

hospital where the first serious operation was performed under an anæsthetic, and the drug was ether. In the old operating theatre, only used now as a lecture room for student nurses, and as a small museum of the precious implements employed, the historic event took place on "Ether Day," October 16th, 1846. The story is told in the following words inscribed on the wall:—

"On October 16, 1846, in this room, then the operating theatre of the Hospital, was given the first demonstration of Anæsthesia, to the extent of producing insensibility to pain during a serious surgical operation. Sulphuric ether was administered by William Thomas Green Morton, a Boston dentist. The patient was Gilbert Abbott, the operation was the removal of a tumour under the jaw. The surgeon was John Collins Warren. The patient declared that he felt no pain during the operation, and was discharged well Dec. 7. Knowledge of this discovery spread from this room throughout the civilized world, and a new era in surgery began."

Awe-inspired, I gazed through the glass case at a dirty-looking ancient sponge, an inhaler, forceps and other instruments; one's mind went behind those unsterile instruments, in reverence for those who had used them—in such inestimable service to mankind—and made them beautiful. A chair upholstered in red plush and stained with the blood of the sacrifice, also stands there, and is proudly shown to visitors. It is a hallowed spot truly, for here was enacted the drama which demonstrated the "death of pain." The American poet-physician has thus expressed the boon of anæsthesia:—

"Whatever triumphs still shall hold the mind,
Whatever gift shall yet enrich mankind,
Ah! here no hour shall strike through all the
years,

No hour as sweet, as when hope, doubts and fears,
Mid deepening stillness, watched one eager brain,
With God-like will, decree the Death of Pain."

Americans, and more especially Bostonians, are justly proud of this great event, which is never allowed to sink into oblivion. To obviate this, every anniversary of October 16th, which is called "Ether Day," is celebrated at the Massachusetts General Hospital as a Red Letter Day in the hospital calendar. On that day in the same old historic operating theatre a meeting is held, and an address given by an eminent surgeon. In the year 1908, a particularly interesting address was given by William H. Welch, M.D., LL.D., the subject being "A Consideration of the Introduction of Surgical Anæsthesia." It has been published in pamphlet form, and a copy of it was kindly presented to me by the Medical Superintendent. It is of absorbing interest and embodies the whole story and what led to it. Having said so much, the readers of the JOURNAL will feel cheated if I don't give them some "tit-bits" out of it. The doctor reminded his hearers that as far back as 1799 Sir Humphrey Davy investigated the properties of sulphuric ether

and nitrous oxide gas, and published a definite suggestion of the possibility of their use in surgical operations. The time, however, did not appear to be ripe for experimentation. Early in the 'forties, several men of science made researches and experiments, and Dr. Welch relates that "the honour of making the first trial of anæsthetic inhalation in surgical operations belongs to Dr. Crawford W. Long," but who "delayed publication of his experiments with ether until several years after the universal acceptance of surgical anæsthesia, and so was deprived of the larger honour."

The records of the great discovery are unfortunately disfigured by bitter controversy as to priority of claim, between a man named Jackson and William Thomas Green Morton, the Boston dentist, but the doctor continues: "The chief glory belongs . . . to Morton's deed in demonstrating publicly and convincingly the applicability of anæsthetic inhalation to surgical purposes, and under such fortunate circumstances that the knowledge became, as quickly as it could be carried, the blessed possession of the whole world."

It is noteworthy that the man was a dentist only, but the generosity and broad-mindedness of the contemporary surgeons is shown in the following sentence: "The manner in which the surgeons of this hospital at that time—including John Collins Warren, George Hayward, J. Bigelow, and J. Mason Warren—received and advanced Morton's demonstration of anæsthesia must always be a source of pride, not only to this hospital, but to our country and the world. . . . No better example can be found of the service which a great hospital and its professional staff can render in furthering discovery, and in advancing and spreading new knowledge and new methods important to the medical and surgical art, than that furnished by the Massachusetts General Hospital in its relations to the demonstration and introduction of surgical anæsthesia, and its officers and staff have ever remained faithful to the high ideals then exemplified."

It does not lie within the province of the Nursing profession to expatiate upon the relative merits of chloroform and ether, for the simple reason that we are unlearned in such matters. We do not know, therefore, what Sir James Simpson meant when he said that chloroform was "better than ether." That is a question for the Medical Profession. The first announcement to the world of this great discovery was a paper read before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on Nov. 3rd, 1846, and published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* on Nov. 18th. In this connection, we learn that Oliver Wendell Holmes—known better as a writer, but a practising doctor at that time—took a lively and sympathetic interest in the new discovery, and coined the word "anæsthesia" to express its power. At such a time as the present time of warfare, we Nurses may very well ask ourselves, how many of us would have had the courage, fortitude, and

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