

SACCHARIN.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the last issue of your valuable journal has appeared a letter from Dr. Pavy, giving his experience and opinion of saccharin. As my name has been mentioned, I should like to make a few explanatory remarks as far as I am concerned.

In June last I was spending a few days with Sir Spencer Wells in London, when I called on Dr. Pavy, whom I already had the honour of knowing. Being interested in diabetes, I was glad to get the benefit of his most recent results and experiences. Dr. Pavy was kind enough to show me his recent and very interesting improvements in the chemical analyses of diabetic urine, as well as some alimentary articles for diabetic patients. Just as I was leaving I asked him what he thought of saccharin, having a short time previously sent him a pamphlet in which I had mentioned the ill effects observed by me in a few cases of administration of that product. As his answer was in English, I understood him to say that he recommended saccharin where it was well borne, and that he advised its discontinuance when it was not well tolerated, adding that many diabetic patients did not care much for sweet things after having left them aside for some time. Somehow or other, I took away the impression that the fact of being badly borne in some cases implied dyspeptic trouble, and that some of Dr. Pavy's patients had been obliged to discontinue the use of the substance for this reason, exactly as had occurred in some cases of mine.

On my return to Paris, at a sitting of the Académie de Médecine, of which I am a member, and in the course of a discussion on saccharin, I referred incidentally to these cases of dyspeptic trouble, and in so doing I was very much pleased to quote the authority and name of my learned confrère of London, mentioning the kind reception he had given me a few days before. That this feeling was quite evident is shown by the way I spoke of him in my communication on this occasion, and that my good faith was perfect is evinced by the fact that I myself sent Dr. Pavy a copy of the Transactions of the Academy as soon as it was published, accompanied by my visiting card. On receiving this copy Dr. Pavy wrote to correct my impression, and specified that he had only spoken of a persistent or unpleasant sweet taste in the mouth in some cases, but was otherwise quite satisfied with the use of the product. At the very next meeting of the Academy I made the correction desired by Dr. Pavy in the following terms: "Dans le cours de la séance du 3 juin, et à l'occasion de la communication si intéressante de notre collègue, M. Dujardin-Beaumetz, sur la saccharine, j'ai dit incidemment que le Dr. Pavy, que je venais de voir à Londres, avait observé, comme moi, des troubles dyspeptiques chez quelques personnes diabétiques qui faisaient usage de cette substance. J'avais eu soin d'envoyer à notre savant confrère le *Bulletin de l'Académie* qui reproduisait cette mention sous la forme où elle m'avait paru répondre à sa pensée, formulée rapidement dans une langue étrangère. M. le Dr. Pavy, en réponse à cette communication, m'exprime le désir de voir spécifier la nature des troubles qu'il a observés quelquefois: ils ont consisté en un goût désagréable laissé par la saccharine, ou une saveur sucrée persistante de la bouche. Il pense que le terme de *troubles dyspeptiques* est à peine applicable à ce genre de manifestations et reste favorable à l'emploi de la saccharine quand elle est bien tolérée. Je m'empresse de déférer au désir de M. le Dr. Pavy quant à la qualification à donner à ce genre phénomènes désagréables déterminés par l'usage de la saccharine."¹

Since then I have not once had occasion to speak of anything concerning saccharin either verbally or in writing. Need I say that I have nothing to do with the article in the press referred to by Dr. Pavy, which has in a most regrettable manner entirely misrepresented his opinion of saccharin, and which, up to the date of his letter in THE LANCET, was entirely unknown to me; and need I add that my interest in the subject is a purely scientific one?

In conclusion, I may just state that the results recorded in this country are not always favourable, and that the chief inconveniences of the employment of the substance have

been especially set forth in the report of the Special Commission of investigation appointed by the "Comité Consultatif d'Hygiène de France," the highest authority in hygiene in our country, and which was presided over by Professor Brouardel, dean of the Paris Faculty of Medicine.

I am, Sirs, yours very obediently,
Rue Pierre Charron, Paris, Nov. 6th, 1888. JULES WORMS.

THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have resided and practised for some years in a small garrison town in one of our colonies, and have from time to time had medical charge of the troops in garrison. The Contagious Diseases Act was not in force during the time I lived in the colony, though now, after the evidence given by some medical men before a select committee appointed by the Government, the Act is to be put in force. Let me say, before I go any further, that I am wholly in favour of the Act being put in force, and in evidence which I gave to the aforesaid committee I recommended that it should be. I wish this to be plainly understood, so that what I say hereafter may not in any way be misconstrued as being antagonistic to the Act. What I wish to demonstrate is the influence of the male population in the spread of contagious disease. I am as well aware as anyone of the difficulties of legislating for males in this matter; but let us remember that we are not legislating for a class, nor are we legislating solely for a body of immoral persons who contract syphilis; but that we are trying by legislation to stamp out disease, which is a fruitful source of weakness to the empire at large, so that no endeavour to surmount difficulties—no matter of what nature—should be spared to check the spread of the disease from all its sources. Venereal disease is not spread by men alone or women alone, it is spread by both, and syphilis cannot exist unless both these factors act in the propagation of it. Clearly, then, it is a mistake to legislate for either of the sexes independently of each other. When there are two well-defined and acknowledged sources of evil, it is unscientific and not in accordance with common sense to attack one source only and disregard the other for no better reason than that the one is easy and the other difficult to deal with, or, as you term it, impracticable.

In your article of Sept. 15th, page 529, you say: "Mr. Benthall has fallen into two errors. One is that the Acts were directed against one sex—i.e., the female—which is untrue. They were directed against common prostitutes, a proportion of the female sex who make a trade of prostitution, and by whom the greater amount of venereal disease is created and propagated." I was always under the impression that the Acts were not directed against any sex or class of people, but against the spread of syphilis, and it is because the Acts have been directed against prostitutes, and not against every source of infection, they have not proved so effective as they might have done. You go on to say: "The second error is that men are equally guilty with prostitutes in spreading disease, which is a wholly untenable proposition. That women are, unfortunately, infected by men is too true; but, while any one man cannot, for obvious reasons, infect more than comparatively few women, there is no limit to the number of men whom one prostitute may infect." Now I hope to prove that men are equally guilty with women in spreading the disease. It is clear that men are the carriers of the poison from one woman to another. Women do not infect each other, and the women are the carriers of the poison to men. In the spread of the disease both male and female are links in the same chain. Men do not, as you say, infect as many women as women do men; but the number infected has nothing to do with the amount of guilt, for it is not the individual action of the one sex which spreads the disease, for the action of one sex without that of the other is impotent; it is the combined action which causes and propagates the disease. You might as well say that the driving-wheel of an engine is not so useful as one of the smaller ones because it does not make as many revolutions in a minute. But surely this is a fallacy.

To show to what an extent syphilis may be spread by men, allow me to relate my experience in the small garrison town in which I lived. The town was the headquarters of a regiment. At times nearly the whole of the

¹ Bulletin de l'Académie de Médecine, No. 29. Séance du 17 juillet, 1888.