

LAW AND MEDICINE.*

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I am delighted to meet the members of the Aesculapian Club. I am reminded of the story of your eponymous hero, Aesculapius, the father of all physicians. It is said that he was the son of Coronis by Apollo. While he was still *in utero*, or, as we say in law, *en ventre sa mère*, his mother was slain by her jealous lover; and when her body was to be burned, Hermes saved the child from the flames, having successfully performed the Caesarean operation. Thus early in the history of the science is proved the efficacy of the knife.

"Which things are an allegory." "Coronis" means nothing else than "that which is curved or crooked." Is the plain meaning not that Apollo, who had to do with man's disease and health, called in the assistance of what was crooked (a clear allusion to bread pills and the like), and so brought forth something new—the medical profession? Of course the story of the child escaping the fire through the assistance of the god of trickery is significant of how the medical profession *does* get out of a hot place with the help of ——. But I do not further pursue the subject.

The temptation is, of course, very strong indeed to consider the story as an indication of the view of the ancient Greek that it took a god to "get onto the curves" of the medical man. But the Greeks were a wholly sane people; and they never could have suggested even in their mythology that the god of the sun himself could do *that*. So that view is quite excluded, even if it were not the fact—as I must regretfully admit that it is—that there is no really satisfactory evidence that the word "coronis" ever was used in any Greek expression corresponding to that in our vernacular which I have employed. So we may be thrown back on the other interpretation.

Or am I quite wrong? And does the story not mean that the bright god who has the power to ward off plagues and epidemics and to relieve mortals from disease, evolved from the crooked Shamanism and quackery of the existing pretended healing art a new and better science—thereafter destroyed the old; and the

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