pertinent remarks of Sir Henry Thuillier about the alleged inhumanity of gas warfare, or even of the use of the submarine, should be welcomed by all scientific workers, and they reveal the essential childishness of much of the discussion on this point.

All war is inhumane; and to fritter away effort discussing the relative inhumanity of different kinds of warfare is rapidly becoming intolerable. What has to be recognized is that war is not only inhumane but also under modern conditions its renunciation as an instrument of national policy, and as a means of dealing with international disputes, is absolutely essential if civilization is to survive.

The question really is whether there is yet time to carry out the constructive work involved both in developing adequate machinery for settling international disputes, and for removing the causes of international friction and misunderstanding, before the world is overwhelmed in another outbreak. Scientific workers owe it to themselves, no less than to their science and to their civic responsibilities, to strain every effort to ensure constructive thinking in these matters and to promote the formulation and execution of policies adequate to secure that the enormous powers now at our disposal are used for the advantage of mankind instead of its destruction.

A Sketch of World History

World History:

the Growth of Western Civilization. By R. Flenley and W. N. Weech. Pp. xix + 757. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1936.) 12s. 6d. net.

WORKS on general history have often been noticed in *NATURE*, especially from the point of view of the space and the position which they assign to science. There has undoubtedly been a marked improvement in the matter, and the very attractive book under notice is a good example, suggesting also one or two points of criticism in its presentation. It is certainly the best thing of the sort that we have seen in English—a sketch of world history in some seven hundred pages with abundant illustrations and excellent maps and diagrams and written throughout by both authors with full knowledge and an almost perfect impartiality.

The questions of how to present the vast mass of material, and for whom one is writing, are, in this kind of book, supremely difficult. In this one, the readers who will gain most from it are those who have a fairly good knowledge beforehand and are glad to have it revived in a well-ordered summary up to date. For students who are approaching the subject for the first time, the language, ideas and implications of the writers are probably too difficult. This is the case more especially with Mr. Flenley, who does the modern portion. One often feels that the essential points could be conveyed without such an array of long and abstract words and in shorter sentences. On the other hand, Mr. Flenley grapples valiantly with the problem of including all sides of history—music, art and literature as well as science—and his allowance for science is relatively generous. Yet even so, how

can one excuse in such a survey the complete omission of the marvels discovered in the heavens and presented so clearly in the Astronomer Royal's recent "Worlds Without End"?

Mr. Weech, who is an old schoolmaster, has a crisper and simpler style. Some of his short sayings are admirable; for example, "It was the spoken word, not the written, that counted with the Greek and made him the teacher of the western world. . . . He was an excitable, quarrelsome, kind-hearted creature. He was continually fighting his neighbour in the next valley, but when he had finished, he did not, like other conquerors, mutilate, crucify or scalp his captives, nor did he convert them into gladiators." On the other hand, Mr. Weech is much less adequate in his account of ancient science. The wonderful discoveries which have recently been made of the mathematics of Babylonia, and the medicine of ancient Egypt, find no place. The institution of the calendar is naturally mentioned, but not its connexion with the heliacal rising of Sirius. More should have been given of the sort of matter which Prof. Gordon Childe has just put out in his "Man Makes Himself"—the origins of civilization—even if further cuts had to be made in the political sections. It is also doubtful in the later portion whether the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters deserve the several pages which they get.

There is room, however, for wide difference of opinion as to such relative values, and the book is strongly to be commended in the sense mentioned above. The sober hopefulness of the "Conclusion"—after a summary of the successes and failures of the League of Nations—hits the mark very well.

F. S. MARVIN.