

Book reviews

Scabies. By KENNETH MELLANBY. 1972. Pp. 81, 10 figs. Classey, Hampton, Middlesex. (£1.25)

Mellanby's 'Scabies', first published in 1943, is a book many of us have referred to, but few have been able to possess. Now we have a reprint of this classic little book which, with only a new preface, reads as though it were published yesterday rather than 30 years ago. Although treatment regimes may have changed, the reader will still find the chapter on treatment well worth reading for the general advice it contains. Most questions one is likely to ask about scabies are answered, and now that the disease is common again the book will surely be as well received as it was in 1943.

P. Rodin

V.D. Explained. By ROY STATHAM. 1972. Pp. 159, figs 11. Priory Press, London (80 p)

What does one look for in a book intended to inform young people about V.D.? The information about the diseases should be accurate and presented with clarity, using simple language. The readers should know what to expect if they ever have to attend a clinic and be reassured that they will be well treated. The book should be inexpensive.

How does this paperback measure up to these requirements? I regret to say, only fairly well.

There are many inaccuracies. A varicocele (page 23) may, if untreated, lead to infertility. Trichomoniasis would appear to be the cause of the vaginitis (page 69) rather than gonorrhoea. The oral lesions of Reiter's disease do not usually produce symptoms (page 80). 'Thrush urethritis' (page 103) is not cured by oral treatment. The gravest misstatement in the book appears on page 62—'Divorce proceedings on the grounds of marital infidelity are not uncommon sequels to gonococcal infection'.

Too often, long or awkward words are used. I would instance only 'misconstrue' on page 29 and 'dispassionate' on page 37, while the allusion to ecclesiastical history on page 139 might well make the young reader stand agape.

The information given in Chapter 4 would be more easily appreciated if the commentary for each graph were on the same page.

Details of contact tracing should be mentioned earlier than page 68 and the fact that female patients

may be interviewed is worthy of inclusion. It may not be good practice for the doctor to interview, in depth, the patient about contacts (page 36). This only makes the contact tracer's subsequent interview with the patient more difficult. The giving of contact cards is not generally considered to be 'one of the most valuable measures' in contact tracing (page 63), nor would one commend the practice of sending letters to contacts whose names and addresses are known (page 64). Arranging a visit should not be 'often time-consuming' (page 64); it is a most important part of a contact tracer's job. It should also be explained to male contacts of patients with trichomoniasis that this disease does not necessarily infer infidelity (page 100).

Many would not be reassured to read that treatment may fail after weeks (page 38), and undue emphasis on the rare complications of gonorrhoea in males (pp. 64-67) may cause anxiety. Mention of cancer as a cause of genital thrush in a book for the young is inappropriate. More definite explanations of the instruments (pp. 79 and 85) and of 'further tests' (page 63) and 'tests' (page 85) might allay fears that the procedures are painful.

It is doubtful whether Dr. Statham has been much helped by his collaborators. Mrs. Barratt's contribution appears to be written for parents and teachers rather than the young people for whom the book is intended. Dr. Mitchell's chapter is disappointing. The introduction lacks relevance and most of the attitudes expressed appear to be a generation out of date. One section (pp. 139-143) might be cited by girls as a typical example of male chauvinism!

One book is listed under further reading; its second edition (1972) is even better value than the first and it costs only 35p compared with the 80p for 'V.D. Explained'.

C. B. S. Schofield

Year Book of Dermatology. Edited by F. D. MALKINSON and R. W. PEARSON. 1973. Pp. 368, 60 figs, 25 pp. of index. Year Book Medical Publishers, Chicago; Lloyd-Luke Medical Books, London. (£7.75)

The latest Year Book of Dermatology, again edited by two Associate Professors of Dermatology in Chicago, follows the pattern of its now well-known predecessors. It commences with an excellent comprehensive review,