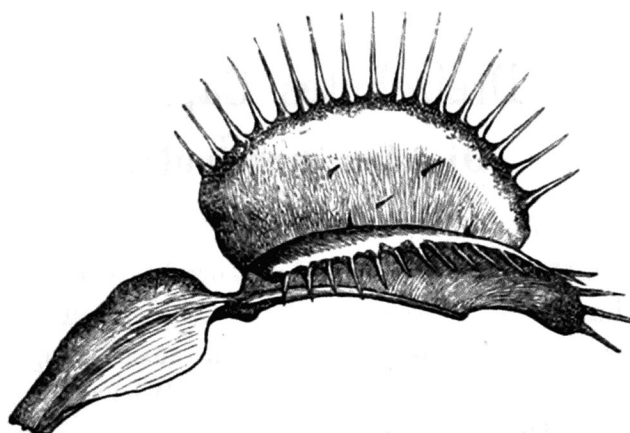

■ ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

Darwin Etherizes Venus Flytraps



In his 1875 text *Insectivorous Plants*, naturalist Charles Darwin noted that the “plant, commonly called Venus’ fly-trap, from the rapidity and force of its movements, is one of the most wonderful in the world.” While investigating anesthetics’ effects on the botanical carnivore’s leaf-closing, he tried chloroform and then ether vapors. Using a 2-oz. vessel, the naturalist determined that the flytrap’s leaf required 24 hr to recover sensibility from 20 min exposure to “15 minims” of ether, but only 52 min to recover from 3 min exposure to “10 drops” in a larger bottle. Darwin conceded that he did not know whether “the larger doses of . . . ether, which caused the leaves to close slowly, acted on the sensitive filaments or on the leaf itself. . . .” His son George provided the illustration above of an unclosed leaf of *Dionaea muscipula*, whose Latin name actually means “Venus mousetrap.” (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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.