

ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

From *The Tempest* and *Henry IV*: Shakespearean Snoring and Colton Gas



Inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, an unknown artist painted ca. 1780 the Bard's characters Duke Prospero (*center*), his daughter Miranda (*left*) and the spirit Ariel (*right*). Also from *The Tempest*, the brother of the King of Naples, Sebastian, observed that Prospero's brother "dost snore distinctly; There's meaning in ... snores." The author of *Shakspeare [sic] and the Bible*, nitrous oxide pioneer G.Q. Colton (1814–1898) used the snoring of partial airway obstruction to judge whether his Manhattan patients were anesthetized deeply enough by "Colton gas" for dental extraction. And quoting the title character from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Colton had no intent to administer "vapours ... to strangle" or smother hapless patients. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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