

Pindar tells the story of his instruction in the art of medicine :—

“The rescued child he gave to share
 Magnesian Centaur's fostering care ;
 And learn of him the soothing art
 That wards from man diseases' dart.
 Of those whom nature made to feel
 Corroding ulcers gnaw their frame ;
 Or stones far hurled or glittering steel,
 All to the great physician came.
 By summer's heat or winter's cold
 Oppressed, of him they sought relief.
 Each deadly pang his skill controlled,
 And found a balm for every grief.
 On some the force of charmed strains he tried,
 To some the medicated draught applied ;
 Some limbs he placed the amulets around,
 Some from the trunk he cut, and made the patient sound.”

(Wheelwright's translation of Pindar, Third Pythian Ode 80-95.)

There is also the story that Athena gave him some of the blood of the Gorgon, by which he was able to heal the sick, raise the dead, or destroy the well. This last is an extra function not now admitted to be part of the art. The tale of Aesculapius being able to restore the dead to life was quite popular among the poets. Pindar says Aesculapius was “tempted by gold” to raise a man from the dead, and Plato repeats the accusation. A list of individuals is given who benefited by this power, Kapaneus, Eriphyle, Hippolytus, Tyndareus and Glaukus were all affirmed by different writers to have been endowed by Aesculapius with a new life.

According to another tradition Aesculapius was once shut up in the house of Glaukus, whom Zeus had struck dead with a thunderbolt—a most useful article in mythological history. While absorbed in thought there came a serpent and twined around his staff. He killed it. Then he saw another serpent which came carrying in its mouth an herb with which it recalled to life the one that had been killed. The physician then