

CURRENT COMMENT

EXPENSIVE SUGAR OR CHEAP SACCHARIN, WHICH?

We have already called attention to the fact that, based on the findings of the referee board, the government has declared the use of saccharin in foodstuffs illegal. This official decision, made in April of this year, was to go into effect July 1, 1911. Immediately the makers of saccharin brought pressure to bear at Washington to have the time extended in which the use of their product in foods would be legal. The appeal was granted and the sophisticators of foods—and others—were officially notified that they might continue to use saccharin in the place of sugar until Jan. 1, 1912. Now as the time of probation draws to a close, the saccharin-makers are again appealing to Washington. The summer of 1911 has been an extremely hard one on the sugar-refiners. As every one knows, the price of sugar has steadily risen and there is every indication that it will go still higher. Under such conditions, it is natural that those manufacturers of foodstuffs who are more concerned with personal profits than public health should see in the present shortage of the sugar-crop the chance of a lifetime to substitute saccharin for sugar. Evidently then the demand for saccharin is likely to be greater within the next few months than it has been for years. This fact has been taken into account in Europe by the calling of an international conference to prevent the illegal use of saccharin, reference to which has been made in THE JOURNAL.¹ Most European nations have long forbidden the use of saccharin in foodstuffs. Great Britain, while not forbidding its use, puts a prohibitive tax on the product so that in that country it is practically as cheap to use sugar as saccharin. It now remains to be seen whether the three secretaries—the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce and Labor and the Secretary of the Treasury—will again extend the period of probation for the use of this drug.

ANOTHER INTERFERENCE WITH THE FREEDOM OF CATTLE

This dispatch from Jackson, Miss., appears in a recent issue of the *Natchez News*, regarding the efforts being made in Yazoo County to suppress the cattle-tick:

“The quarantine placed on cattle from Yazoo County appeared to have little effect until the stockman of that county awakened to

the realization that their stock would not be admitted to the Mississippi State Fair, at Jackson, during the latter part of the month. The embargo stung the farmers and they decided to take some drastic measure to eradicate the dreaded tick.”

The *News* then gives the proceedings at a meeting of the city council, where strenuous measures were urged to wipe out this blot on the fair name of Yazoo County, and to permit her cattle to appear at the state fair. This is right, nor would any one object to any measures which the Jackson City Council might adopt, to rid the cattle of disease. But, incidentally, how many human beings are there in Yazoo County, Mississippi, to-day who are suffering from tuberculosis and typhoid fever, for example? Nobody knows! Will there be any quarantine against the people of Yazoo County on that account? Oh, no, they can all go to the fair and if any of them are suffering from these diseases, they can communicate the infection to others without hindrance. If one cow died of foot-and-mouth disease in Yazoo County to-morrow the fact would be known in Washington in twenty-four hours, and live stock inspectors would immediately invade Yazoo County. How many women and children died in that county last year? Nobody knows! They are only human beings, not live stock, and in a majority of the states in the union and in all of the southern states, the state pays no attention to the birth or death of a human being. A blooded calf or a pedigreed colt has its birth carefully registered, but the birth of a child is not worth recording. And when it comes to dying, if you are a human being, you can die whenever you like. The state has no money to waste in such “scientific nonsense” as finding out how many of its citizens have died during the past year, or whether the death-rate in Mississippi is growing or decreasing, or what diseases are killing its people. But ticks in cattle—that is a different matter. The cows must not be kept away from the state fair.

1. Contraband Trade in Saccharin, Paris Letter, THE JOURNAL A. M. A., Oct. 7, 1911, p. 1219.

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Editor's Note: JAMA 100 Years Ago is transcribed verbatim from articles published a century ago, unless otherwise noted.

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