

Readings and Recitations.

[We earnestly recommend teachers to encourage their pupils to commit to memory *prose* recitations. In no other way can composition be taught more effectively, nor literary taste be more rapidly developed. The following may serve as trial pieces. Put the epitaph on the black-board, and, if found necessary, the first two words of each sentence. This will arouse the curiosity of the hearers and will serve a better purpose than prompting to the speakers who declaim.—EDITOR.]

THE STORY OF A LITTLE HERO.

In the churchyard of an isolated hamlet in Brittany an inscription has been engraved on an unpretending stone slab, couched in these terms:—

PIERRE BOZEC,
Ship Boy,
Who lost his life in saving the crew of
the Sancta Maria.

The circumstances under which this humble and youthful hero died in saving eight Breton sailors are singularly touching. The lad, an orphan, embarked on a small trading vessel, the captain and crew of which systematically ill-treated him. Some time ago the little craft was in imminent danger of breaking up on the rocks in the neighborhood of Corsan (Finisterre). All the men were on deck, with the captain, who, foreseeing a catastrophe, told those about him to be prepared for the worst. A hundred yards off was the coast, and a group of fishermen were visible through the driving rain, debating the point how to render assistance to the distressed vessel. In the last emergency the captain took a rope, made a slip knot in it, and asked who would swim to shore through the breakers? The answer was promptly given by the lad Pierre, who said that he was the right one to run the risk, being without relatives or parents to regret him if he perished. His offer was accepted; the brave boy started on his perilous mission, and after a while a ringing shout told that he had reached the land. The boat was saved, with its human freight, but the lad was lost. Just as he reached the shore the waves threw him with violence against a sharp pointed rock, and when the fishermen drew up the rope it was to find a mangled corpse attached to it. The crew of the Sancta Maria, smitten with remorse for their former brutality towards the ill-fated lad, and with admiration for his courage, perpetuated the memory of his brave deed on the tablet which marks the spot where he was buried.—*Scholar's Companion.*

BESSY'S LIFE ROPE.

Steeple Jack, who was celebrated for working on high steeples, had a daughter named Bessy, who had much of the fearless, adventurous spirit of her father, and would carry up his dinner to the dizzy heights without trembling; she seemed to feel as safe as a bird, and would stand at the edge of the loftiest scaffold, amusing herself by scattering bits of paper in the air, laughing to see her little pigeons fly, for so she called them.

Once upon a time, a flash of lightning struck Repton spire, and displaced the cross and globe which surmounted it, also doing great damage to the upper courses of fine stonework, and Steeple Jack had to repair it. This he did by ascending the tower as high as the bell chamber, then placing ladders within the hollow of the spire, until the highest loop-holes were reached, through which braces were put cross-ways; on them a slight flooring was laid, which supported two light ladders, reaching up to the ball. Day after day Bessie climbed with her father's dinner in a basin slung in a handkerchief, to this aerial scaffold, and at length the job was completed, a new copper ball, brightly gilded, superseded the old one, and a glittering cross surmounted the graceful steeple. Jack had done his work so well, that the vicar and church-wardens resolved, in addition to his pay, to present him with a new coat, vest, and hat, and a sort of village fete was to be held in honor of the occasion. Drinking one night at the "Red Lion,"

Jack had bragged that he would put on the new clothes on the top of the ball; and he was not the man to risk being twitted for cowardice from not making his rash promise good. His assertion got abroad, and on the fete day, quite a crowd, from the adjacent villages and farms, gathered to witness the exploit. Jack's wife was away working at a lone farm-house some two miles from the village, and Bessy had accompanied her, for she knew that her husband would in all probability spend the day in dissipation, and she did all she could to conceal his weakness from the little maiden.

With the bundle of clothes in his hand, Jack started up the tower, the crowd eagerly watching until he emerged from the loop-hole on to the scaffold. He came out, and pulling off his old hat, flung it down among the people, then taking a rope in which he had made a noose, in his hand, he ascended the ladders. Flinging the rope over the ball, the noose passed round the cross, and, tightening it, Jack managed to get beyond its bulge, and soon stood on the very top of the cross, while the huzzas of the crowd below came up like the buzzing of bees to the elevated regions of his proud ambition. By some unlucky accident, while Jack was coolly divesting himself of his old jacket and vest, having made his bundle safe on one of the arms of the cross, the noose of the rope slackened, and the rope itself slipped over the ball, leaving him without any possible means of overcoming its rotundity. A cry of horror made Jack look down, and he at once understood the desperation of the position. His pride was humbled, a vertigo seized his brain, and he would have fallen if he had not clutched the cross. What was to be done? Among the whole crowd there was not one with sufficient courage even to brave the scaffold, much less to mount the tottering ladders which led from it to the apex of the steeple.

Concentrating all his energies into one shrill shriek of agony Jack exclaimed:

"Send for Bessy!"

There was a movement in the crowd, and a farmer in his buggy drove off for the daughter of the entrapped steeple-climber. What an hour of waiting was that! When Bessy arrived she displayed no fear, but taking on her little arm a coil of slender rope, she passed through the crowd, which readily made way, and ascended the ladders. Standing on the topmost round, with one arm passed around the slender stonework, she flung the rope. Jack clutched it, and the little maiden descended the steps. All the danger was over. Jack made the rope fast, and was soon upon the scaffold, while a shout of joy rose from the people below.

Bessy could not understand that she had done anything wonderful, but she embraced her father, and putting her little face to his, begged him to thank God for his safety.

This was many years ago, but should any of you visit Repton, you may still see a fragment of line swinging in the breeze from the now tarnished cross surmounting the steeple, and among the simple peasantry it goes by the name of "Bessy's Life Rope.—*Scholar's Companion.*

HIGHER.

Not at a bound,
But round and round,
Up the ladder we're climbing;
Striving to aim at something higher,
Striving to win the heart's desire,
With noble zeal the soul to inspire,
Up the ladder we're climbing.

Each step we count the while we mount,
Up the ladder we're climbing;
Ladders of learning, ladders of fame,
Ladders of wealth, it is all the same,
To gain a fortune or win a name,
Up the ladder we're climbing.

Pause though we may,
Yet every day
Up the ladder we're climbing;
Not content with a low degree,
Anxious still at the top to be,
Hand over hand continually
Up the ladder we're climbing.