

COMMON DISEASES

CHAPTER I

THE PASSING OF PILLS AND POWDERS

WHEN Eve ate the apple she was making an experiment in therapeutics. In this she was only living up to the professional obligations of her sex, probably with an eye to its use upon Cain and Abel in the next domestic emergency. Even the misogynist Moses admits that it was because the fruit was "to be desired to make one wise."

To this day the serpent is the symbol of medicine, of wisdom, and of Woman the Wise and the Inscrutable, She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed. Woman is the oldest and not least worthy priest of Æsculapius, an echo of which still rings in the old proverb, "One old woman is worth a dozen doctors."

When the good old mother in Israel trumpets her contempt for the medical profession with its "new-fangled fixin's," she has a past of a quarter of a million years to base her pretensions upon.

The drug problem, the burning question both before and after taking, "What shall I take?" is one of the oldest in history. Even older, and far more respectable, than its sister query, "What will *you* take?" Though the answer was the same Life-Saving Remedy in the vast majority of both cases.