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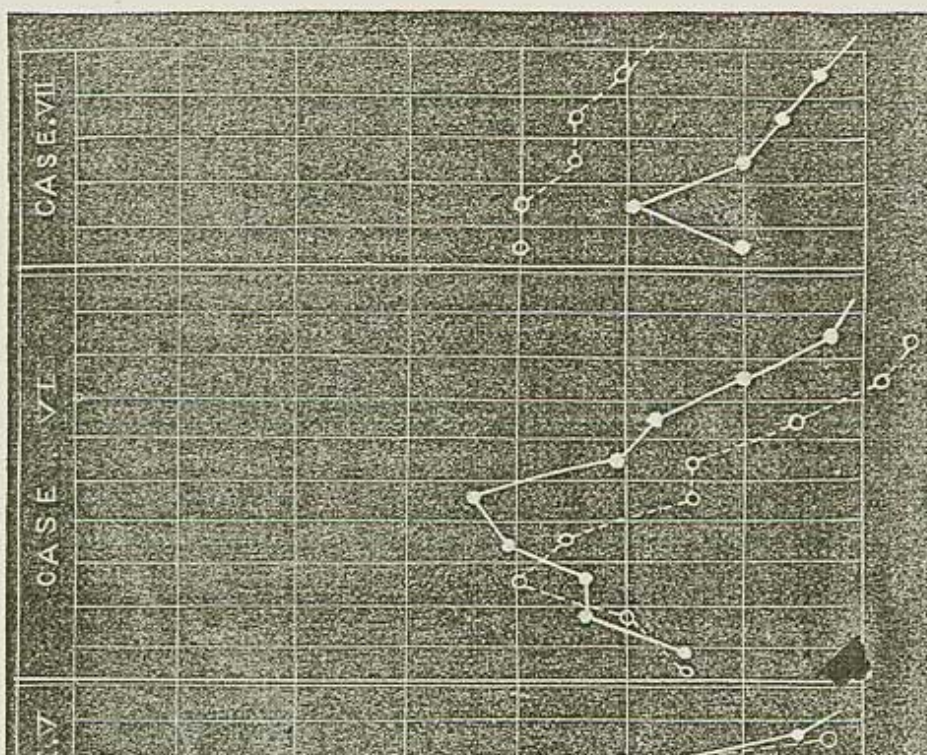
Maclagan T (1876). The treatment of acute rheumatism by salicin. Lancet 1:383-84.

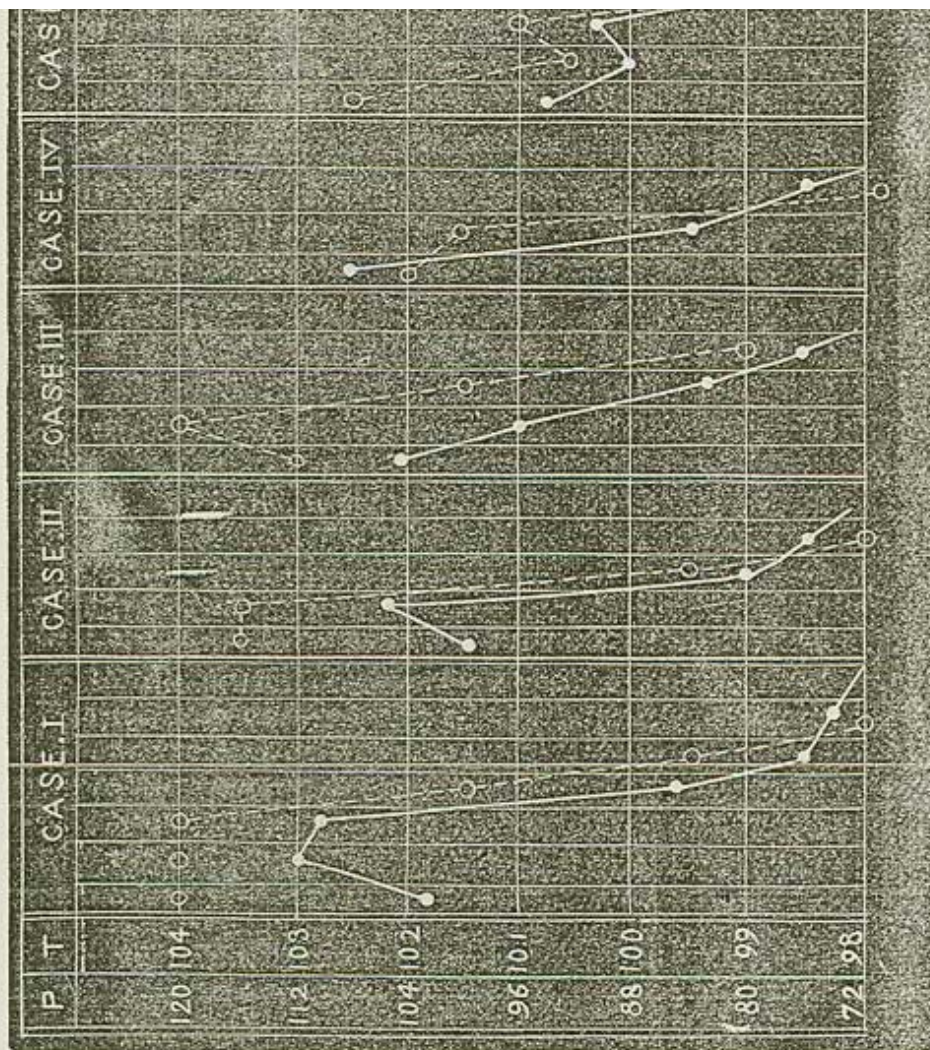
Key passages

THE TREATMENT OF ACUTE RHEUMATISM BY SALICIN.

By T. MACLAGAN, M.D.

The sudden arrest of the painful symptoms, and the coincident rapid fall of pulse and temperature, followed so immediately on the administration of the salicin that it is impossible not to attribute them to its use. Cases of acute rheumatism do sometimes improve in the most unexpected manner, but I never saw a case get well so quickly as those of which I have given details above. A succession of such cases cannot but be attributed to the peculiarity of the treatment. We have seen that this treatment has a good foundation in reason and analogy. The details of these cases afford, as far as a few cases can, practical evidence of its utility.





From so small an experience of salicin as I have had, I would not assert in anything like a dogmatic manner the full extent of its usefulness. I would simply indicate the following conclusions as those to which I have been led, and which, I hope, a more extended experience of its use may confirm.

1. We have in salicin a valuable remedy in the treatment of acute rheumatism.

2. The more acute the case, the more marked the benefit produced.

3. In acute cases, its beneficial action is generally apparent within twenty-four, always within forty-eight, hours of its administration in sufficient dose.

4. Given thus at the commencement of the attack, it seems sometimes to arrest the course of the malady as effectively as quinine cures an ague, or ipecacuanha a dysentery.

5. The relief of pain is always one of the earliest effects produced.

6. In acute cases, relief of pain and a fall of temperature generally occur simultaneously.

7. In subacute cases, the pain is sometimes decidedly relieved before the temperature begins to fall; this is especially the case when, as is frequently observed in those of

nervous temperament, the pain is proportionally greater than the abnormal rise of temperature.

8. In chronic rheumatism, salicin sometimes does good where other remedies fail; but it also sometimes fails where others do good.

Regarding the action of salicin on the cardiac complications of rheumatic fever I have no experience. In Case 1, indeed, the muffled and indistinct character of the heart's sounds, which existed before its administration, disappeared with the general improvement which accompanied its use. But it needs not the details of cases to demonstrate that a remedy which curtails the duration, or mitigates the severity, of an attack of rheumatic fever, must of necessity diminish in a proportionate degree the risk of cardiac mischief. Neither is it doubtful that the general treatment most suited for rheumatic endo- or peri-carditis is that which most surely and speedily cures the rheumatism. Rheumatic inflammation about the heart requires the same general treatment as rheumatic inflammation of a joint.

The dose of salicin is from ten to thirty grains every two, three, or four hours, according to the severity of the case. Fifteen grains every three hours is a medium dose for an acute case. It is very possible that less might suffice; for I have not tried to find the minimum dose. It is very certain that a much larger dose may be given without producing discomfort.

Salicin is not soluble to any useful extent; it is best administered as a powder mixed with a little cold water. It is a very pleasant bitter. I have never found the least inconvenience follow its use.

When salicylic acid (originally prepared from salicin) was first introduced, I determined to try it; and in the one case in which I did have recourse to it, it seemed to do good to the rheumatism; but it caused so much irritation of the throat and stomach that I did not repeat it. This was, no doubt, due to its being impure; for Traube has lately been trying it in his wards at Berlin, and reports most favourably as to its action in rheumatic fever.*

It is the publication of these observations that has led me to give to the profession so soon my favourable and prior experience of salicin in the same disease.

I have no doubt that Traube's observations are correct, and that salicylic acid will be found efficacious in the treatment of acute rheumatism. But I have as little doubt that it is not so good as salicin for this purpose; for it is more apt to contain noxious impurities, it is not so pleasant to take, and it apparently requires a larger dose to produce its beneficial action.

I shall be greatly obliged if those who try the remedy, and do not care to publish their observations, would kindly forward to me the results of their experience, be it favourable or otherwise. The points to be specially noted are the state of the patient, before taking the salicin, as regards heart, pulse, temperature, skin, tongue, urine, joints, &c., with daily (or more frequent) observations of the same points while under its influence. Observations taken only once a day, to be taken as nearly as possible at the same time on each day.

Dundee.

