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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

Gardner Quincy Colton, a Man of Mark

In 1871 the New York and Hartford Publishing Company released a book of portraits and biographies of "eminent self-made men," a volume titled Sketches of Men of Mark: Written by the Best Talent of the East. The tome was "beautifully illustrated with steel portraits by the finest engravers in the United States." The steel engraving (right) of Gardner Quincy Colton (1814–1898) was accompanied by a six-page biography highlighting Colton’s early efforts as an itinerant lecturer and demonstrator of the recreational use of nitrous oxide. In Hartford, Connecticut, on December 11, 1844, "Dr. Colton took a bag of the gas to the office of Dr. [Horace] Wells and Dr. Colton administered the gas to Wells, when Dr. Riggs [Wells’ dental partner] extracted a large molar tooth." As the visionary volunteer, Dr. Horace Wells, regained consciousness, he remarked, "I did not feel it so much as the prick of a pin."

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George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., Honorary Curator, ASA’s Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Park Ridge, Illinois, and Clinical Associate Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. UJYC@aol.com.