

*Amylene, a condensed history of its discovery as an anæsthetic agent.*

Translated and abridged from the *Revue de Thérapeutique*.

Anæsthesia is a conquest which will endure notwithstanding the accidents which now and then occur to surgeons. But yesterday this method counted two agents, sulphuric ether, now seldom used, and chloroform, almost universally adopted. A third is now being tried.

On account of the deaths which have occurred during the use of inhalation in the hospitals of London, and which seem to have been more numerous there than elsewhere, the English physicians have eagerly sought for a substance less dangerous than chloroform, and one of them, Dr. Snow, has arrived at a result in the discovery of the anæsthetic properties of amylene which merits being recorded.

Dr. Snow after many experiments upon animals, after having respired the vapors of amylene himself, decided to employ it upon man. The 10th November, 1856, he employed it for the extraction of teeth in two young persons fourteen years of age. In these cases he was not perfectly successful, but from what he had observed he felt authorized in continuing his experiments, and so on the 4th of December he used it upon four new patients with complete success. The 13th of December it was again employed in some more severe cases; and in one, operated upon by Mr. Fergusson for fungus of the testicle, and in another, operated upon by Mr. Bowman for the removal of tumors in the region of the groin, and in two cases of section of tendons. The 27th of December, Mr. Snow used it in the case of a young girl three years and a half old. She breathed the vapors for two minutes only. She did not give the least manifestation of pain, and awoke at the very moment that the operator finished the section of the tendons of the muscles of the foot.

January 3rd, Mr. Fergusson operated upon three patients subjected to the vapors of amylene. In one a rhinoplastic operation was to be completed. The inspiration continued six minutes. It was observed that the amylene produced less rigidity and less convulsions than chloroform administered a few days before.

January 7th, Mr. Henry Lee employed amylene upon a young girl whose thigh he was to amputate. The anæsthesia was maintained during the whole of the operation,—three ounces of amylene were employed. The young patient felt no pain and was very well afterwards. The same day Mr. Fergusson operated upon three patients under the anæsthetic effect of amylene. In all the anæsthesia was obtained in two or three minutes. In two the intelligence was not completely abolished.

Mr. Tyler Smith, surgeon to St. Mary's Hospital, has employed amylene with success in accouchments. Upon the approach of each pain, he