A Handbook of Cryptograms (review)*.—If readers want a prosaic account of the ferns, horsetails and allies with a smattering of mosses thrown in for good measure then they should buy this book—if they can afford it. But this volume could have been so much better.

It starts well. The introductory chapters on the morphology of the groups cater for beginners and the key to all British vascular cryptogams seems very serviceable and particularly sound for the genus *Equisetum*. Then follows the main body of the book, the description of each species in some detail with notes on distribution, habitat, economic uses and etymology of name. This is all excellent. But really the keynote to the book is set by the first sentence of the introduction where reference is made to the Victorian era, for in fact this volume is but a Victorian fern guide decked up with excellent illustrations, perhaps fuller descriptions and the inevitable changes in nomenclature. For shame that a book which purports to cover British vascular cryptogams should be published without even mention of Professor Manton's exciting work which after all was carried out almost exclusively on British plants—not even a mention of it in the tiny bibliography where the usual hardy perennials, Newman, Moore and Bower bloom. The author may protest that the cytology is too complex. Surely the elementary ideas of polyploidy for a book of this type are not any more complex than the ideas of microspores, megaspores and *Pilularia* sporocarps. Then comes the real anticlimax, for after one hundred and seventy odd pages on the vascular cryptogams there come forty on mosses. It must be reported that the choice of the most common species is good and their description accurate. Every species is illustrated either in colour or by black and white line drawings most of which are fairly good but all would have been better for the addition of a scale. Pity the poor enquiring reader of the introduction who thinks that the *Sphagnum* and *Andraea* on fig. 43 are of the same size where one must be $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$ and the other $\times 6$—the caption helpfully informs him that they are all magnified. Also the enquiring reader is just as likely to pick up *Plagiochila asplenioides* as *Hookeria lucens* (the reference to *lucida* on p. 207 is one of the few misprints noticed); here this book cannot help him for no hepatics are included and their existence is not even mentioned. Either some hepatics should have been included or the mosses excluded altogether for as it stands the book is an ill assorted hotch-potch.

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* British Ferns and Mosses, by Peter Taylor. London, Eyre & Spottiswoode (The Kew Series No. 5). 1960. Pp. 231, 15 coloured plates and 51 line drawings. Price: 25s.