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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

At our monthly meeting held on 14th inst. Mr. W. Meier, our President, informed us of the death, at St. Gall, from creeping paralysis, of our Member, Mr. Max Gerig, who joined our society in 1912. Those present paid the usual silent tribute to his memory.

We were also advised of the death of Dr. Joseph Burri, for many years rector of the S.K.V. School in Zurich and an outstanding authority on commercial education. He had also served on the Central Committee of the S.K.V. for a number of years. A letter of condolence had been sent to the Central Committee.

A wedgwood vase and two ash trays to match, chosen by Mr. and Mrs. W. Meier as a typically English creation suitable as our present to Mr. Phillip Schmid-Ruedin on the occasion of his retirement from the position of Central Secretary of the S.K.V., were then exhibited and admired. Mr. Krucker, who is shortly going to Switzerland, will make the presentation on our behalf.

A telegram of felicitation would be sent to the City Swiss Club on the occasion of its centenary celebration at the Dorchester Hotel on 16th November.

Mr. G. D. Smith, B.Com., of the Data Processing Division of I.B.M. (International Business Machines) gave us an informal talk on Electronic Computers and their use for Commercial Purposes. With the help of drawings and notes on the blackboard and a film of sketches he illustrated and explained the highly technical working and capacity of the I.B.M. 650 Magnetic Drum Data Processing Machine, of which 400 are installed and in use, while another 1,000 are on order and in course of manufacture. Mr. Smith told us that the term electronic brain applied to these computers is a misnomer. It would be nearer the truth to call them slaves of man, who has to do the thinking for the machines. If man's logic is wrong the machine cannot work for him. It takes a man with a mathematical and analytical mind three weeks to absorb the principles upon which the computers work, but anything up to a year to master the application of the computers to the system and organisation of the large concerns for whose use they are made. They are capable of ultra rapid solutions of com-

plicated mathematical and recording problems. It costs £50 per hour to run one of these machines, which are rented at anything up to £6,000 per month. The tendency towards ever larger undertakings has produced vast problems of manufacture, organisation and salesmanship. To solve these problems facts and figures are required, which would, in the ordinary way, take months to calculate. Electronic computers make such information available in a much shorter time. Hence these machines are meeting a very real, practical need and for this reason it is beyond doubt that the future will produce even greater wonders in this very recent field of human endeavour.

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