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Some Uses of Opium.

This is the subject of an interesting and practical article by Eustace Smith, *British Medical Journal* for December, 1909. The author reminds us that opium has stimulating as well as sedative properties, and that as a general stimulant to the nerves, the brain, and all the organs of life, it has definite value. Opium and morphine are not quite the same in this respect, the former being a more active stimulant than the latter. The stimulating effect is best obtained by administration of small doses at suitable intervals. The invigorating influence can be turned to account in the case of obstinate sores occurring in cachectic children. The ulcerative stomatitis which is so common among the ill-fed and badly nourished children of the very poor, often shows little disposition to heal, even when treatment is reinforced by a generous diet and healthy surroundings. When repair is thus at a standstill, a few drops (two to five) of laudanum given twice a day quickly induce a welcome change in the local conditions, and start an improvement which goes on smoothly to a cure. Opium exerts its influence by means of the nervous system, through which it gives energy to the capillary circulation, and effects to some extent every organ of the body. There can be no doubt that the circulation is stimulated by the remedy. The feet become warmer, and the resistance of the

body to the depressing influence of cold is very appreciably enhanced. This primary effect of the drug as a stimulant of the nervous system is a quality, the value of which must not be forgotten. The nervous trepidation called "stage fright"—the ill-defined sinking apprehension which as familiar to the orator and the player, and is not unknown to the student as he prepares to face his examiner—may be forestalled and disarmed by a small dose, five or six drops, of laudanum taken half an hour or so before his trial is to begin. Again, the nervous tremblings and depression which may be induced by a shock, and are apt to follow a surgical operation, are amenable to the same influence. Such a dose, separated, if necessary, several times at intervals of half an hour, is usually soon followed by tranquility and sleep. The same treatment will go far to relieve the distress of dying persons. Under the influence of a few drops of the tincture the painful uneasiness abates, and is succeeded by a period of restful calm, which may be maintained by judicious repetitions of the remedy until the close. Again, the profound mental depression which sometimes afflicts elderly people, making their lives a burden to themselves and to their relatives, may be alleviated by the same means. In this, as in the preceding cases, the drug acts as a stimulant, and something more; it quiets nervous irritability, while at the same