

Jones Minor's Recitation.

The celebrated recitation that Jones Minor gave at the breaking-up entertainment at Middleton Hall School will not easily be forgotten by those who were present. It came about in this way. Sinclair, who was responsible for getting up the program, declared that he was in want of one more recitation to make it complete.

"Now then, you fellows," he said, "who will volunteer? Don't all speak at once."

"What sort of a recitation do you want?" they asked.

"Oh, something a bit serious. I've got enough comic things down already."

"All right, Sinclair, I'll do it for you."

There was a perfect roar of laughter from the boys when Jones Minor made the offer. In the first place he was known to be rather a nervous fellow, and then he possessed one of the worst memories of any at the school. It struck them as too funny.

"Why, what can you do, Jones?" asked Sinclair.

"Oh, I think I can manage a recitation all right," replied the boy.

"Put him down, Sinclair," shouted one or two of those present: "it will be well worth hearing."

"Perhaps you think I can't do it?" cried Jones, rather indignantly.

"Not a bit, old chap. You're as good as Irving, any day."

"Very well young un, I'll put you in the program," said Sinclair, "but don't you make a fool of yourself, that's all."

In his calmer moments Jones Minor rather regretted his rash promise. To tell the truth, he had been egged on by one or two of the others, who had seen a possible joke looming in the distance.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked a day or two afterwards, "I'm in a beastly hole over that recitation."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know what to recite."

"What do you know?"

"Well, I've learnt 'The Inchcape Rock' and 'The Schooner Heperus.'"

"Won't one of them do?"

"I don't quite know. It's such a bother remembering them. Are there any easier pieces?"

"I'll tell you what," said Blake, a boy with a keen sense of humor, "Your best way, if you haven't a very good memory, is to learn a dozen different pieces."

"Why?"

"Because then you'll be able to give the thing you know best when the time comes."

"Do you really think so?"

"I'm certain of it. Tell Sinclair not to put the name of your piece on the program, and then you can settle at the last moment what's the best."

"What other things would you learn, then?"

"Oh, there's 'Horatius keeping the bridge,' that ought to go down."

"And 'The Battle of Blenheim,'" said another boy.

"And 'The Village Blacksmith'—and 'The Goodwin Sands,'" cried another.

And the latest version of

"The boy stood on the burning deck
Complaining of the heat."

He turned, and stood upon his hands
And tried to cool his feet!"

The end of it was that from that moment every boy in the school was continually suggesting a fresh recitation to the unhappy Jones. He never suspected for an instant that they were making fun of him, but worked all his spare time in trying to master piece after piece "so that I shall be sure of one at any rate," as he fondly told himself. And the more he worked the more Blake, who kept him up to it, saw that he was getting helplessly confused with the various pieces.

At length the eventful night arrived, the guests assembled, and the entertainment began.

Jones was more nervous and con-