

Anaesthetics EVE BLANTYRE SIMPSON Anaesthetics are gases (or other substances) which make people unconscious. Let me remind you that Sir Humphry Davy boldly made the experiment many times upon himself, although he had seen occasional deaths in animals from it. He did this in the last century, with nitrous oxide, and, further, found that headache and other pains disappeared under its influence." The uses of this gas lay partly forgotten for nearly forty years, till a Mr. Colton, lecturing on laughing-gas in Hartford, Connecticut, had among his audience Mr. Horace Wells, dentist. Mr. Wells was surprised by seeing a person who breathed it fall and knock himself badly, without being conscious of the fact. Next day Mr. Colton gave the gas to Mr. Wells, and a Dr. Rigg extracted his tooth. he exclaimed. This was the first anaesthetic operation in America, 1844. He was unsuccessful in an attempt at painless dentistry in public at Boston. He left very disappointed, not knowing that his failure was owing to not giving enough gas. In 1818, in a journal published by the Royal Institution, London, the case of a man is mentioned. This man unwisely breathed ether, and became unconscious for thirty hours. Faraday in this country, and Godman in America, showed, as a result of their observation and experience, that the effects of breathing ether were quite similar on the nervous system to those produced by breathing nitrous oxide gas. This vapour of ether was used across the Atlantic in Georgia in 1842. While he waited to test ether's powers, Morton, a clever young dentist, wanted some nitrous oxide gas to imitate Wells. He asked Mr. Jackson, who was more of a scientist than Morton; and Jackson suggested ether. In 1846 Morton boldly breathed it, and saw, when he recovered consciousness, that he had been insensible for about eight minutes. He quickly understood that longer operations than tooth-pulling could be performed with it. He begged for a public trial of it at Massachusetts General Hospital, 30th September, 1846; and as it was said, "By this priceless gift to humanity, the fierceness of suffering has been covered in the waters of forgetfulness." OF nitrous oxide, Sir Humphry Davy wrote, "It appears able to destroy physical pain. It may be used with advantage during surgical operations in which no great amounts of blood are lost."The passage comes from Sir James Y. Simpson (1896).