

she went away and left him puzzled at her strange speech and fierce looks.

Poor little prince! he did not know that in the heart of that cruel woman his death was already planned. But so it was. She feared that he might stand in Nero's way. His beauty and his popularity might at any time make him a powerful rival of her son. Moreover, the circumstance of the waxen tablet, and his graceful, pathetic song, showed her that his regard for his cousin was an obstacle which could be removed only by his death. For she had determined that the royal Octavia must mate only with her son.

That night the fierce empress paced the marble floor of her chamber with the tread of a tigress, while Nero, her son, listened to the murderous schemes that were to make his throne secure from any danger, either imaginary or real. In that midnight session he took his first lesson in crime, for before another morning he was a murderer.

In another chamber of that Roman home, within sound of the plash of the fountain in the atrium, lay Britannicus. With one arm thrown above his head and the other resting on the soft ermine of the couch, his dark hair streaming over his pillow, and the soft, yellow light of the southern moon shining on his Italian face, he looked too fair to die. Under his pillow was the waxen tablet, and he had sunk to sleep with the name of Octavia on his now quiet lips.

He never woke again. When the sun rose over the Apennines it shone on a cold, dead face in the marble chamber; shone on the stiffened form of the young Roman prince, whose valentine had wrought his doom. The waxen tablet had been poisoned.

Many a young Roman lad has, since then, bestowed gifts and received gifts at the Lupercalia, and happy youths and maidens every year write their valentines without any thought of Britannicus, but never does the 14th of February come round, but that I am reminded of the hapless little prince whose life went out on that festival day, in that old Palatine palace, where so many of his name held sway.—*Mrs. George, in Cultivator.*

A CAT STORY.

Four men in India, partners in business, bought several bales of India rugs, and also some cotton bales. That the rats might not destroy the cotton, they purchased a cat. They agreed that each of the four should own a particular leg of the cat; and each adorned with beads and other ornaments the leg thus apportioned to him. The cat, by accident, injured one of its legs. The owner of that member wound around it a rag soaked in oil.

The cat, going too near the hearth, set this rag on fire, and, being in great pain, rushed in among the cotton bales where she was accustomed to hunt rats. The cotton and rugs thereby took fire and they were burned up—a total loss. The three other parties brought a suit to recover the value of the goods destroyed against the fourth partner, who owned this particular leg of the cat. The judge examined the case, and decided thus:

"The leg that had the oiled rag on it was hurt; the cat could not use that leg; in fact, it held up that leg, and ran with the other three legs. The three unhurt legs, therefore, carried the fire to the cotton, and are alone culpable. The injured leg is not to be blamed. The three partners who owned the three legs with which the cat ran to the cotton will pay the whole value of the bales to the partner who was the proprietor of the injured leg."—*Carpet Trade.*

DONNA pleasantly sat down at breakfast the other morning, and his loving wife said: "Darling, does your head ache?" He replied with sufficient dignity, "No; why should you ask?" And she said back: "Well, dear, you came in at 3 o'clock this morning, and as you couldn't hang your hat on the rack, you put the rack down on the floor, and said you'd hang every hat in the house on it; and I thought your head might ache."

WHAT THE ENGLISH THINK OF OUR STATE PRIDE.

A correspondent of the London Times has been in this country, and touches off our State pride in this manner.

The rivalry which prevails among all the States of the American Union is especially keen and conspicuous in Minnesota. Each State, from rugged Maine to sunny Florida, and from imperial New York to golden California, considers that no other one rivals or excels it. The citizens of each speak as if they had been placed by a kind Providence on the most favored spot of the whole earth, and they regard the stranger who doubts whether their good fortune be wholly exceptional as a person who is utterly ignorant and inexcusably prejudiced. Indeed, a new comer will ingratiate himself the most easily with the citizens of a particular State if he can look upon all others, for the time being, through their spectacles. His wisest course will be to copy the example of the Frenchman ridiculed and stigmatized by the late Gen. Sir Charles Napier. That renowned soldier and eccentric man entertained the conviction that all Frenchmen are hypocrites, and he illustrated this harsh and ungenerous opinion by saying, "If a Frenchman were to go to hell, he would put on an overcoat, compliment the Devil on the fineness of the climate, and add that, if anything, it was rather chilly." I once said something to a Pennsylvanian, alike laudatory and merited, with regard to his State. He accepted the compliment as a matter of course, and replied, "That's so; Pennsylvania is best in everything." Traveling in Colorado shortly after the late total eclipse of the sun, I remarked, in the presence of several citizens, it was fortunate that the weather had been so favorable there for the purpose of observation. One of them told me, in reply, "Sir, Colorado can beat the world in eclipses, as in everything else."

These instances might be multiplied. They all exhibit that pride in one's State, which is as notable a characteristic of a United States citizen as pride in his country. When Capt. Basil Hall traveled in North America he bitterly complained of the pertinacity with which everyone demanded his opinion about it, and of the extreme annoyance which was manifested if the reply was not unreservedly complimentary. It is far less common now than in bygone days for a stranger to be questioned concerning his views of the Republic as a whole, and to be expected to draw a flattering comparison between it and what the ignorant call the effete monarchies of Europe. It is far more probable that he will be asked by the citizens of one State what he thinks of another, and then, unless he display a little of that French politeness which Sir Charles Napier detested, he will give as much offence as Capt. Basil Hall gave when he denied that the United States was the only land worth living in.

HOME JEWELS.—In the true idea of home there are other ties than that of property. It is the parental bond which sweetly clasps and crowns all other bonds of home. The joy that burst from the lips of Hannah and of Elizabeth, and Mary in exultant song is the peculiar joy and glory of woman. Antipathy to that song is the fearful mark of modern degeneracy. The true ideal is pictured in that historic scene that will never lack import, and may well be brought to mind in this day. A lady friend calls at the house of Cornelia, and takes pleasure in showing her jewels, and at length turns to Cornelia, saying: "Where are your jewels?" Cornelia retires for a moment, and returns leading her two sons, and saying with true womanly dignity: "These are my jewels." The Roman matron, wiser than many in our day, knew what was woman's highest title and highest throne of usefulness and power. Happy the home that has its growing olive plants.

CHAFF.

THE colored brother in a Virginian church just hit the nail on the head when he prayed at the close of a white brother's sermon, "Lord, bread de brudder to whom we has listened to so patiently."

A PROFESSOR at Cornell, lecturing on the effects of the wind in some western forests, remarked: "In traveling along the road, I even sometimes found the logs bound and twisted to such an extent that a mule couldn't climb over them, so I went round."

AN honest Hibernian, trundling a hand-cart containing all his movables, was accosted by a friend with: "Well, Patrick, you are moving again, I see." "Faith I am," replied he. "The times are so hard it's a dale cheaper hiring hand-carts than paying rints."

A LITTLE boy whose father was rather an immoderate drinker of the moderate kind, one day sprained his wrist, and his mother utilized the whisky in her husband's bottle to bathe the little fellow's wrist with. After a while the pain began to abate, and the child surprised his mother by exclaiming, "Ma, has pa got a sprained throat?"

"Do you make any reduction to a minister?" said a young lady in Richmond the other week to a salesman. "Always. Are you a minister's wife?" "Oh, no, I am not married," said the lady, blushing. "Daughter, then?" "No." The tradesman looked puzzled. "I am engaged to a theological student," said she. The reduction was made.

A YOUNG negro bootblack observed a neighbor poring wisely over a newspaper, whereupon he addressed him thus: "Julius, what are you looking at dat paper for? You can't read." "Go away," cried the other indignantly; "guess I can read; I's big enuff for dat." "Big enuff," retorted the other scornfully, "dat ain't nuffin'. A cow's big enough to catch mice, but she can't."