

however apparently innocuous, should be taken into account in patient management.

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## A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

### The Opium Commission

The Indian papers contain, as might be expected, a great deal about the proceedings of the Opium Commission in India and the evidence given before it. There has been, of course, much evidence adduced on both sides of the question, but it cannot be concealed that the weight of testimony, so far from being favourable to the anti-opium movement, has been against it. The general feeling seems to be that the case of the anti-opium party has broken down. The general tendency of the evidence is to show that the use of opium in moderation is harmless and, under certain conditions, even distinctly beneficial, and that any attempt to prohibit its use would be unadvisable, and might lead to serious opposition and possible disturbance. It is not denied that the abuse – that is to say, the immoderate use – of opium may,

and occasionally does, give rise to evil consequences; but instances of the kind are relatively rare and have been greatly exaggerated. The mass and weight of the evidence are favourable to the soundness and reasonableness of the policy of the Government of India regarding opium. The number of instances in which the drug is immoderately used is insignificant compared with the immoderate use of alcohol in this and other countries, and as regards the prejudicial effects of opium on the races of India, they are not to be compared with the baneful results, moral and physical, of alcohol witnessed elsewhere or as occasionally seen among the natives of Bengal or India itself.

### Reference

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