

## ANÆSTHESIA FROM COMMERCIAL ETHER- ADMINISTRATION AND WHAT IT IS DUE TO

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EVER since William Long in 1842, and Crawford in 1846, used a sample of so-called ether for anæsthesia, the medical profession have believed that this anæsthesia obtained, was due to ethyl ether. They have continued to use ether (supplied by commercial firms), and you will most likely agree with the statement that the ether as so supplied is at present considered to be the safest and best anæsthetic known. No doubt, but that every anæsthetist has at times mentally criticized the anæsthetic powers of certain cans or makes of ether, and on account of there being no apparent chemical reason, has laid the blame at the door of the patient. But there is a reason, a most vital reason, (other than idiosyncrasy), and that is that ether, ethyl ether, with which we are so familiar, is not an anæsthetic, and the analgesia which comes from the administration of commercial ether, is not due to ether, but rather to the impurities occurring in it.

The research leading up to these radical conclusions was started in the spring of 1915, when Dr. McKicken, of the Toronto General Hospital staff, observed that certain cans of ether emitted an unusual odour, the cause of which was considered worth looking into. Through the kindness of Dr. C. K. Clarke, Professor Hunter, and Dr. Samuel Johnston, we were enabled to undertake the investigation of commercial ethers in the laboratories of pathological chemistry. The various states of the chemical part were carefully checked by clinical observation of the different derivatives