

there exists a great gap after them as well as before them . . . . the writings of Hippocrates remain alone amongst the ruins of ancient medical literature."

Now Hippocrates was born in 460 B.C., whereas Aesculapius is said to have lived about 1250 B.C. It is not, therefore, surprising that the story of Aesculapius is intermixed with Greek mythology, for a period of 800 years elapsed between the time of Aesculapius and the first authentic records. Our main sources of information are the writings of Hesiod and Homer assigned to the period 850 B.C. Pindar and others also relate some of the legends connected with Aesculapius. Hippocrates wrote a treatise "On Ancient Medicine," but it contains no reference to Aesculapius. It deals with the development and the principles of the practice of medicine. He remarks with profound comprehension and appreciation of the history of medicine, that: "The physician must know what his predecessors have known, if he does not wish to deceive both himself and others."

In the Homeric poems Aesculapius is not a divinity but a human being; the healing god is Apollo, who was the physician of the Olympian gods,—the god who visits men with plagues and epidemics, who wards off evil and affords help to man. Pausanias says: "If Aesculapius is the air, indispensable to the health of man and beast, yet Apollo is the sun, and rightly so is he called the father of Aesculapius, for the sun by his yearly course makes the air wholesome."

Homer calls Aesculapius the "blameless physician," from which we may infer that even in those times there were such individuals. The worship of Aesculapius became established at least 400 years after his death, and soon after that of Homer.

The story of Aesculapius, while very interesting, is largely mythological. I have not been able to find it consistently told by any writer, so that what I have selected to relate to you is quite open to criticism.

Coronis, daughter of Phlegyas, living in Thessaly, near the lake Boebeis, was beloved by Apollo in the godlike way of those early days, and became pregnant by him; unfaithful to the god, she listened to propositions from Ischys, an ordinary