

Dispensing for Nurses.

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— PART I. —

(Continued from page 37.)

THESE terms are largely abbreviated when used in prescription, often to an extent to become confusing, but with practice and familiarity this difficulty will soon be overcome.

Thus, tincturæ becomes tinct., tr., or t., and extractum becomes extract., ext., or e. It is in the translation of the directions the student usually finds difficulty, but these are now mostly cut down as short as possible, and the terms employed are not very numerous.

The Parts of the Prescription.—The word prescription is derived from *præ*, before, and *scribo*, I write, and is the term applied to the written directions of a medical practitioner for the preparation and use of certain remedies. It is the medium of communication between the prescriber and the dispenser.

For simplicity we will divide the prescription into four parts:—

I. The heading—which usually begins with the name of the patient. Beneath it, in the left-hand corner, the symbol \mathcal{R} , which represents the word recipe, signifying "take thou," which is supposed to have originated in the sign of the ancient invocation to Jupiter, and is of great antiquity.

II. The names of ingredients prescribed, each occupying one line, the solids usually preceding the liquids, and followed by the symbol denoting the weight or measure to be used.

III. The instructions to the dispenser as to what form the medicine is to take.

IV. The directions to the patient as to use, the whole of which is to be translated and written in English on the label. Below, in the right-hand corner, the initials or signature of the prescriber are usually placed, and the date upon which the prescription was written.

Nomenclature used in Prescriptions.—The names of the various ingredients ordered in prescriptions

are expressed in Latin, and are mainly those included in the British Pharmacopœia, which is the official list of drugs and chemicals, their compounds and preparations, issued by the General Medical Council under the authority of the Medical Act. It fixes the standard for the preparation of the various forms of medicinal agents, and is supposed to include all the reliable remedies required in the treatment of disease. A further object of the Pharmacopœia is to cause the various preparations to be made of a uniform strength, and also to lay down a standard of quality as to the drugs used.

There are, of course, a large number of medicinal agents in common use that are not included in the Pharmacopœia, and these are called unofficial remedies. A careful study of this work is, therefore, of the utmost importance to the dispenser, who should be familiar with all its processes, and know the proportions of the active ingredients in all its preparations.

The contents of the Pharmacopœia may be roughly divided into three parts:—

- I. The inorganic substances of chemical origin.
- II. The organic substances of vegetable origin.
- III. The preparations of the above.

The Nurse should first make herself thoroughly acquainted with the English and Latin names of these, which are arranged alphabetically in the Pharmacopœia, and also take note of their doses and chief characters.

The preparations, of which a distinct knowledge of the processes of making and their appearance should be acquired by actual experience if possible, include confections, decoctions, essences, enemata, extracts, glycerines, infusions, inhalations, juices, liniments, lozenges, mixtures, ointments, pills, powders, plasters, poultices, suppositories, solutions, syrups, tinctures, wines, etc.

Explicit directions are given as to the best methods of preparing these compounds, which must always be strictly adhered to.

Occasionally, the abbreviated form used in writing the name of a substance included in a prescription causes some confusion and difficulty to the student, as it may apply to more than one. Great care must be taken that an error is not made in such cases. The quantity and dose ordered is sometimes a guide to the dispenser, but when there is room for doubt the prescriber should be

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)