

CHAPTER III.

POSOLOGY.

The British Pharmacopœia makes the following statement in regard to the doses as given in it. "The doses mentioned in the pharmacopœia are intended to represent the average range in ordinary cases, for adults. They are meant for general guidance, but are not authoritatively enjoined by the council. The medical practitioner must act upon his own responsibility as to the doses of any therapeutic agents he may administer." This statement is a very important one and one that should be thoroughly understood by every medical practitioner. Firstly, The official doses represent the average range in ordinary cases. The deviations from the ordinary that are most likely to be met with must be considered. *Weight.* Roughly the larger and more robust the individual the larger the dose of most drugs that may be given to him. Small and weakly individuals should always at first receive small doses of any remedy. *Sex.* Women are often said to be less resistant to the action of drugs than men are but as a rule little distinction is made between the sexes. It must however be born in mind that at the time of pregnancy or menstruation any drugs that bring about changes in the blood-supply to the uterus or that would set up movements in its musculature should be either entirely avoided or given in very small doses and with caution. Also it must be remembered that many drugs are excreted in the milk and may readily make the milk unpalatable or even dangerous to a suckling child. Amongst the drugs excreted by the mammary glands are the oils of anise and dill, turpentine, copaiba, the purgative principles of rhubarb, senna, and castor oil, opium, iodine, also some of the metals antimony, arsenic, iron, lead, mercury, and zinc. *Idiosyncrasy.* Every person differs from all others more or less. Each person is not only physically but also chemically a distinct individual. These personal differences are usually quantitatively so small as to occasion little or no difficulty but occasional individuals are met with who deviate very widely from the normal in respect to some one or more drugs. Such individuals as are abnormally affected by any drug are said to have an idiosyncrasy for the drug. Drugs in regard to which idiosyncrasy is likely to be encountered are morphine, and its allies, mercury, bromides, copaiba, arsenic, iodides, quinine, etc. Idiosyncrasy is often an inherited characteristic. *Tolerance.* The continued use of a drug is very apt to make any individual less susceptible to its pharmacological action and to necessitate the administration of larger doses, this is known as tolerance. Tolerance often occurs with alcohol, morphine, arsenic, vegetable purgatives.