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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

Despite the inclement weather, the Monthly Meeting held at Swiss House on Wednesday, 12th March, was well attended.

Three new members, Messrs. O. Braga, B. O. Cogliatti and J. M. Rueff, to whom the Chairman, Mr. O. Grob, extended a cordial welcome, were admitted and two members were transferred to Swiss Sections.

In recognition of long and faithful service rendered to the Society, the Chairman presented a leather travelling case to Mr. W. Meier, Hon. Member and Past President of the S.M.S. This gesture was greatly appreciated by the recipient, who thanked the Chairman and members present for this token of appreciation.

Reporting on the activities of the College, the Chairman of the Education Committee, Mr. A. Jaccard, stated that a large influx of students was expected for the summer months, when admission would probably have to be restricted. He stated that a new term of Evening Classes would start on May 12th and asked members to draw the attention of any young Swiss at their offices to these classes. At the external examinations held in December, out of 71 candidates presented by the College 51 (72 per cent) obtained the Lower Certificate in English, and of 15 candidates who sat, 11 (73 per cent) obtained the Certificate of Proficiency in English. These examinations, which are held each year in June and December by the University of Cambridge, are becoming increasingly popular and universally recognised. The overall figures for the whole of the United Kingdom of the last examinations are not yet known, but the results obtained by the College are again well above the averages for the last few years.

Following the meeting, Mr. J. D. Wilkinson, of the British Iron and Steel Federation, gave a talk on "The British Steel Industry". By way of introduction to his address, the lecturer showed a technical film, "Steel", which gave a vivid account of

this dynamic industry in all its aspects from the mining of pig-iron to the finished product. We saw blast-furnaces and rolling-mills in operation and witnessed gigantic plants devouring the raw materials in an inferno of leaping flames and with the clatter of mammoth mechanisation. Experienced men were supervising and directing the production during all the various stages of a highly technical process. As a graphic description of a whole industry, this film must surely be unique.

In order to acquaint his audience more intimately with the British iron and steel industry, which comprises over 300 companies employing just under 300,000 workers, the lecturer then gave an outline of its structure, location and economics. He explained in detail the various processes of manufacture, i.e., open hearth, Bessemer and electric. He also explained how the various districts had developed particular characteristics, South Wales specialising in the production of sheet and tinplate, the North-East Coast and Scotland in plates and heavy sections for ship-building and structural engineering, and Sheffield in alloy and special steels. Important factors governing these locations were the situation of the home ore fields and easy access to coal and imported ore, being well placed for exporting and adjacent to a vast market and, therefore, having a good supply of scrap in return.

The lecturer referred to the rapid growth in the iron and steel industry, which in Britain in 1946 had produced 7.8 million tons of pig-iron and 12.7 million tons of crude steel. By 1957 these had been increased respectively to 14.3 million and 21.7 million tons, representing an increase of nearly 75 per cent in steel production and nearly 85 per cent in pig-iron output. In terms of the 1957 production Britain was the fourth largest steel producer in the world.

On conclusion of his most interesting and instructive talk, the lecturer answered numerous questions, put to him by the audience, with great skill and authority. It was altogether a most enjoyable evening.

W.B.



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