

PRACTICAL PHARMACY AND SYSTEM IN THE PRESCRIPTION  
DEPARTMENT.

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Your chairman has with mistaken zeal insisted upon my writing for you a paper on Practical Pharmacy and Dispensing, to be read before the next meeting of that section. I am fully aware of my limitations, but nevertheless there are a few ideas and wrinkles which occur to us all at times and which would be of appreciable benefit were they called to the attention of probable users, and I shall jot them down here.

The writer was actively engaged in prescription and laboratory work for some years, and although now one of that great army of travelling representatives who call upon the drug trade, still maintains a very lively interest in the back portion of the drug store, the place where the mortars and graduates and the pots and pans are used. Practical pharmacy in its truest sense, comprises both preparing and dispensing the various galenicals and other complex substances which enter into the dispensing or prescription work of the drug store. Such being the case, the writer has been shocked to see the tendency of the pharmacist to *buy everything*, and to be content to pour out of the manufacturer's bottle or package into his own, write out the physician's directions, slap on the label, and let it go at that. Practical pharmacy, I take it, necessitates a clean and orderly prescription counter, and scales. Shades of our ancestors! when I think of the condition of some of the prescription scales I have seen I throw up my hands in horror! Dirt incrustated scale pans, small amounts of powdered and crystalline chemicals which have spilled onto the glass portion of a torsion or a Troemner balance and left to remain there until by its hygroscopic nature it had corroded the metal parts and incrustated both the metal and the glass, rendering the balances sensitive to anywhere from one to five grains instead of one-sixty-fourth or one one-hundredth of a grain as they properly should be. Coupled with that, a dirty disorderly arrangements of the stock bottles and a heterogenous collection of graduates, etc., seems to be the condition existing in too many of our stores. How delightful on the other hand to go behind the prescription counter of a store where all is order and system, and where cleanliness is paramount. That fellow is usually the one who is able to compound that batch of difficult pills or suppositories and do it *right*. In the routine of the busy prescription store a full line of working solutions of the various salts, acids, etc., is always a great help, and such solutions as potassium iodide, potassium bromide, sodium bromide, sodium salicylate of definite strength, boric acid, citric acid, tartaric acid, and others of their class, also a solution of strychnine sulphate, 1 in 60, all of which remain stable for a time if a small quantity of alcohol be added thereto when making up to the required volume. Such solutions can be measured with greater ease and more expeditiously than the corresponding substance can be weighed, made into solution in the vehicle and strained through cotton or filtered; and let me say right here that

had I a man in my employ who sent out a murky liquid when it should have been clear, I would fire him at once.

Practical pharmacy goes still further than the prescription department. How many so called practical pharmacists have we who would make a botch of Fowler's Solution by putting the arsenic trioxide and potassium bicarbonate in a porcelain evaporating dish, adding the water, and then applying heat. What is the result? In the ebullition caused by the heat the bubbles are forced to the surface and bursting there carry a part of the arsenic with them to the rim and over the rim of the dish. If you doubt, it, get your old tripod, scrape some of the incrustation from its rings and apply any arsenic test; or better still, when you have finished your lot of Fowler's Solution assay it for its arsenical content. I am satisfied that you will in the future use a Florence flask. How many of you in making a U. S. P. tincture of an alkaloidal drug, mydriatic or otherwise, know that the drug is thoroughly exhausted before percolation is finished. Do you just rely upon the absence of chlorophyll, or coloring matter in the last few cubic centimeters of the percolate, or do you subject it to the action of say Mayer's reagent?

In handling a prescription containing a large quantity of a glycerophosphate, for instance, which was intended to be in solution, have you ever tried the efficacy of a small quantity of lactic acid?

In making solution of lead subacetate U. S. P. have those of you who have an open steam pipe handy, ever tried coupling a hose on that steam pipe putting the lead oxide, lead acetate and water all together in a stone crock, sticking that hose down into it, turning on the steam and letting the good work go on by itself?

Have any of you ever had to make large quantities of a phosphorous rat and roach paste? No? Well if you ever do, try it this way: Get an ice cream freezer, place the phosphorous in the freezer can, with water enough to cover it. Put it on a water bath until the phosphorous melts, then put in the dasher, pour in fifty percent of the total volume of glucose (syrupy) turn the crank until it is thoroughly mixed, after which add enough previously made flour paste to make up the required volume, then add oil of anise or any other odor desired. That is practical pharmacy from the manufacturing standpoint and just as much practical pharmacy is needed there as behind the prescription counter.

In making large quantities of Aromatic Elixir, U. S. P. have you had trouble in filtering the finished product? Of course you have. Try dissolving the oils or aromatic spirit in part of the alcohol triturating that with talcum in a large mortar, or other vessel, then adding the balance of the alcohol and water, filtering, and adding the syrup last. Have you ever made Compound Resorcin Ointment? Certainly you have, but did you ever try using anhydrous wool fat, dissolving the resorcin in the necessary quantity of water and doing your own hydrating, instead of having the manufacturer to do it for you, and at the same time getting in the resorcin? Try it once. All these things are practical pharmacy and go a very long way toward determining whether or not a man has the ability to make a success in pharmacy.