.
26		1	
27		0	
28		1	
29	18	1	great griping.
30		0	
31		1	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

April 1	18	1	flight griping.
2		1	
3		1	
4		0	
5	18	2	flight griping.
6		1	
7		1	
			All complaints removed.

5. Elizabeth Hofey, aged 30: Disease, loss of appetite, sickness and great flatulency: usually a stool every other day.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. II.

	Grains.	Stools.	
1784.			
Dec. 16		1	
17	35	2	considerable griping.
18		0	
19	35	1	great griping.
20		0	
21		1	} great costiveness during this time.
Jan. 4		0	
5		0	
6		0	

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. I.

1785.			
Jan. 7	35	3	slight griping.
8		0	
9		0	
10		0	
11	35	5	the two last stools with considerable griping.
12		1	
13		1	

TURKEY RHUBARB.

14	35	2	slight griping.
15		0	
Jan. 16		1	
17		0	
18	35	3	slight griping.

6. Jane Middleton, aged 26: Disease, loss of appetite and sickness, occurring by fits, with flatulency, pain in her bowels, and costiveness: took first an emetick, and afterwards, thro' the whole of the disease, a Bark mixture.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. II.

1785.			
Jan. 19		0	
20		0	
21	35	1	great griping.
22		0	
23	35	1	less griping.
24		—	

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. I.

25	35	6	flight griping.
26		1	
27	35	1	before 12 at noon, with griping.
28		—	

TURKEY RHUBARB.

29	35	4	flight griping.
30		3	
31	35	0	before 12 at noon; but flight griping.

7. Jane Middleton's Child, aged 5 weeks :
Disease, costiveness.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

		Grains.	Stools.	
1785.				
Jan.	20		0	apparently with great griping.
	21	7	1	
	22		0	
	23	7	1	
	24		1	powder taken at night. with apparent griping all day, before the second 10 grains, which were taken at night.
	25	10	—	
	26	10	2	
	27		0	
				before 12 at noon.

TURKEY RHUBARB.

Jan.	28	10	—	powder taken at night. with griping.
	29		2	
	30	10	1	powder taken at night, after the stool.
	31		0	before 12 at noon.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

Feb.	1	10	—	powder taken at night.
	2		2	with griping.
	3		0	

8. Mary Penny, aged about 50: disease, pain in the stomach and bowels, after eating: one stool a day.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

	Grains.	Stools.	
1784.			
Sept. 23		1	
24	25	2	considerable griping.
25		—	
26		—	
27		—	
28	25	2	considerable griping.
29		—	
30		0	

TURKEY RHUBARB.

Oct. 1		—	
2	25	2	no griping.
3		0	
4	25	0	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

Oct. 5		—	
6	25	0	
7		0	
8		0	
9	25	0	
10		0	
11		0	
12	30	2	flight griping.
13		0	
14		0	
15	30	3	

9. Bridget Hatherfidge, aged $2\frac{1}{4}$: Disease, considerable hardness and swelling in the belly, with two loose stools a day.

TURKEY RHUBARB.

1784.	Grains.	Stools.	
Nov. 16	10	9 or 10	a good deal of griping.
17		0	
18		5 or 6	
19	10	8 or 9	a good deal of griping.
20		2 or 3	
21		3	
22		2 or 3	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

Nov. 23	10	12 or 13	sickness and a good deal of griping.
24		7	
25		6	
26	10	10	less griping.
27		6	
28		4	
29		2	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

Nov. 30	10	2	no griping.
Dec. 1		0	
2		0	
3	10	2	flight griping.
4		—	
5		—	
6		1	

10. Tho. Gore, aged 35: Head-ach, with pain and founes in his stomach, and costiveness.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

	Grains.	Stools.	
1784.			
Oct. 8	30	0	} costiveness during this time, as before.
9			
10			
11			
12	30	0	
13			
14			

TURKEY RHUBARB.

Oct. 15	30	1	great griping.
16		0	
17	30	1	great griping.
18		0	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

Oct. 19	30	2	confiderable griping.
20		0	
21		0	
22	30	2	confiderable griping.
23		0	
24		1	
25		0	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

	Grains.	Stools.	
Oct. 26	30	2	confiderable griping.
27		0	
28		1	
29	30	2	less griping.
30		0	
31		1	

CLASS II.

Miscellaneous comparative Experiments.

1. Esther Rolf, aged 33: disease, flatulency and pain in the stomach, with costiveness.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

1784.			
Sept. 28	30	5	no griping.
29		1	
30		1	
Oct. 1		1	
2	30	5	no griping.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

Oct.	12	30	3 or 4	flight griping.
	13			} bowels regularly open.
	14			
	15			
	16	30	3 or 4	flight griping.
	17			} bowels regularly open.
	18			
	19			

2. Sarah Stuart, aged 33: Disease, pain and flatulency in the stomach, with costiveness.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

		Grains.	Stools.	
1784.				
Oct.	5	25	3	flight griping with the last stool.
	6		0	
	7		1	
	8	25	1	flight griping.
	9		0	
	10		1	
	11		0	
	12	30	3	great griping.
	13		0	
	14		1	
	15	30	2	no griping.
	16		0	
	17		0	
	18		1	

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

Oct.	19	30	1	considerable griping.
	20		1	
	21		0	
	22	30	2	flight griping with the 1st stool: considerable with the second.
	23		0	
	24		1	
	25		0	

TURKEY RHUBARB.

Oct.	26	25	2	the last stool with griping and sickness.
	27		0	
Oct.	28		1	
	29	25	1	no griping.
	30		0	
	31		1	

3. William Greenaway, aged 8 : Disease, pain in his head and bowels, sickness, and purging four times a day : he took first two vomits of Ipecacoanha, but the purging still continued.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. II.

1785.				
Mar.	15	12	0	no griping.
	16		1	
	17		—	
	18	12	2 or 3	no griping.
	19		—	
	20		—	
	21		—	Purging cured.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. I.

April	7		—	purging somewhat return'd.
	8	12	4	no griping.
	9		—	
	10		3 or 4	
	14			bowels open ever since the 10th, without purging.

CLASS III.

Miscellaneous Experiments.

1. Thomas Saunders, aged 27 : Disease, purging of brown stools for two months, without blood or scybala, to the amount now of near forty per diem, with great flatulency and griping : took first a vomit of Ipecacoanha.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. I.

		Grains.	Stools.	
1785.				
April	26	30	6 or 7	less griping than before.
	27		5	
	28		3	before 1 at noon, with great griping, sickness, and vomiting.

2. Charles Philips, aged $3\frac{1}{4}$; Disease, putrid fever, with slight purging of white stools.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. I.

1784.				
Dec.	2	8	5 or 6	no griping.
	3		—	} fewer stools on these days than on the 2d. instant.
	4		—	
	5		—	
	6	8	5 or 6	no griping.
	7		—	Purging much diminished.

3. Mary Pye, aged 19: Disease, slight purging, &c.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. I.

		Grains.	Stools.
1784.			
Oct.	8	25	0
	9		1
	10	25	1
	11		0

4. Elizabeth Gibbons, aged 2 $\frac{1}{2}$: Disease, purging thrice a day.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. II.

		Grains.	Stools.
1784.			
Sept.	26		3
	27		3
	28	8	4
	29		3
	30		3
Oct.	1	8	3
	2		3
	3		3
	4		3
	5	10	
	6		
	7		
	8	10	

} three or four more stools on the intermediate days than on those on which the rhubarb was taken.

5. Hannah White, aged 28; disease, violent purging, with pain in the bowels, and considerable feverish heat.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. II.

		Grains.	Stools.
1784.			
Nov.	5	30	2
	6		
	7		
	8	30	2

Pain in the bowels considerably less than before, more than two stools on each of these days.
Pain less than the preceding days.
Purging afterwards more violent than before.

6. Jane White, aged 9 $\frac{3}{4}$: Disease, purging for two days, of three or four stools a day.

ENGLISH RHUBARB NO. II.

		Grains.	Stools.
1785.			
Feb.	2	15	2
			3 or 4

slight griping.

5		3 or 4	
6	15	4	flight griping.
10		—	Purging removed.

7. Elizabeth Hofey, Junr. aged $4\frac{3}{4}$: Disease, clay-coloured stools.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. II.

1784.			
Dec. 15		2	
16		1	
17	14	3	no griping.
1784.			
Dec. 18		1	
19		3	no griping.
20		1	
21		1	stools of the natural colour.

8. Elizabeth Hibbert, aged about 60: Disease, pain in the bowels.

ENGLISH RHUBARB No. I.

1784.			
Oct. 8	35	3	
9		—	
10	35	3	
11		—	
12		—	
13	35	3	
14		—	
15	45	3	great griping.
16		0	
17		0	
18	45	4	great griping.

Observations on the comparative Purgative and Astringent Effects of the several Kinds of Rhubarb.

[By Dr. PARRY.]

FROM the first class of these experiments it appears, that the Turkey rhubarb operated more than either of the two others, in one case only. No. I. operated most frequently in four cases. No. II. most frequently in two cases. The Turkey operated least frequently in two cases. No. I. in three. No. II. in three. In two cases the Turkey and No. II. operated equally; while in one of these No. I. acted more powerfully than either, and in the other not at all. In one case No. I. and No. II. acted alike; and both more than the Turkey. One exhibition of each kind

than the Turkey. One exhibition of each kind of the rhubarbs produced equal effects in the case of Jane Middleton's child; but neither the Turkey rhubarb, nor No. I. in two other experiments on the same patient, operated at all before twelve the next day, when her mother called on me.

So far as these few experiments go, we may infer that the specimen of English rhubarb No. I. was fully equal in its purgative quality to the Turkey, and that they are both somewhat superior to No. II. This conclusion is farther strengthened by the experiments in the cases of Greenaway, Rolf, and Stuart, Class II. In the last of these, the English rhubarb No. I. was more powerful than the Turkey, and in all three than No. II. It must also be observed that in the two first experiments with No. II. in the case of Gore, no effect was produced by the quantity there exhibited.

The astringent effects of rhubarb may be divided into two kinds: those which seem immediately to arise from the medicine; and those which appear after it has operated as a purgative. The chemical experiments above-recited shew the existence of an astringent principle in all the rhubarbs, and the degree in which it takes place; but we cannot from thence draw any certain conclusion with respect to their operation on the human body. I have known the gum kino, the strongest vegetable astringent with regard to taste, with which we are acquainted, purge more violently than jalap. How far indeed the astringent quality of rhubarb with regard to the bowels is separable from its power as an aperient, and whether therefore it possesses that quality in a higher degree than any other purgative equally drastring, experience, I think, has not hitherto ascertained.

Let us however examine the properties of our different kinds of rhubarb in cases of diarrhœa, in which alone we can form a true judgment of their effects. In the examples of Gibbons and H. White, the rhubarb No. II. shewed an immediate power of diminishing the number of stools, for in both there were fewer motions on the days on which it was taken, than on others. This also appeared from the first exhibition of the same

rhubarb in the several cafes of Greenaway, Jane White, and Allen. No. I. seemed to have the same property in the cafes of Pye and Saunders; but the Turkey rhubarb in no instance. To shew these effects still more clearly, we may observe, that in seven of fourteen experiments made in the above cafes of diarrhoea with the rhubarb No. II. that medicine diminished the number of stools the day on which it was given; No. I. in two of ten experiments; the Turkey in no instance out of four.

To enter into a disquisition concerning the cause of these differences, would belong more properly to a collection of medical than agricultural essays: But I think it probable, that the rhubarb No. II. diminished the number of motions not by any direct astringency, but by its gently cathartick power, which was just such as to stimulate the bowels sufficiently to make them discharge the greatest part of their contents in a few evacuations; while the other rhubarbs, by their stronger purgative quality, produced also a considerable discharge of the mucus of the bowels. This conclusion seems to correspond with the comparative costiveness which succeeded the cathartick operation of each rhubarb; that being much alike after the Turkey rhubarb and No. I.; and after both much greater than from No. II. altho' the latter was sufficient to remove the purging in the cafes of Greenaway and Jane White.

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