

TREATMENT OF ACUTE RHEUMATISM BY SALICIN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Dr. Broadbent's very interesting cases of rheumatic fever treated by salicylic acid, published in your last number, confirm the observations of Riess and Stricker as to the value of that acid in the treatment of that disease.

But Dr. Broadbent scarcely does me justice when he refers to my communication (published in the numbers of your journal for March 4th and 11th) as if I had simply followed the practice and confirmed the results of the German physicians. A reference to my paper will show (a) that the remedy regarding whose action I wrote was not salicylic acid, but salicin; (b) that I had been using this remedy in rheumatic fever since November, 1874, more than a year before Riess and Stricker reported favourably of salicylic acid; and (c) that I had been using it for some time before the introduction of salicylic acid into this country.

The results which I obtained from the use of salicin were so remarkable that I hesitated to publish them till a sufficient number of cases lent certainty to them. Since their publication I have had sent to me from various quarters such increased evidence of the efficacy of the remedy, that I have come to regard it almost as a specific in the treatment of acute rheumatism. Its advantages over salicylic acid are (1) that it is not apt to be impure, (2) that it acts in smaller quantity, (3) that it is more agreeable to take, and (4) that it never gives rise to unpleasant effects.

I believe that there is a great scarcity of salicin in the market at present. Until it is manufactured in larger quantity, salicylic acid will be found a good substitute. Those who try both remedies will not fail to find salicin the better of the two.

Your obedient servant,

Dundee, April 10th, 1876.

T. MACLAGAN.

ROME.

(From our own Correspondent.)

THE EUCALYPTUS IN THE CAMPAGNA.

To make the New World the auxiliary of the Old was a vision of Canning's which is now being realised in the action of the Australian eucalyptus on the Roman Campagna. The Trappist monastery of the Tre Fontane—on the spot where Saint Paul is believed to have been beheaded—has for some years been under the enlightened direction of the Padre Gildas, who, aided by the Fra Orsise, has set himself to prove how far the Agro Romano in which their institution lies is susceptible of amelioration by planting in general and the culture of the eucalyptus in particular. Desolate indeed is the locality in which they have taken up their abode, and so visited by malaria in the summer and autumn as to have hitherto been uninhabitable by all who have not made themselves fever-proof. Their very labour in upturning the long inert soil and disengaging the "telluric poison" in which many physicians find the true cause of malaria, aggravates the dangers incident to the spot, till the heroic stand they have made amid disease and death itself reminds us of the Roman centurion left with his handful of men in defence of the Wall of Hadrian. They are at length, however, reaping the reward of their truly exemplary industry, and by the assiduous cultivation of the eucalyptus, and the skill with which they have extracted its virtues in the form of an elixir, they have not only kept fever at bay, but have found an antidote for it, more certain than quinine, when it has been accidentally imported among them. Apart from its antiquarian and ecclesiastical interest, the monastery of Tre Fontane has now become a place of pilgrimage for the stranger in Rome, solving, as it bids fair to do, the problem of the improvement of the Campagna, and offering, as it does, a gratifying illustration of what courage and industry, aided by science, can achieve.

On my last visit to the spot, the Padre Gildas expressed a wish that THE LANCET might keep the English public from time to time informed of the work now progressing under his auspices, and accordingly he drew up a series of notes

on the same, of which I make a selection. The plantation of eucalyptus, which is gradually covering the grounds of the monastery, has, of itself, improved the atmospheric condition of the spot, in so much that the brotherhood enjoy an immunity from malaria, almost entire, throughout the hottest months of the year. The agricultural operations, however, in which they are engaged for the reclamation of the surrounding country, subject them to a distinct source of danger—the "intoxication tellurique," to which all tillers of long inert soil are liable,—and consequently they have sought, in an extract from the eucalyptus leaves, a more active and immediate antidote. This extract has been prepared single-handed by the Fra Orsise, and its virtues are much more potent and certain than any other preparation hitherto made from the same source. As specimens of its action the following examples may be taken.

At the beginning of March, a strong wind setting from the Pomptine Marshes laid up a few of the brotherhood with malarious fever. One, the chief gardener, who persevered at his work even under the incipient malady, finally experienced a sharp attack of it, and took a dose (about half a drachm) of the elixir. Feeling better, he resumed his labours, but had again to desist, from a second and severer accession of the fever. A larger dose was then given him, after which the fever did indeed return in a very mild form, but a third dose cured him, and he has been in his usual good health since the 10th of last month.

On the 10th the Fra Orsise himself, from imprudent over-exertion, contracted the fever and took a mild dose of his elixir. He still suffered, however, on the 11th, and on the 12th had a rather severe attack, which lasted from 9 A.M. till 5 P.M. He took an extra strong dose (about half an ounce) of the elixir, and since then has been perfectly free from the malady.

The Padre Gildas on the 13th had a distinct access of the fever, lasting from 9 A.M. till 4 P.M.; on the 15th another and severer attack from 7 A.M. till evening; and on the 17th a third from 5 A.M. till nightfall. In the interval of the first two attacks he tried the elixir, but without success. After the third he took quinine in the usual doses, but it seemed to aggravate the fever with head symptoms. He resumed the elixir in a stronger dose than previously, and after two days the fever had completely gone, leaving him in his wonted health and with good appetite.

Other cases, duly noted in the Padre's register, showed that in Rome itself the fever is quite tractable by the use of the elixir—in so much that the monastery is now being largely resorted to for supplies of it. All this, be it remembered, has been achieved by the unprofessional agency of the brotherhood themselves, who declare it to be their earnest wish that medical science should fairly examine the remedy and report impartially on its properties. Should such a verdict prove favourable, the worthy Trappists of the Tre Fontane will have done more than their brethren of the Grand Chartreuse—invent a stimulant liqueur. They will have associated their name with a remedy quite as effective in its way as Jesuit's bark.

THE ROMAN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE.

Professor Carlo Maggiorani presided at a numerous attendance of the Roman Academy of Medicine on the 26th ult., when several interesting communications were read. One by Professor Moriggia, entitled "Certain Chemo-organic Experiments on some New Properties of the Bile," demonstrated—1st. That the acid bile precipitates alkaloids and glucosides, and redissolves them if added in slight excess. Professor Moriggia here asks whether the bile so prepared might not reasonably be regarded as an antidote for the poisonous alkaloids and glucosides? Whether it is not capable of assisting the other antidotes more or less efficacious by its property of arresting the process of digestion of the gastric juice? 2nd. That the bile precipitates all the albuminoids or their derivatives in acid solution; nay, that it is better supplied with this property than the already known precipitants, while, under given conditions, it redissolves the precipitate if added in slight excess. 3rd. That the mucus of the bile is in great measure digestible by the gastric juice. 4th. That the bile slightly acid has a strongly marked antiseptic property. 5th. That the bile does not manifest any antidigestive action on the saliva. An animated discussion ensued on these positions, generally favourable to Professor Moriggia's