Morton arranged a meeting of his former partner, Wells, with John G. Warren for the purpose of a public demonstration of nitrous oxide. Although Wells' demonstration failed it was responsible for Morton's interest in a method for relief of pain. Having heard of painless extractions made by Wells, Morton, in 1846, made a trip to Hartford to see Wells. Wells referred Morton to Jackson who warned Morton of the dangers of nitrous oxide and suggested the use of ether. On September 30, 1846, Morton gave ether to Eben Frost for the extraction of a tooth. On October 16, 1846, at the Massachusetts General Hospital he publicly demonstrated the practicability of anesthesia.

Morton gave up his practice of dentistry and devoted his full time to anesthesia. Morton impoverished himself in his efforts to establish the validity of his claims as the discoverer of anesthesia. He died, practically penniless, on July 15, 1868. Although Morton cannot be called the discoverer of anesthesia he did introduce anesthesia as a practical procedure.

F. A. M.


The only method of teaching and learning local anesthesia is by building the technic on a solid anatomic basis. The first and most important principle is that the technic must embody the individual variations. This has to be done by selecting for the injection those landmarks that are individually fixed and are correlated to each other in such a way that their recognition makes the operator independent of individual variation. Not all landmarks are accessible to the eye or the palpating finger. Some landmarks must be palpated with the point of the needle. For this purpose a rigid, inflexible needle has to be used.

To illustrate how anatomy can serve the anesthetist the author has used as an example block anesthesia of the inferior alveolar nerve. The anatomy, technic and complications involved in the mandibular block are thoroughly described with the help of nine sketches.

F. A. M.


For more than 3000 years men had striven to find relief from pain in surgery. No one person made the discovery of anesthesia. The honor of having a part in advancing the knowledge of anesthesia is great enough to be shared by all. Morton proved by his demonstration at the Massachusetts General Hospital the possibilities of ether anesthesia. Building on the foundation laid by others Morton brought to fulfillment the dream of centuries. In paying tribute to Morton's memory credit must also be given to others who searched for means of relieving pain.

F. A. M.


The new surgery which became possible after 1846 created a different atmosphere in the hospital which, once a place of despair, now became one of hope. Study of a textbook published before that date reveals the conditions of surgical practice. The surgeon was forced to perform an operation as speedily as possible. The scope of surgery remained extremely limited. The cause of this limitation was not only due to the lack of anesthetics but also to the older concept of disease.