

mortal, and consented to wed him. The infidelity of Coronis was witnessed by a crow, which at that time had snowy plumage. The bird officiously rushed off and told Apollo, who cursed it with such vigour that its feathers turned black, and have remained so to this day. The change of the colour of the crow is noted by Ovid and by Virgil in the *Aeneid* (vii, 761) though the name "*Corvo custode ejus*" is there printed with a capital letter, as if it were a man named Corvus. Artemis, sister of Apollo, enraged at the wounded dignity of her brother, brought the affair to the notice of Zeus, who also was indignant at the slight thus put upon an immortal, so he

"From Olympus top
With flaming thunderbolt cast down and slew
Latona's well-loved child—such was his ire."

(Hesiod.)

While Coronis was being consumed by fire, Apollo, evidently disturbed at the thought that his child should die like this, clove asunder the devouring flames and caught up the babe by some process of divinely operative Caesarean section. This child was Aesculapius, who, like other great men, was begotten in concubinage and born by Caesarean section. Afterwards Apollo handed him over to Cheiron, who taught him how to cure all diseases. This story was modified by the priests at Epidauros to the effect that he was born in the usual manner but abandoned by his mother, who left him to die on Mount Tithium. Here the babe was nursed by a goat (perhaps the earliest example of artificial feeding of children) and protected from harm by a dog, both of these animals being in after years identified with the cult of Aesculapius. The goatherd missed his goat and dog, and on hunting for them found the infant Aesculapius lying upon the earth with the protecting animals beside him. Perceiving a dim radiance about the infant, he gave him into the care of the Centaur Cheiron, famous for his medical and surgical knowledge. Aesculapius soon acquired, partly from the teaching of the beneficent leech Cheiron, partly from inborn and superhuman aptitude, a knowledge and mastery of medicine and surgery, such as was never before witnessed.