

## Dispensing for Nurses.

BY C. J. S. THOMPSON.

Author of "The Best Thing to Do," etc., etc.

### — PART III. —

#### *Instruments and Apparatus used in Dispensing.*

THE bench on which the compounding of prescriptions is carried on is usually called the dispensing counter. It should be fitted with a water tap and sunk basin, gas arrangement for Bunsen burner, shelves above for bottles, jars, and measures, and drawers below the counter to hold the various necessary requisites.

The instrument of perhaps the greatest importance to the dispenser is the balance or apothecaries' scales for weighing solids. These may, of course, be had of many different designs, and vary from the fine balance enclosed in glass, to the ordinary hand scales with metal pans. The most useful and handy are those with glass pans, which should not measure less than 3 inches in diameter, suspended from a simple beam to be held in the hand or fixed to an upright standard. The scales must be perfectly accurate, and should turn to  $\frac{1}{2}$  a grain, and must also be kept clean. Weights from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 grains, and apothecaries' weights from half a scruple to four drachms, should be kept in a box close to the scales. When using the hand-scales they should be held with the left hand, the pans being allowed just to touch the counter in order to steady them. Place the weight in the left, and the article to be weighed in the right. A small quantity should be put in first, and this added to gradually. Between each addition raise the scales about an inch, to see if the amount has been reached to balance the scale.

The pestle and mortar are the instruments used for pulverising, pounding and triturating drugs. They are made of wedgewood, marble, glass and iron. Those composed of wedgewood and glass, of various sizes, are generally used for dispensing purposes. The pestle is manipulated in several ways. To reduce a solid substance to powder it is used as a pounder, in triturating or mixing, with a stirring motion, and in working up a pill mass with a lever-like action. In dispensing, the use of the mortar should be avoided as much as possible. The measures used for dispensing purposes, of from 1 drachm to 20 oz. capacity, are made of glass.

The most useful sizes are the 1 drachm, graduated from 5 minim to 60, 1 oz. and 2 oz. graduated in drachms, and the 10 oz. and 20 oz. graduated in ozs.

When measuring a liquid, the bottle containing it should be held in the right hand, the measure being held at the base by the thumb and forefinger of the left. Remove the stopper of the bottle with the disengaged fingers of the left-hand, and raising the measure to the level of the eye, gently pour the liquid into it until the desired graduated mark is reached, then, placing the measure on a level surface, see the liquid is equal with the marks on both sides of the measure. Carefulness in measuring is most important, and it should never be done hurriedly. When taking a bottle down from a shelf do not get into the habit of first giving it a vigorous shake, and then, when you are going to measure out 2 drachms, slop 2 ozs. into the measure, but hold the bottle steadily, and pour the liquid out gently. When drops are ordered, the liquid should be dropped from the neck of the bottle. If a stoppered one, slightly loosen the stopper and supporting it against the inside of the neck with the forefinger, allow the liquid to escape slowly. It is well to moisten the rim round the neck of the bottle first. The drop must not be confused with the minim. The former is an unreliable method of measuring a liquid, now happily falling out of use, as it varies in size, according to the consistency of the liquid, the shape of the bottle from which it is dropped, and the amount of liquid in it at the time. It must therefore be remembered that drops and minims are not synonymous.

*Funnels* of various sizes, composed of glass or wedgewood, are used for filtering or straining, and a few small glass ones of from two to four ounces capacity are very useful on the dispensing counter for this purpose. For filtering, unsized paper is the usual medium, and may be bought in packets circular in form, of various sizes. These simply need folding into the form of a cone, placing in funnel, and the liquid poured in and allowed to slowly drain through. In straining a liquid to remove any foreign substance, the medium used must depend upon its consistency. For a thick fluid, such as syrup, muslin should be used, or for watery solution, a small piece of tow or absorbent wool is best, placed in the neck of the funnel, and the liquid run through it.

*Pill Machine.*—A pill machine is the instrument used for rolling, cutting, and forming a mass into pills. It is made in various sizes, to cut from one to four dozen pills of one to five grains in size.

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