

Player's Please

MILD or MEDIUM

"IT'S THE TOBACCO THAT COUNTS"

This Age of Conflict, A Contemporary World History, 1914-1943. By Frank P. Chambers, Christina Phelps Grant and Charles C. Bayley. New York. Harcourt, Brace & Co. Pp. 856. \$7.25. Published in Canada by George J. McLeod, Ltd., Toronto.

We have here a fine historical achievement. Probably it will serve to many rather as a book of reference than as a book to be read through continuously. But for those whose special concern is to understand and keep in proportion as well as in sequence the great world developments of the years covered, time will be well spent in making this, for a period, a textbook of systematic study. 'Of course, in dealing with an age whose characteristic the authors have well described as "conflict", any writer, or any group of writers, must often advocate some interpretation with which well-informed readers of another way of thought will disagree. But there is an admirably cautious spirit governing the controversial sections of this book. It is the aim of the authors to enable readers to understand what a movement meant, rather than to appraise its value. There is a clarity also in the exposition, which one too often misses in a work necessarily so complex.

The stretch of years, 1914-1943, chosen for treatment, contained much of which little or no mention is here made. Purely domestic developments in any country are taken as outside its scope, and such limitation is in perfect conformity with its purpose. There is, indeed, far more than enough to be done in presenting what those years brought of contribution to "the world's war and peace". A short critical notice provides no fitting opportunity for argument on conclusions of such a book that would elsewhere lend themselves to debate. But an expression of gratitude is due to the three who have here presented in such lucid, readable and often very vivid writing the features of that international scene we need just now most of all to understand. For the Age of Conflict to which they refer is not yet over. Verd critical decisions must soon be taken, and here is a most valuable aiy

to the forming of a sound public opinion.

It was a daring venture in authorship for three writers to cooperate on such a work, not apportioning it in sections for each of which one author should be responsible and whose exposition should bear their respective initials, but making the whole the work, after a manner, of each. One recalls the words of the later Greek atomists about "something of everything in every thing". The preface tells us that there was even an effort to arrive at a uniform English style. Each read the contributions of the other two, and there was achieved a literary as well as an historical solidarity like that which is said to hold a political Cabinet together. The writers must not complain if it is suspected that for solidarity here a sacrifice similar to that in politics was sometimes made. Synthetic English, too, such as their account of their literary procedure suggests, may well turn out (like the "basic" English which Mr. Churchill recommends) to have lost something in flavour. But this seems like the case of a critic looking for faults. Sancho Panza's warning is always appropriate—that one should not demand better bread than can be made from wheat, and to the present reviewer at least This Age of Conflict seems worthy of the warmest commendation.

H. L. S.

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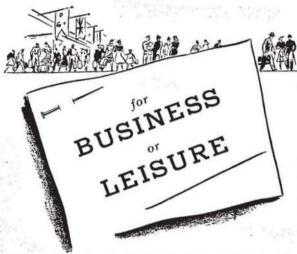
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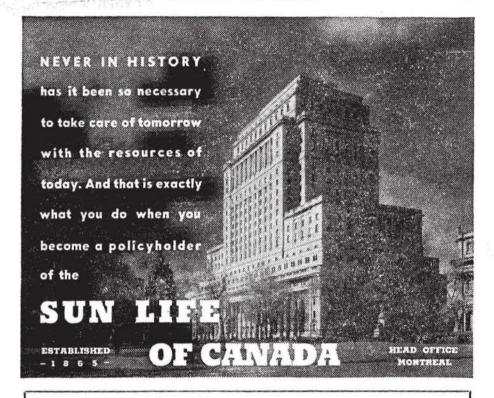
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