

BOOK NOTICE.

NERVES -By Professor D. Fraser Harris, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.E.,
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This most admirable handbook on "Nerves" belongs to that excellent series, "The Home University Library of Modern Knowledge," published by Williams and Norgate, London. The series ranges over such diverse fields as Literature, Art, History, Philosophy and Science, and the authors include some of the most eminent specialists of our time. Professor Fraser Harris's little treatise of nearly 250 pages will rank among the best, for it is brightly written, full of interesting matter, thoroughly up to date, and as clear and concise as could be desired. The book has a distinct literary flavour, as might be expected from a writer who has the distinction of being a member of the exclusive "Authors Club" of London.

Nobody, in these days of stress and strain, needs to be told that he possesses nerves. Most people are only too painfully aware of the fact, and like James David Forbes, the Scottish physicist, compelled to confess "I am laid on my back, and unable to revolve through the smallest aliquot parts of a right angle without a tremendous twitch."

A clearer description of the nerves, and of nerve functions, than Dr. Fraser Harris gives in his first two chapters cannot, we feel sure, be found, though a few good figures of the brain, spinal cord, and of actual preparations, not diagrammatic, would have been helpful to ordinary readers. Many curious facts are detailed in the earlier chapters, such as the ascertained speed of nerve impulses, viz.: 180 feet per second in man's motor nerves. These nerve impulses are not the same as electrical waves, though all neural activity, as of all muscular activity, is accompanied by electrical disturbances. The continuity of the neuraxone is carefully explained and in Chap. III the nature of nerve centres, or specialized groups of nerve cells, are admirably elucidated. The nerve centres are a "hierarchy," the lower centres obey the higher, says the author, there is no equality, but there is co-operation, surely an object-lesson for some politicians! Curiously enough nerve activities are not specific for experiment shows that a nerve for inhibiting the heart was grafted on to the nerve for dilating the pupil of the eye, and on being stimulated the heart-nerve actually dilated the pupil (p. 78). The character of nerve activity depends upon the tissue or organ in which the nerve ends. Habit or the forming of nerve-paths, individual susceptibility or the truth that "what is one man's meat is another's poison," and other interest-