

The Changing World

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In 1933 H. G. Wells published a novel entitled *The Shape of Things to Come*. In this fiction he allowed his imagination to move freely through time, from the beginning of World War I to the middle years of the twenty-first century. He predicted with startling precision a series of events leading up to World War II. He enlarged upon the confusion and strife of this century and gave the label, "Age of Frustration," to the period.

He imagined that man throughout the world turned against the scientist and the engineer, gave up any attempt to maintain modern industrial world order, and reverted to the simple agrarian culture in which each family group worked with its hands in an effort to feed, clothe, shelter, and protect its own members. He painted a return to the Dark Age.

This novel is of special interest to teachers because of a major thesis around which Mr. Wells weaves his story. He says, in short, that confusion, wars, plagues, and general frustration are the indirect result of an ancient and outmoded conception of education. The schoolmaster insists on turning the eyes of young people toward the past.

He acknowledged as startling the advances made in the past one hundred years in our mastery of the physical forces through the radio, the airplane, modern medicine, mass production, and a long list of inventions. Teachers as a

profession deserve great credit for bringing wide understanding of the principles underlying these new mechanisms and for developing popular approval of their benefits.

While our culture has been successful in designing better and bigger machines and power sources, we have failed to keep pushing forward with equal vigor and intelligence on the institutional front. As a result our culture is out of balance—the physical and material gadgets outrun the social control—and here the teaching profession, according to Mr. Wells, must share the blame for our wars and frustrations.

Wells did not think schoolmasters were equal to the task of facing our younger generation toward the present and the future. Therefore, he would have them and their systems eliminated and forgotten.

But Wells could be proven wrong. There is a promising movement in the educational profession that takes its purposes out of the conditions and problems of the present and future. This group does not for a moment ignore its heritage from the past. But the major effort of these teachers is placed on showing children and youth the magnificent opportunities that are everywhere present for making life more rational and more human. These teachers have faith in the ability of the common man continuously to improve himself and his environment.

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