

One word more. The short preface by Prof. Friedel explains, as follows, the object of the book: "La branche de la science chimique à laquelle on a donné le nom de stéréochimie ou chimie dans l'espace est de date toute récente. Elle a été créée par MM. A. Le Bel et Van't Hoff: . . . A l'étranger les publications d'ensemble faites pour répandre ces notions ne manquent pas. Il n'en est pas de même en France," &c. This seems strange, while close by, rue S. André des Arts, may be had Meyerhoffer's edition of Van't Hoff's celebrated "Dix années dans l'histoire d'une théorie," a book of infinitely greater interest than the volume before us.

A practice has grown up of late years of inserting into text-books by obscure authors little prefaces by better-known men, containing nothing in particular in the way of information, and in which the laudatory expressions are not always quite justified by the character of the book. So long as "puffing" is regarded as allowable, there is no very clear reason why it should not be permitted in connection with books; but the sort of preface referred to, has rather too strong a family likeness to the "certificate" so often found on the label of hair-restorers and packets of cocoa, to the virtues of which these writers of prefaces would probably in most cases shrink from testifying.

#### OUR BOOK SHELF.

*The Telephone Systems of the Continent of Europe.* By A. R. Bennett. (London: Longmans, 1895.)

WITH what object was this book written? The introduction is a violent diatribe against the telephone powers that be in England; and yet by his titles, the author seems to have been nursed in their service. Moreover, England and Germany with their 162,000 telephones, rank next to the United States, and possess more telephones than all the rest of Europe put together. In fact, next to Scandinavia and Switzerland, England ranks above Germany in telephonic development—the rest of Europe being "nowhere." Why, therefore, this wailing and gnashing of teeth? Why should England and Germany alone in Europe excite his wrath? Is it that they will not adopt at home his views of low rates and, perhaps, no profits, and did his apparent rough treatment in Berlin prejudice his judgment of German ways? The book is full of statistics of the growth and development of the business in different European countries—except England. It indicates the public uses to which telephones can be applied, but it contains little that is scientific or practical. Its facts are fleeting, and its *raison d'être* is not evident.

The development of telephony in Sweden is very remarkable. The difficulty of locomotion, and the long dark days in winter, may account for much of it. In a population of 4,824,000 there are 26,201 telephones in use. This means one telephone to 184 inhabitants. In the United States there is one telephone to 270 inhabitants.

In Switzerland it is even more developed than in Sweden. The difficulties of locomotion and internal communication, the isolation of valleys, that gold mine to the country—the great summer tourist traffic—and hotel life, may account for this, but the author attributes its success solely to its cheapness. In fact it is too cheap, for it does not pay, and this state of things is not conducive to future prosperity.

The great development of telephony in the United States, where there are 232,140 subscribers in spite of very high rates, does not support the views of the author.

The annual charge in Switzerland was originally 150 francs per annum for an unlimited local service, and an additional 25 francs per annum to cover trunk or inter-urban service. It was soon found necessary to charge 20 centimes per talk of five minutes on trunk lines. Since 1890 the local charges have been 80 francs per annum with 800 free talks, and 5 centimes per extra talk, and the trunk charges per three minutes, 30 centimes for any distance up to 50 kil., 50c. to 100 kil., and above 100 kil. 75c. From January 1, 1896, it will be a very practical and sensible tariff, viz. an initial annual charge of 40 francs and a uniform charge of 5 centimes for all local talks, the trunk charges remaining unchanged. The number of talks per annum per subscriber during 1894 was—local 504 and trunk 85, but the trunk traffic in many places far exceeds the local. In Affoltern, for instance, during 1894, there were only 105 local talks, while the trunk talks amounted to 8167 (*Journal Télégraphique*, May 25, 1895). There were at the end of 1894, 18,814 subscribers in Switzerland. This means one telephone to 147 inhabitants.

A word is wanted badly to express a telephonic conversation or talk analogous to "telegram." The author's "telephonogram" is lengthy. "Phonogram" is in use in connection with the phonograph. "Telelogue" has been proposed, but has not met with general approval.

*The Elements of Health.* By Louis C. Parkes, M.D. D.P.H. (London: J. and A. Churchill, 1895.)

THE author of this manual states in the preface that his "main idea has been to give some simple yet practical information on the preservation of individual or personal health." It is impossible to say, with any degree of certainty, who is to be accorded the distinction of having originated such an "idea." Certainly Hippocrates undertook the writing of treatises on hygiene, and even he was only following in the footsteps of others. This preliminary remark mainly arises out of the fact that when another manual of hygiene appears, one's natural impulse is to turn to the preface, in order to see if the author has any new motive to suggest for its appearance; for the fact is, there is, at present, a superabundance of such works. Dr. Parkes' manual, good as it is, contains practically nothing that cannot be found in any of the other dozen or more elementary treatises dealing with the same subject; and to those who are familiar with the same author's work upon "Hygiene and Public Health," it will be sufficient to state that the present volume under review is practically that work popularised and very much abridged.

The illustrations are excellent; and it is a positive relief to find that they show a little freshness in their treatment, and are something more than the stock figures that appear in so many similar publications.

Dr. Parkes occupies a deservedly high position among sanitarians, and it goes without saying that his teachings are sound. There are only two points which call for adverse criticism. The table on page 168 needs revision; the author is well aware that the fat in butter does not average 88 per cent.; indeed, on a subsequent page (196) he himself puts it down at 83 per cent.; and his statement that it is "doubtful if alum (in bread), unless present in considerable quantity, is able to influence health adversely," is also open to criticism. In the first place, it is doubtful whether, if such be the case, it is prudent to make so loose a statement in what is designed to be a popular work for the lay reader. There is little doubt that the hydrate of alumina, which results from the use of baking powders containing alum, is soluble in the hydrochloric acid of the gastric juice, and there are many good reasons for regarding such addition as very undesirable; it would, moreover, probably prove harmful when present in what may be held to constitute less than a *considerable quantity*.