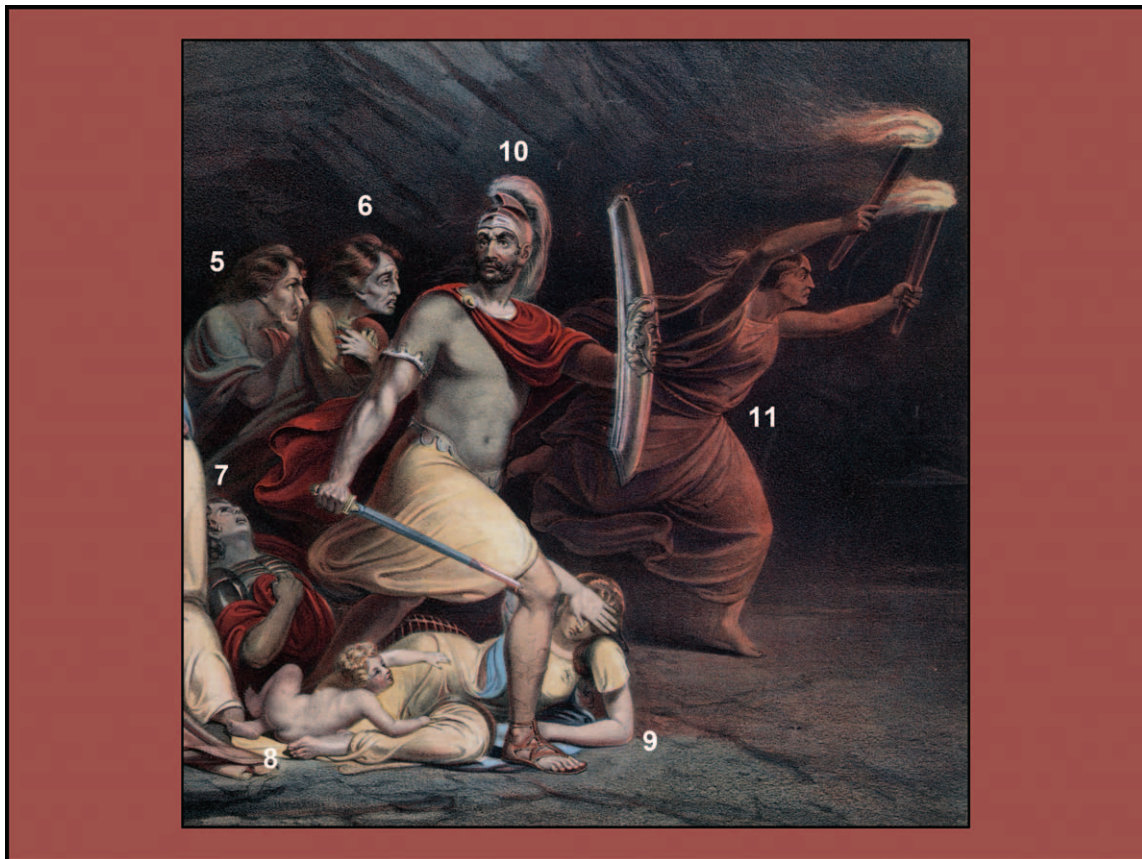


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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Blade Bearer to *The Court of Death*: Peale's Warrior ... and Colton's Surgeon?



On the right third of *The Court of Death*, a painting by America's Rembrandt Peale (1778–1860), a closer view (above) of a lithographic copy reveals Famine (6) and then Pestilence (5) in the wake of the Conflagration (11) of War. In his 100,000 chromolithographs of that oil painting, nitrous oxide pioneer Gardner Q. Colton (1814–1898) publicized how such threats trampled not only the Victim (7) of War, but also the Widow (9) and the Orphan (8). Whether a sword-brandishing Warrior (10) or a scalpel-wielding surgeon or dentist, figures brandishing blades were associated by artist Peale with death and by Colton with the near-death to which he subjected his patients with laughing gas. Remarkably, despite smothering his patients with up to two minutes of 100% nitrous oxide while watching their faces turn blue and then gray from lack of oxygen, Colton recorded over 190,000 such anesthetics without one anesthetic death. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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