

Twitter Thread by Lindsey Fitzharris



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#OTD 1901, Queen Victoria's funeral took place. Here's a little medical history THREAD (1/9) about one of Britain's longest reigning monarchs. ■

"Queen Victorian on her death bed" by Emil Fuchs.



(2/9) On 7 April 1853, Queen Victoria became the first monarch to use chloroform to ease the pains of childbirth. Prince Leopold was born within 53 minutes of administration of the drug, which Victoria described as "delightful beyond measure."



(3/9) The anaesthetic powers of chloroform was first discovered in 1847 by the Scottish physician James Young Simpson. He and his two friends experimented with it on the evening of November 4th. At first, they felt very cheerful and talkative. After a short time, they passed out.



(4/9) Impressed with the drug's potency, Simpson began using chloroform as an anaesthetic. In December 1847, he delivered the first baby using it. Simpson nicknamed the girl "Saint Anaesthesia." Her real name was Wilhelmina Carstairs, pictured here.



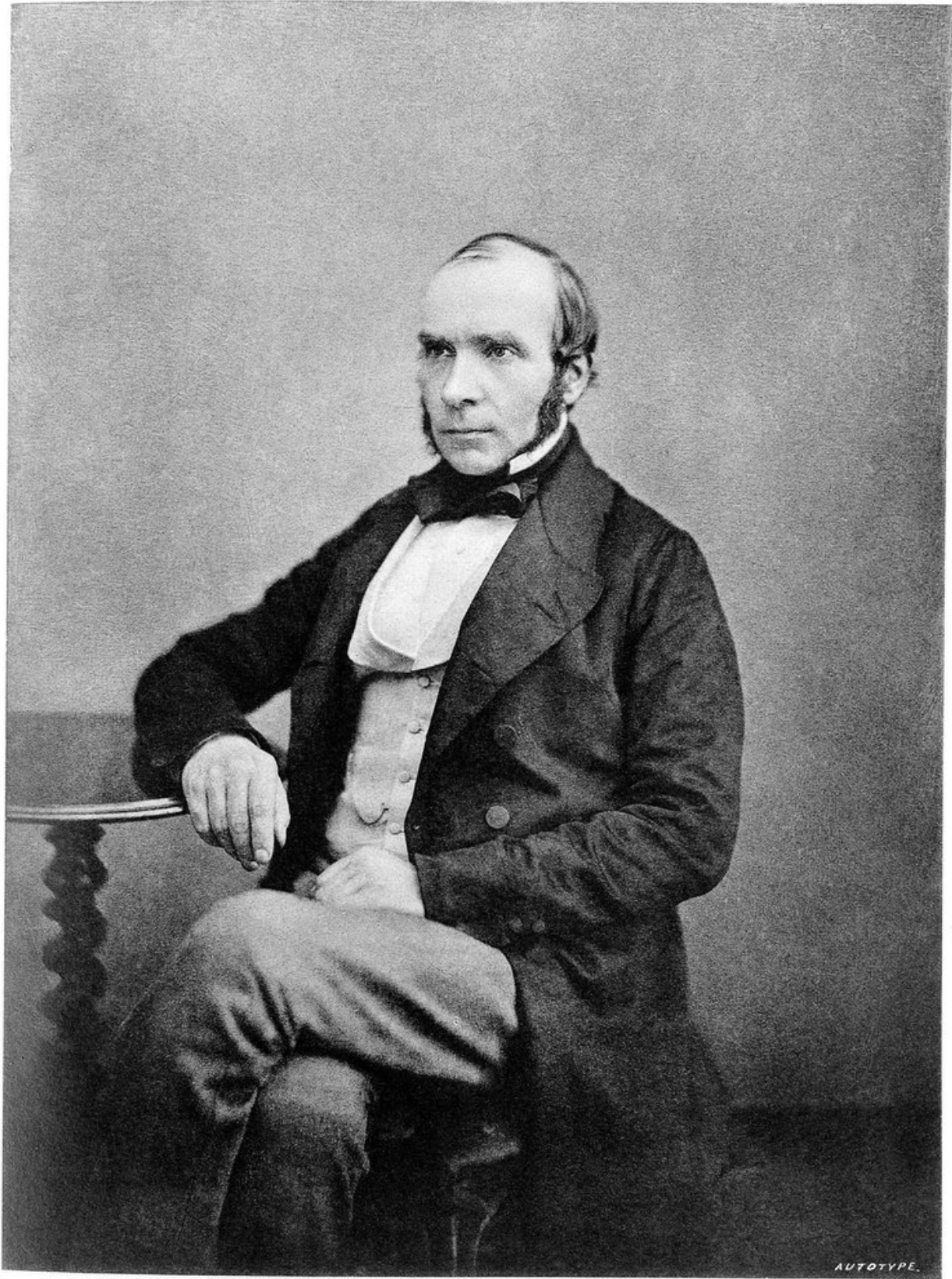
(5/9) During this time, Queen Victorian was pregnant with her sixth child. She heard of Simpson's discovery and was keen to benefit from it, but royal doctors cautioned against it, claiming that painful contractions during labour were ordained by God.



Engraved by D.J. Ford

HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY
THE QUEEN.

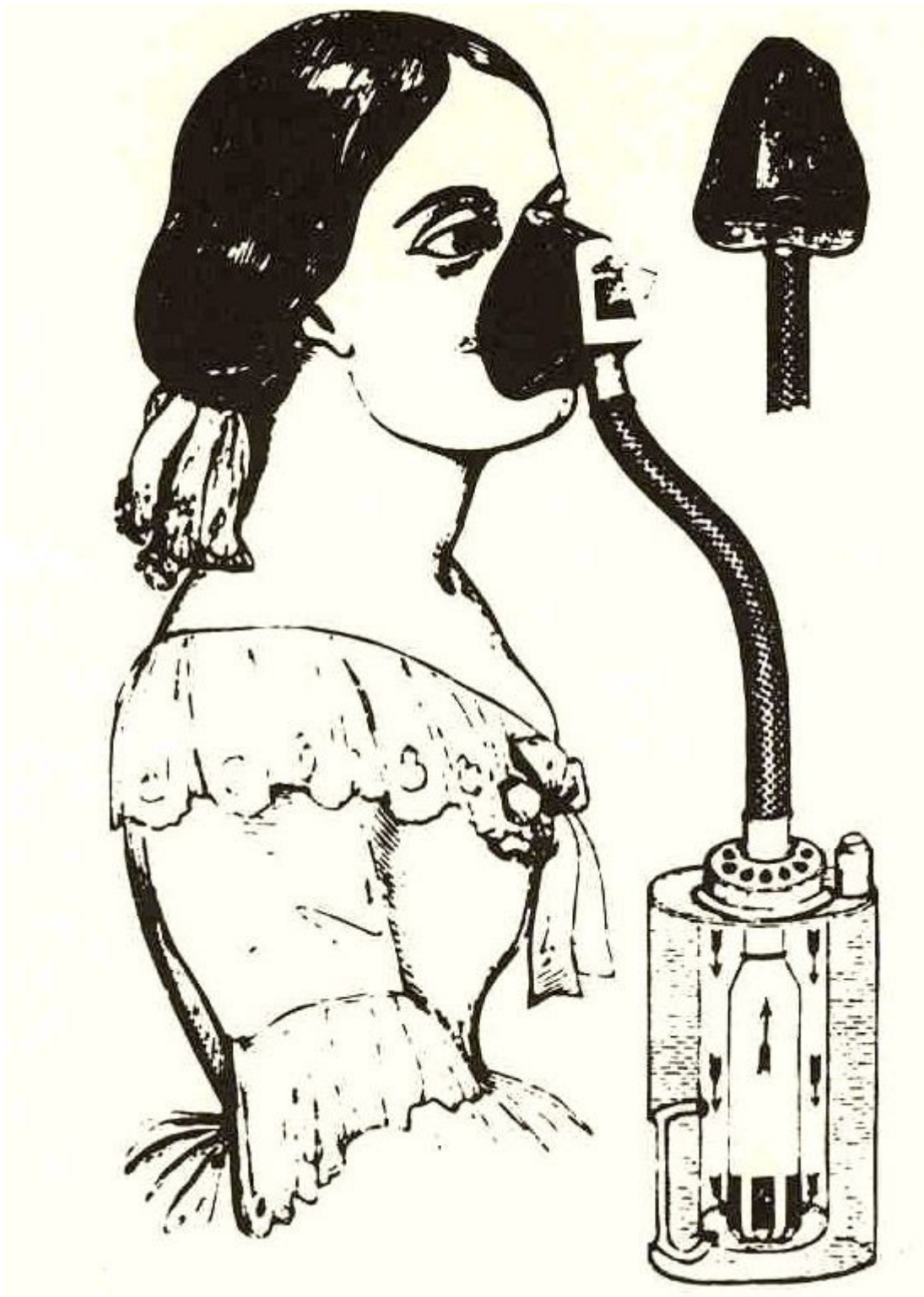
(6/9) When the Queen became pregnant again in 1850 her doctors – Sir James Clark and Charles Locock – consulted the leading London anaesthetist, John Snow, later famous for his work on cholera. But prudence again won out and the Queen was denied chloroform.



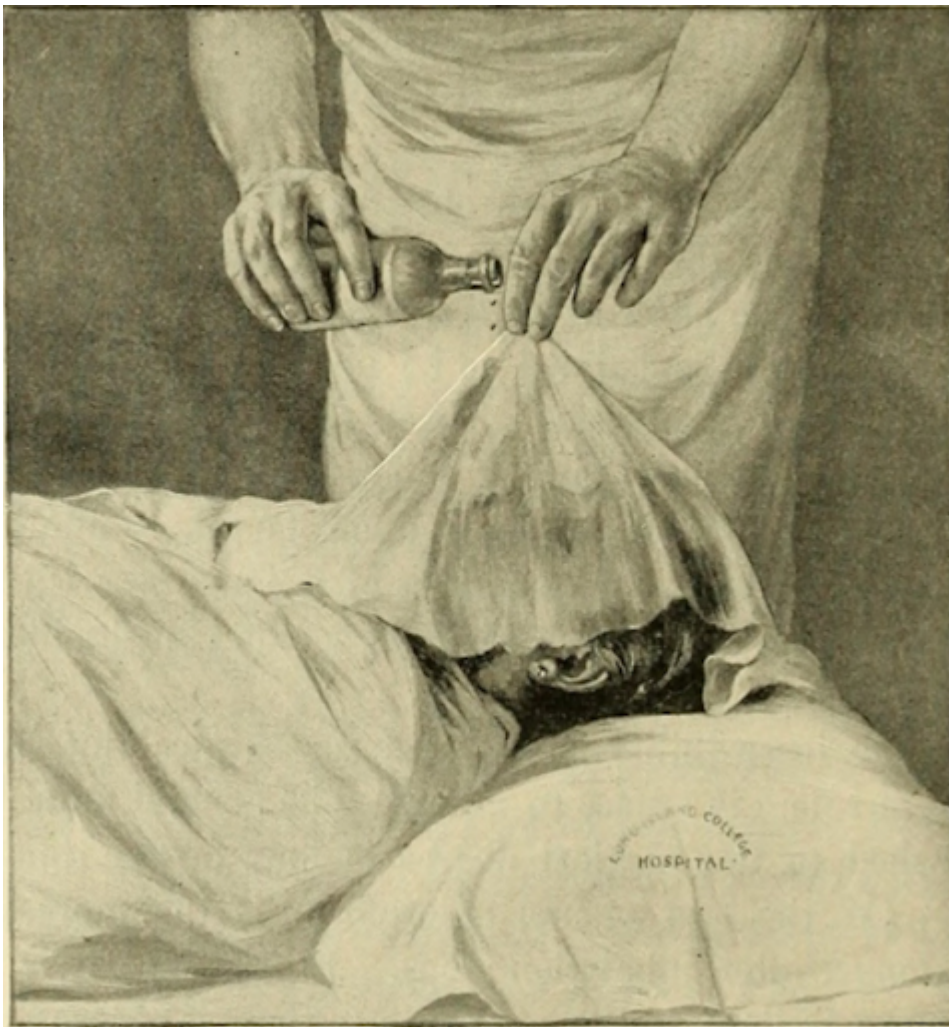
John Snow

*(Autotype from a Presentation Portrait, 1856, and Autograph
facsimile.—B. W. R.)*

(7/9) By 1852—when Victoria became pregnant with Prince Leopold—attitudes towards the drug were beginning to change. Most importantly, the Queen's husband, Prince Albert, had become an advocate of its usage. On 7 April 1853, John Snow administered the drug to Victoria.



(8/9) Not everyone was pleased with the outcome, however. Some protested on religious grounds; others for medical reasons. The Lancet questioned the veracity behind claims that the Queen had even used the drug in her last delivery.



(9/9) Doubts aside, Queen Victoria's use of chloroform led to a public outcry for painless childbirth. The editor of the Association Medical Journal called it "an event of unquestionable medical importance." Women everywhere were requesting chloroform to ease their labour pains.



PAINLESS CHILDBIRTH

By

MARGUERITE TRACY AND CONSTANCE LEUPP

A NEW AND PAINLESS method of childbirth has been developed in the medical clinic of the University of Baden, at Freiburg, by two men famous throughout the medical profession of the world. This method has now been used in five thousand cases with practically unvarying success. Not a single fatality to the mother can be charged to it; and under it the rate of infant mortality has decreased. A complete account of this method, containing the reports of the hospital authorities and the first-hand evidence of mothers who have undergone the treatment, has been prepared at Freiburg by representatives of McCLURE'S MAGAZINE, and is presented here for the first time.

Sigh. I got to the end of the thread and just realized there is a spelling error in the first tweet! When will Twitter allow us to edit tweets? ■■■