SCABIES (Oxford War Manuals)

By KENNETH MELLANBY. Oxford University Press, London, 1943. Price 5s.

This little book will bring disappointment to those who hoped for a more or less complete account of the natural history of sarcoptes and of the recent experimental work on scabies.

The conception of an "immunity" based on the mechanical removal of burrowing females by means of the nails in repeatedly infected subjects is novel. One has occasionally seen this phenomenon, represented by an eruption consisting solely of large excoriated hyperaemic papules, in the bedfellow of a symptomless carrier, and these cases are necessarily very difficult to diagnose. An attack of scabies may, moreover, sensitise the skin to other

external irritants, e.g. woollen textiles, and promote a chronic prurigo which retains many of the objective characters of the original infestation.

Among the conditions simulating scabies, one looks in vain for mention of dermatitis herpetiformis, mild cases of which have, especially in distribution, the closest resemblance to scabies. This is indeed one of the commonest pitfalls in diagnosis.

While one is bound to agree with the author that the key to exterminating this disease is greater precision in diagnosis it seems to be the case that a wide dermatological experience is necessary before this can be attained.

In the reviewer's experience, fomites are more frequent sources of infection than one might be led to believe by reading this book.

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