

at its full value. We can, however, realize that without anæsthesia surgery could never have reached its present state. No human being could bear, and few would care to inflict, the suffering that would be involved in many of the triumphs of surgery on which we legitimately pride ourselves. Nor is it surgery alone that has been advanced by anæsthesia. Medicine, obstetrics, therapeutics, and biological science generally have profited by the discovery, which has made researches on animals possible that could not have been undertaken had there been no means of making them painless.

The discovery of nitrous oxide and ether was quickly followed by that of chloroform. This anæsthetic was made known to the world by James Young Simpson a year after the first trial of ether in the Massachusetts General Hospital. Nitrous oxide, which had first been used successfully in the extraction of teeth by Horace Wells in 1844, had been hissed into an ignominious obscurity which lasted many years, owing to its failure at a public trial in the same hospital where ether made its triumphant first appearance two years later. Wells' mind gave way under the stress of disappointment, and he died by his own hand in a New York gaol.

Morton spent the greater part of his life after making his discovery in sordid wrangles about patent rights and bitter struggles as to priority, and at last passed away before his time, a beggared and broken-hearted man.

Chloroform also had to make its way against stupid and fanatical opposition. It was rejected by surgeons who looked upon pain as a tonic; it was denounced by clergymen as "a decoy of Satan, apparently offering itself to bless women," which, it was benevolently added, "will harden society and rob God of the deep earnest cries which arise in time of trouble for help!" The use of chloroform in labor was even looked upon as sinful by pious women. Simpson fought the battle of anæsthesia—and common sense—with immense ability and learning, and in the end he bore down all opposition. The courage of Her Majesty the Queen, who consented to have chloroform administered to her at the birth of two of her children, powerfully aided in the victory. Simpson did not discover anæsthesia, but to him belongs the merit of having made it be accepted by the world.

Morton and Simpson, and after them Snow and Clover, risked their lives over and over again in the endeavor to find a safe and effective anæsthetic. These men are gone, but their work lives after them. Ether and chloroform still hold the field as anæsthetics, but at present the stream of tendency is running strong in favor of the former. The ideal anæsthetic, however, has yet to be discovered.—*British Medical Journal*.