

Torch of Reason

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Notice!

A hand pointing to this notice denotes that your subscription has expired. You are earnestly requested to renew so that you may receive the paper without interruption. We have decided that it is best for all concerned that we do not send papers longer than the time paid for unless so ordered. This will prevent any loss and we will know just where we stand.

We request you to send us the names of Secularists who might become subscribers and we will mail sample copies.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 21, E. M. 299.

THOSE SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

The time has come when we must act or we will not have the Secular Sunday School lessons ready for this winter's work, and following the suggestions of our co-worker, Eliza Mowry Bliven, we take it upon ourselves to suggest subjects and call for help in writing the lessons. There will be three grades of lessons, and we hope that many will write on some or all of these grades, and keep at it. All the lessons may not be published, but the best ones and best parts of others will be printed as soon as needed.

We have concluded to give a cash prize (the amount announced later) for the best lessons, as an inducement for writers to take hold of the work. The judges will be the readers of the Torch of Reason, who will, at the close of the year's work, send in their votes. The voters, not knowing who the writers are until after the contest, can only be influenced by the merits of the lessons.

Here are the grades and topics for the year's work:

WORK FOR SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOLS,
E. M. 299 AND 300.

I. Adult.

Study of the world's Bibles in the light of modern science and morality.

II. Intermediate.

Hygiene and Morality.

III. Primary.

Nature Studies and Kindergarten.

The subjects for the first lessons will be as follows:

Adult.

Introduction to the Bibles of the World.

Intermediate.

The Relation of Health to Morality.

Primary.

The Happiness of Animals.

A gem of thought will be selected from one of the lessons or from other works on the subjects. Each lesson will be limited to three hundred words and ten questions. The writers may ask all or part of the questions if they choose.

Two columns of the Torch of Reason will be devoted to these lessons each week, and we do hope that the burden of the work will not be allowed to rest on a few shoulders. Let each write something and we will certainly find some good timber to use in the great work of educating our youth and ourselves free from the superstitions of the old dogmas and traditions of our heathen-like ancestors.

In a recent letter Mrs. Bliven gives the following hints and suggestions:

Some have the gift to interest and instruct little children; others can better teach youths, while others can best adapt their teaching only to adults. Among the variety of methods and illustrations which we ought to be capable of developing, our editor ought to always have a surplus of good lessons in store almost from the start.

Perhaps the first lessons will lead to discussion and deeper study, and others will write on the subject later. In school we had to study each lesson several times, and add more to it another term, and repeatedly review, to make it so a part of ourselves as to be ready for practical use all our lives. So, in our Sunday School lessons, I think our editor will welcome additional knowledge at any time, on any subject that has been presented.

Of course none of the lessons can contain over 300 words, because the Torch is small and can not spare us much space. No one should send longer lessons, obliging the editor to cut them down. He has enough other work.

For awhile I mean to send something, if only one sentence, on every subject selected which I understand; but the editor is not to print my attempts if he secures enough that is better; but I can thus help to keep the ball rolling till we have writers enough so this becomes needless. Who else will help? The object is to secure as many lesson writers as possible, to aid them to develop their own talents, and also thereby we shall secure the best lessons obtainable, for printing, and furnish the Sunday School lessons needed everywhere.

I suggest that no reference be made to the Bible nor to God in any of the Intermediate or Primary lessons. I mean to write mine so they will be printed in the Observer, a local Connecticut paper, having 4,000 subscribers, besides their use in the Torch. Perhaps

teachers of day schools and church Sunday schools, and other editors, will find our lessons so appropriate and practical that they will be led to use them quite generally. Thus will be attained the very thing we desire—right teaching and right living founded on facts. Who will help write these lessons? Don't be afraid to try. The trying will benefit ourselves.

ELIZA MOWRY BLIVEN.

Brooklyn, Conn.

GOOD PREACHERS.

A boy who has to be paid for being good is not a very good boy after all; and when we hear certain ministers of Christ praised way up above other good men, and these common good men neglected entirely, we ask ourselves, why will people be so foolish as to think that the goodness of these holy ones is any better than the goodness of other men?

How easy a thing it is to help the poor, smile sweetly at the old ladies and little babies, take a sick sister for a ride, and do all manner of goodnesses when one has nothing else to do. A few hours' work each week at the pleasant occupation of preparing two lectures, worries the average preacher but very little, and how easy a thing it becomes, after he has had a few years of practice, to be very, very good. It is a sad fact that the preachers' goodness is only seeming goodness. They are experts at deception as a rule, and it is no wonder, for they (the intelligent among them) know that the very foundation of their trade is a fraud. They know that most of their flock are ignorant of the history of religions, and yet they preach about everything excepting the very things that the people ought to know. They are exactly on a par with the Catholic priests in this respect. The Christian creeds as well as all supernatural religions, depend altogether on the ignorance of the majority of its adherents and the hypocrisy of the rest. Knowing this, as every intelligent preacher must know, is not conducive of the moral health of the goodie men called ministers of Jesus Christ. We recognize the fact that some naturally good men have been lead into the ministry by their own youthful ignorance and the advice of their friends, and that some are so good naturally that they are quite hard to entirely spoil; yet for such it is a very hard fight, and generally ends in their leaving the ministry or in their insanity.

It is claimed by statisticians that, according to their numbers, there is more crime committed by preachers than by any other class of citizens, and our reason and experiences lead us to think that it would naturally be so. Idleness is called the mother of vice and the preachers are certainly the most idle of all men,

although their pretensions of hard work are very great. Then the opportunities and temptations of preachers to commit crime are above the average, and, being nothing but weak men, they more often fall; and if today the masks were torn from the lives of every preacher, and the scales were torn from the eyes of their dupes, there would be much surprise, disgust, and rapid conversion to a more common-sense religion than that of God and his chosen ones.

But what of the future? Preachers will be forced by public opinion to become strictly honest. Many will drop out of the business and many less will take it up. Those having a natural aptitude for public speaking will engage in the Secular work, and when once it gets a foothold it will entirely capture the field. The one thing that has held back our work more than anything else has been the unwillingness or inability of Freethinkers to take a firm moral stand. This we are now beginning to do, and we look forward with the greatest of hopes to the time when all preachers will stand on an equal footing with other men, and have the opportunity of being truly good instead of being forced to play the hypocrite.

WHO AND WHAT?

Who are we that we should undertake the great work of redeeming the world from its corruption. We are the voices of a few, who have been saved from the (d)evil of orthodoxy and itsimps, crying in a wilderness of selfishness to make straight the way of Humanity.

Repent ye, for the kingdom of MAN is at hand!

Many have recognized the great importance of our work and believe as we do that it is the greatest movement of this age. Those who are engaged in the active work of building up this great Freethought educational center are just common people. In fact we might be considered by some uncommonly common. We are all just common workers. Of course we are inspired. We couldn't do anything without the inspiration of God, could we? The only difference between us and the other fellows who are inspired and working for the salvation of the world, is that they know that they are inspired and we don't. We feel that we are no better than anyone else and that everyone else is just as sure to go to heaven as we are, and we are quite sure that heaven is quite near us. It is all "in our minds," don't you see?

But sometimes circumstances, inherited traits and early training cause just common people to do some very uncommon things, and we believe that one of the most uncommon and yet most bene-