

laid broad and deep, and has stood the stress and strain of the development of a remarkable superstructure in the surgery of to-day.

#### ANÆSTHESIA.

The practice of surgery before Simpson's time was a cruel task for both operator and patient, and those of us who were not in practice during the pre-anæsthetic days can hardly realize what an untold blessing the introduction of anæsthetics has been in relieving human suffering and in permitting us to extend the field of operative surgery.

There was most unreasonable opposition to the use of anæsthesia shortly after its introduction. In addition to objections on moral and religious grounds, it was supposed that various dire calamities followed the administration of chloroform; for example, many urged that apoplexy frequently ensued and proved fatal. Simpson, in referring to apoplexy, speaks of an incident in the life of Lord Loughborough, as related by John Lord Campbell. The biographer states that when he first travelled from Edinburgh to London in a mail coach the time had been reduced from the former twelve or fourteen days to three nights and two days. "But," he adds, "the new and swift travelling from the Scottish to the English capital was wonderful, and I was gravely advised to stop a day at York, as several persons, who had gone through without stopping had died from apoplexy from the rapidity of the motion." "Be assured," says Simpson, "that many of the cases of apoplexy alleged to arise from ether or chloroform, have as veritable an etiology as this apoplexy from the rapidity of motion."\* All such absurd objections to the use of anæsthesia have of course been removed, but the choice of anæsthetic is to-day a question the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated. In this age of specialism one is inclined to relegate the settlement of it to those who make it a special study. It is true that experimental physiologists have so far been of little assistance to us in their attempts to settle this difficult problem. The Hyderabad Commissions have failed to convince the profession as a whole of the infallibility of their conclusions, and we find even that their results are directly challenged by eminent British experimenters, chiefly those of the Cambridge school. In the meantime we are content to watch the "battle royal" from a respectful distance, and to entertain the hope that some definite and incontrovertible evidence may soon be forthcoming from the physiological laboratory regarding the action of chloroform on heart, respiration, etc. We turn, however, more hopefully to the anæsthetists who are daily administering anæsthetics to their fellows. It is true that

\* "Sir James Young Simpson and Chloroform," by H. Laing Gordon, p. 118. 1897.