

that he returned home in safety. The fate of his brother, Podaleirios, is more uncertain, for the last we hear of him is that he was "leading on in the fierce battle on the Trojan plain."

Thus, according to Homer, Asklepios was a Greek chieftain who acquired his primitive knowledge of surgery and medicine from Cheiron, and handed it on to his sons Machaon and Podaleirios, who served in the Greek army. The story seems simple and intelligible; but in reality the problem of the personality of Asklepios is extraordinarily complicated. Some light has been thrown on it by the study of Greek art and mythology. In Greek sculpture we find representations, first of a huge coiled serpent, secondly of an immense snake accompanying a venerable old man leaning on a staff, thirdly of an old man round whose staff coils a diminutive snake, and lastly of an old man without either staff or snake. The last-named figure is identified with Asklepios. These probably represent four stages in the development of a god, and the word "Asklepios" is derived from a root which means to "wriggle." Asklepios was thus not an Homeric hero who was deified in later ages, and the worship of whom supplanted that of some old snake-god, but the snake-god himself, who subsequently assumed human shape. It is remarkable that the badge of the Royal Army Medical Corps does not represent the Homeric hero, but a deity whose origin is far anterior to that of the Trojan War.

I cannot here trace the spread of the worship of Asklepios in Grecian lands, nor the development of surgery and medicine between the age of Homer and that of Hippocrates. Probably in earlier times people visited temples of Asklepios to consult the gods by dreams, at first for any purpose, and subsequently for relief from suffering. The priest aided in the interpretation of dreams by his knowledge of simple remedies, and gradually a separation of the offices of priest and doctor took place. The knowledge and skill of these temple doctors, or sons of Asklepios, increased as the years passed by, and were in many cases handed down from father to son. Thus in the works of Hippocrates we find not only the results of his individual experience, but that of preceding generations of doctors at the shrine of Asklepios at Cos.

Although the Iliad opens with a magnificent description of a great pestilence which decimated the Greek army, we can gather very little knowledge of diseases from the pages of Homer. The treatment of the subject of this plague is poetic and moral rather than scientific. The poet relates how, in his great foray, Achilles had sacked the town of Chryse and taken prisoner the daughter of Chryses, priest of Apollo. In the distribution of the booty the captive girl was assigned to Agamemnon, who refused the ransom offered by her father. Whereupon he prayed to the god Apollo for vengeance, and "Apollo descended from