

## Editorial.

### The Discovery of Anæsthesia.

*The Dental and Surgical Microcosm* reappeared last month after a temporary suspension. The journal is devoted chiefly to the art and science of anæsthesia, which its editor, who is also the proprietor of a dental depot, claims to have revolutionized by new apparatus and a new process of application. The editor does not hesitate to assert, that when he writes upon the subject of anæsthetics he does so *ex cathedra*, and unquestionably, from time to time, he has shown the scientific spirit of inquiry, and the correct application of terms. However, it is not our object at present to discuss the question as to whether or not nitrous oxide is an anæsthetic or an asphyxiant, a question that *must* be discussed and decided. In the November number of the *Dominion Journal*, we gave extracts to prove that Dr. Horace Wells did not "discover" the anæsthetic properties of nitrous oxide, though as the resolution of the American Dental Association, in 1864, correctly declared, to him belongs "the honor of the introduction of anæsthesia in the United States." We quoted Harris, Garretson, Flagg, the "History of American Dentistry," and the *Cosmos*, as sufficient *American* authority that Sir Humphrey Davy was the discoverer of the anæsthetic effects of nitrous oxide.

The editor of the *Microcosm* has rather a severe criticism on the work done by the committee appointed to celebrate the fiftieth "anniversary of the discovery of anæsthesia by Horace Wells." With some of his remarks we cannot agree; but he takes an impartial view of the historical facts, and entirely frees himself from any of that silly national predilection, which is more at home in a lunatic asylum than in dental controversy. It needs but a tyro in logic to expose the *reductio ad absurdum* of those who make the claim for Wells. While admitting that anæsthesia was discovered centuries ago, and while stating that Sir Humphrey Davy first suggested in 1800 the use of nitrous oxide in surgery, and actually submitted to the cutting of the gums over an erupting wisdom tooth, *for the express purpose of testing the properties of the gas*, and in which he declared there was no pain, the essayists and the editors persist in claiming as the "discoverer," a very worthy gentleman, who, at the period of Davy's discovery, was either unborn or a mere child. Dr. Horace Wells did not "discover anæsthesia by nitrous oxide." Dr. Wells was not even the first to apply it in surgery, as the facts above prove. But Dr.