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THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

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Bartram, the lime-burner, a rough and heavy looking man, begrimed with charcoal, sat watching his kiln, at nightfall, while his little son played at building houses with the scattered fragments of marble, when, on the hill-side below them, they heard a roar of laughter, not mirthful, but slow, and even solemn, like a wind shaking the bows of the forest.

"Father, what is that?" asked the little boy, leaving his play, and pressing betwixt his father's knees.

"Oh, some reveller, I suppose," answered the lime-burner; "some merry fellow from the barroom in the village, who dared not laugh loud enough within doors, lest he should blow the roof of the house off. So, here he is, shaking his jolly sides at the foot of Graylock."

"But, father," said the child, more sensitive than the obtuse, middle-aged clown, "he does not laugh like a man that is glad; so the noise frightens me!"

"Don't be a fool, child!" cried the father, gruffly; "you will never make a man, I do believe; there is too much of your mother in you. I have known the rustling of a leaf to startle her. Hark, here comes that merry fellow now. You shall see that there is no harm in him."

Bartram and his little son, while they were talking thus, sat watching the lime-kiln. It was a rude, round, tower-like structure, about twenty feet high, heavily built of rough stones, and with a hillock of earth heaped about the larger part of its circumference, so that the blocks and fragments of marble might be drawn by cart loads and thrown in at the top. There was an opening at the bottom of the tower, like an oven-mouth, but large enough to admit a man in a stooping posture, and provided with a massive iron door. With the smoke and jets of flame issuing from the chinks and crevices of this door, which seemed to give admittance into the hill-side, it resembled nothing so much as the private entrance to the infernal regions, which the shepherds of the Delectable Mountains were accustomed to show to pilgrims.

There are many such lime-kilns in that tract of country, for the purpose of burning the white marble which composes a large part of the substance of the hills. Some of them, built years ago, and long deserted, with weeds growing in the vacant ground of the interior, which is open to the sky, and grass and wild flowers rooting themselves into the chinks of the stones, look already like relics of antiquity, and may yet be overspread with the lichens of centuries to come. Others, where the lime-burner still feeds his daily and nightlong fire, afford points of interest to the wanderer among the hills, who seats himself on a log of wood or a fragment of marble, to hold a chat with the solitary man. It is a lonesome, and, when the character is inclined to thought, may be an intensely thoughtful occupation, as it proved in the case of Ethan Brand, who had mused to strange purpose, in days gone by, while the fire in this very kiln was burning.

The man who now watched the fire was of a different order, and troubled himself with no thoughts save the very few that were requisite to his business. At frequent intervals he flung back the clashing weight of the iron door, and, turning his face from the insufferable glare, thrust in huge logs of oak, or stirred the immense brands with a long pole. Within the furnace were seen the curling and riotous flames, and the burning marble, almost molten with the intensity of the heat; while without, the reflection of the fire quivered on the dark intricacy of the surrounding forest, and showed in the foreground a bright and ruddy little picture of the hut, the spring beside its door, the athletic and coal-begrimed figure of the lime-burner, and the half-frightened child, shrinking into the protection of his father's shadow. And when again the iron door was closed, then re-appeared the tender light of the half-full moon, which vainly strove to trace out the indistinct shapes of the neighboring mountains; and, in the upper sky, there was a flitting congregation of clouds, still faintly tinged with the rosy sunset, though thus far down into the valley the sunshine had vanished long and long ago.

The little boy now crept still closer to his father, as footsteps were heard ascending the hill side, and a human form thrust aside the bushes that clustered beneath the trees.

"Hallo! who is it?" cried the lime-burner, vexed at his son's timidity, yet half infected by it. "Come forward and show yourself like a man, or I'll fling this chunk of marble at your head!"

"You offer me a rough welcome," said a gloomy voice, as the unknown man drew nigh; "yet methinks I claim no desire a kinder one, even at my own fireside."

To obtain a distincter view, Bartram threw open the iron door of the kiln, whence immediately issued a gush of fierce light that smote full upon the stranger's face and figure. To a careless eye there appeared nothing very remarkable in his aspect, which was that of a man in coarse, brown, country-made suit of clothes, tall and thin, with the staff and heavy shoes of a wayfarer. As he advanced he fixed his eyes—which were very bright—intently upon the brightness of the furnace, as if he beheld, or expected to behold, some object worthy of note within it.

"Good evening, stranger," said the lime-burner; "whence come you so late in the day?"

"I come from my search," answered the wayfarer, "for, at last, it is finished."

"Drunk or crazy!" muttered Bartram to himself. "I shall have trouble with the fellow. The sooner I drive him away the better."

The little boy, all in a tremble, whispered to his father, and begged him to shut the door of the kiln, so that there might not be so much light, for that there was something in the man's face which he was afraid to look at, yet could not look away from. And, indeed, even the lime-burner's dull and torpid sense began to be impressed with an indescribable something in that thin, rugged, thoughtful visage, with the grizzled hair hanging wildly about it, and those deeply-sunken eyes, which gleamed like fires within the entrance of a mysterious cavern But, as he closed the door, the stranger turned toward him, and spoke in a quiet, familiar way, that made Bartram feel as if he were a sane and sensible man after all.

"Your task draws to an end, I see," said he. "This marble has already been burning three days. A few hours more will convert the stone to lime."

"Why, who are you?" exclaimed the lime-burner. "You seem as well acquainted with my business as I am myself."

"And well I may be," said the stranger; "for I followed the same craft many a long year, and here, too, on this very spot. But you are a new comer in these parts. Did you ever hear of Ethan Brand?"

"The man that went in search of the Unpardonable Sin?" asked Bartram with a laugh.

"The same," answered the stranger. "He has found what he sought, and therefore he comes back again."

"What! then! are you Ethan Brand himself?" cried the lime-burner, in amazement. "I am a new comer here, as you say, and they call it eighteen years since you left the foot of Graylock. But, I can tell you, the good folks still talk about Ethan Brand in the village yonder, and what a strange errand took him away from his lime-kiln. Well, and so you have found the Unpardonable Sin?"

"Even so," said the stranger calmly.

"If the question is a fair one," proceeded Bartram, "where might it be?"

Ethan Brand laid his finger on his own heart.

"Here!" replied he.

And then, without mirth in his countenance, but as if moved by an involuntary recognition of the infinite absurdity of seeking throughout the world for what was the closest of all things to himself, and looking into every heart, save his own, for what was hidden in no other breast, he broke into a laugh of scorn. It was the same slow heavy laugh that had almost appalled the lime-burner when it heralded the wayfayer's approach.

The solitary mountain-side was made dismal by it. Laughter, when out of place, mistimed, or bursting forth from a disordered state of feeling, may be the most terrible modulation of the human voice. The laughter of one asleep, even if it be a little child; the madman's laugh, or the wild screaming laugh of an idiot, are sounds that we sometimes tremble to hear, and would always willingly forget. Poets have imagined no utterance of fiends or hobgoblins so fearfully appropriate as a laugh. And even the obtuse lime-burner felt his nerves shaken as this strange man looked inward at his own heart, and burst into laughter that rolled away in the night, and was indistinctly reverberated among the hills.

"Joe," said he to his little son, "scamper down to the tavern in the village, and tell the jolly fellows there that Ethan Brand has come back, and that he has found the Unpardonable Sin!"

The boy darted away on his errand, to which Ethan Brand made no objection, nor seemed hardly to notice it. He sat on a log of wood, looking steadfastly at the iron door of the kiln. When the child was out of sight, and the swift and light footstep ceased to be heard treading first on the fallen leaves and then on the rocky mountain path, the lime-burner began to regret his departure. He felt that the little fellow's presence had been a barrier between his guest and himself, and that he must now deal, heart to heart, with a man who, on his own confession, had committed the only one crime for which heaven could afford no mercy. That crime, in its indistinct blackness, seemed to overshadow him. The lime-burner's own sins rose up within him, and made his memory riotous with a throng of evil shapes that asserted their kindred with the master sin, whatever it might be, which it was within the scope of man's corrupted nature to conceive and cherish. They were all of one family; they went to and fro between his breast and Ethan Brand's, and carried dark greetings from one to the other.

Then Bartram remembered the stories which had grown traditionary in reference to this strange man, who had come upon him like a shadow of the night, and was making himself at home in his old place, after so long absence that the dead people, dead and buried for years, would have had more right to be at home in any familiar spot than he. Ethan Brand, it was said, had conversed with Satan himself in the lurid blaze of this very kiln. The legend had been matter of mirth heretofore, but looked grisly now. According to this tale, before Ethan had departed on his search, he had been accustomed to evoke a fiend from the hot furnace of the lime-kiln, night after night, in order to confer with him about the Unpardonable Sin; the man and the fiend, each laboring to frame the image of some mode of guilt which could neither be atoned for nor forgiven. And, with the first gleam of light upon the mountain-top, the fiend crept in at the iron door, there to abide the intensest element of fire, until again summoned forth to share in the dreadful task of extending man's possible guilt beyond the scope of Heaven's else infinite mercy.

While the lime-burner was struggling with the horrors of these thoughts, Ethan Brand rose from the log and flung open the door of the kiln. The action was in such accordance with the idea in Bartram's mind that he almost expected to see the evil one issue forth red-hot from the raging furnace.

"Hold, hold!" cried he, with a tremulous attempt to laugh, for he was ashamed of his fears, although they overmastered him. "Don't, for mercy's sake, bring out your devil now!"

"Man!" sternly replied Ethan Brand, "what need have I of the devil? I have left him far behind me on my track. It is with such half-way sinners as you that he busies himself. Fear not because I open the door. I do but not by old custom, and am going to trim your fire like a lime-burner, as I was once.

He stirred the vast coals, thrust in more wood, and bent forward to gaze into the hollow prison-house of fire, regardless of the fierce glow that reddened upon his face. The lime-burner sat watching him, and half suspected his strange guest of a purpose, if not to evoke a fiend, at least to plunge bodily into the flames, and thus vanish from the sight of man. Ethan Brand, however, drew quietly back, and closed the door of the kiln.

"I have looked," said he, "into many a human heart that was seven times hotter with sinful passion than your furnace is with fire. But I found not there what I sought. No, not the Unpardonable Sin!"

"What is the Unpardonable Sin?" asked the lime-burner, and then he shrank further from his companion, trembling lest his question should be answered.

"It is a sin that grew within my own breast," replied Ethan Brand, standing erect, with a pride that distinguishes all enthusiasts of his stamp; "a sin that grew no where else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed every thing to its own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony! Freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly I accept the retribution!"

"The man's head is turned," muttered the lime-burner to himself. "He may be a sinner like the rest of us, nothing more likely, but I'll be sworn he's a madman too."

Nevertheless, he felt very uncomfortable at his situation, alone with Ethan Brand on the wild mountain side, and was right glad to hear the rough murmur of tongues, and footsteps of what seemed a pretty numerous party stumbling over the stones and rustling through the underbrush. Soon appeared the whole lazy regiment that was wont to invest the village tavern, comprehending three or four individuals who had drank flip beside the bar-room fire through all the winters, and smoked their pipes beneath the stoop through all the summers, since Ethan Brand's departure. Laughing boisterously, and mingling all their voices together in unceremonious talk, they now burst into the moonshine and narrow streaks of fire-light that illuminated the open space before the lime-kiln. Bartram set the door ajar again, flooding the spot with light, that the whole company might get a fair view of Ethan Brand, and he of them.

There, among other old acquaintances, was a once ubiquitous man, now almost extinct, but whom we were primarily sure to encounter at the hotel of every thriving village throughout the country. It was the stage agent. The present specimen of the genus was a wilted and smoke-dried man, wrinkled and red-nosed, in a smartly-cut brown bob-tail coat, with brass buttons, who, for a length of time unknown, had kept his desk and corner in the bar-room, and was still puffing what seemed to be the same cigar that he had lighted twenty years ago. He had great fame as a dry joker, though, perhaps, less on account of any intrinsic humor, than from a certain flavor of brandy toddy and tobacco smoke which impregnated all his ideas and expressions, as well as his person.

Another well remembered, though strangely altered face, was that of Lawyer Giles, as people still called him in courtesy—an elderly ragamuffin, in his soiled shirt sleeves and towlinen trousers. The poor fellow had been attorney in what he called his better days—a sharp practitioner, and in great vogue among the village litigants; but flip, and sling, and toddy, and cock-tails imbibed at all hours—morning, noon and night—had caused him to slide from intellectual to various kinds and degrees of bodily labor, till at last, to adopt his own phrase, he slid into a soap-vat. In other words, Giles was now a soap boiler in a small way. He had come to be but the fragment of a human being—a part of one foot having been chopped off by an axe, and an entire hand torn away by the devilish grip of a steam engine. Yet, though the corporeal hand was gone, a spiritual member remained; for stretching forth the stump, Giles steadfastly averred that he felt an invisible thumb and fingers with as vivid a sensation as before the real ones were amputated. A maimed and miserable wretch he was; but one nevertheless whom the world could not trample, and had no right to scorn, either in this or any previous stage of his misfortunes since he had still kept up the courage and spirit of a man, asked nothing in charity, and with his one hand—and that the left one—sought a stern battle against want and hostile circumstances.

Among the throng, too, came another personage, who, with certain points of similarity to Lawyer Giles, had many more of difference. It was the village doctor, a man of some fifty years, whom, at an earlier period of his life, we should have introduced as paying a professional visit to Ethan Brand during the latter's supposed insanity. He was now a purple visaged, rude and brutal, yet half gentlemanly figure, with something wild, ruined, and desperate in his talk, and in all the details of his gesture and manners. Brandy possessed this man like an evil spirit, and made him as surly and savage as a wild beast, and as miserable as a lost soul; but there was supposed to be in him such wonderful skill, such native gifts of healing, beyond any which medical science could impart, that society caught hold of him, and would not let him sink out of its reach. So, swaying to and fro upon his horse, and grumbling thick accents at the bedside, he visited all the sick chambers for miles about among the mountain towns, and sometimes raised a dying man, as it were, by a miracle, or quite as often, no doubt, sent his patient to a grave that was dug many a year too soon. The doctor had an everlasting pipe in his mouth; and, as somebody said, in allusion to his habit of swearing, it was always alight with hell fire.

These three worthies pressed forward, and greeted Ethan Brand each after his own fashion, earnestly inviting him to partake of the contents of a certain black bottle, in which, as they severed, he would find something far better worth seeking for than the Unpardonable Sin. No mind which has wrought itself by intense and solitary meditation into a high state of enthusiasm, can endure this kind of contact with low and vulgar modes of thought and feeling to which Ethan Brand was now subjected. It made him doubt, and, strange to say, it was a painful doubt, whether he had indeed found the Unpardonable Sin, and found it within himself. The whole question on which he had exhausted life, and more than life, looked like a delusion.

"Leave me," he said, bitterly, "ye brute beasts, that have made yourselves so, shrivelling up your souls with fiery liquors! I have done with you. Years and years ago I groped into your hearts and found nothing there for my purpose. Get ye gone!"

"Why, you unevil scoundrel," cried the fierce doctor, "is that the way you respond to the kindness of your best friends? Then let me tell you the truth. You have no more found the Unpardonable Sin than yonder boy Joe has. You are but a crazy fellow. I told you so twenty years ago; neither better nor worse than a crazy fellow, and the fit companion of old Humphrey, here."

He pointed to an old man, shabbily dressed, with long white hair, thin visage, and unsteady eyes. For some years past this aged person had been wandering about among the hills, inquiring of all travelers whom he met for his daughter. The girl, it seemed, had gone off with a company of circus performers, and occasionally tidings of her came to the village, and fine stories were told of her glittering appearance as she rode on horseback in the ring, or performed marvellous feats on the tight-rope.

The white-haired father now approached Ethan Brand, and gazed unsteadily into his face.

"They tell me you have been all over the earth," said he, wringing his hands with earnestness. "You must have seen my daughter, for she makes a grand figure in the world, and every body goes to see her. Did she send any word to her old father, or say when she is coming back?"

Ethan Brand's eye quailed beneath the old man's. That daughter, from whom he so earnestly desired a word of greeting, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul in the process.

"Yes," murmured he, turning away from the heary wanderer, "it is no delusion. There is an Unpardonable Sin!"

While these things were passing, a merry scene was going forward in the area of cheerful light, beside the spring, and before the door of the hut.

A number of the youth of the village, young men and girls, had hurried up the hill side, impelled by curiosity to see Ethan Brand, the hero of so many a legend familiar to their childhood. Finding nothing, however, very remarkable in his aspect—nothing but a sunburnt wayfarer, in plain garb and dusty shoes, who sat looking into the fire, as if he fancied pictures among the coals, these young people speedily grew tired of observing him. As it happened, there was other amusement at hand. An old German Jew, travelling with a diorama on his back, was passing down the mountain road toward the village just as the party turned aside from it; and, in the hopes of eking out the profits of the day, the showman had kept them company to the lime-kiln.

"Come, old Dutchman," cried one of the young men, "let us see your pictures, if you can swear they are worth looking at."

"Oh, yes, captain," answered the Jew—whether as a matter of courtesy or craft, he styled every body captain—"I shall show you, indeed, some very superb pictures!"

So, placing the box in a proper position, he invited the young men and girls to look through the glass orifices of the machine, and proceeded to exhibit a series of the most outrageous scratchings and daubings, as specimens of the fine arts, that ever an itinerant showman had the face to impose upon his circle of spectators. The pictures were worn out, moreover—tattered, full of cracks and wrinkles, dingy with tobacco smoke, and otherwise in a most pitiable condition. Some purported to be the cities, public edifices, and ruined castles in Europe; others represented Napoleon's battles and Nelson's sea-fights, and in the midst of these might be seen a gigantic, brown, hairy hand, which might have been mistaken for the hand of Destiny, though in truth it was only the showman pointing his forefinger to various scenes of the conflict, while its owner gave historical illustrations. When, with much merriment at its abominable deficiency of merit, the exhibition was concluded, the German bade little Joe put his head into the box. Viewed through the magnifying glasses, the boy's round rosy visage assumed the strangest imaginable aspect of an immense Titanic child, the mouth grinning broadly, and the eyes and every other feature overflowing with fun at the joke. Suddenly, however, that merry face turned pale, and its expression turned to horror, for this easily impressed and excitable child had become sensible that the eye of Ethan Brand was fixed upon him through the glass.

"You make the little man to be afraid, captain," said the German Jew, turning up the dark and strong outline of his visage from his stooping posture. "But look again, and, by chance, I shall cause you to see something that is very fine, upon my word!"

Ethan Brand gazed into the box for an instant, and then, starting back, looked fixedly at the German. What had he seen? Nothing, apparently, for a curious youth, who had peeped in almost at the same moment, beheld only a vacant space of canvas.

"I remember you, now," muttered Ethan Brand to the showman.

"Ah, captain," whispered the Jew of Nuremburg, with a dark smile, "I find it to be a heavy matter in my show-box—this Unpardonable Sin! By my faith, captain, it has wearied my shoulders this day to carry it over the mountain.

"Peace!" answered Ethan Brand, sternly, "or get thee into the furnace yonder."

The Jew's exhibition had scarcely concluded, when a great elderly dog—who seemed to be his own master, as no person in the company laid claim to him—saw fit to render himself the object of public notice. Hitherto he had shown himself as a very quiet, well-disposed old dog, going round from one to another, and, by way of being sociable, offering his rough head to be patted by any kindly hand that would take so much trouble. But now, all of a sudden, this grave and venerable quadruped, of his own mere motion, and without the slightest suggestion from any body else, began to run round after his tail, which, to heighten the absurdity of the scene, was a great deal shorter than it should have been. Never was seen such headlong eagerness in pursuit of an object that could not possibly be attained; never was heard such a tremendous outbreak of growling, snarling, barking and snapping, as if one end of the ridiculous brute's body were at deadly and most unforgiveable enmity with the other. Faster and faster round about went the cur, and faster and still faster fled the unapproachable brevity of his tail, and louder and fiercer grew his yells of rage and animosity, until, utterly exhausted, and as far from the goal as ever, the foolish old dog ceased his performance as suddenly as he had begun it. The next moment he was as quiet, mild, sensible and respectable in his deportment as when he first scraped acquaintance with the company.

As may be supposed, the exhibition was greeted with universal laughter, clapping of hands, and shouts of "Encore!" to which the canine performer responded by wagging all that there was to wag of his tail, but appeared totally unable to repeat his very successful effort to amuse the spectators.

Meanwhile, Ethan Brand had resumed his seat upon the log, and moved, it might be, by a perception of some remote analogy between his own case and that of this self-pursuing cur, he broke into the awful laugh which, more than any other token, expressed the condition of his inward being. And at that moment the merriment of the party was at an end; they stood about, dreading lest the inauspicious sound should be reverberated around the horizon, and that mountain would thunder it to mountain, and so the sound be prolonged upon their ears. Then, whispering to one another that it was late; that the moon was almost down; that the August night was growing chill, they hurried homewards, leaving the lime-burner and little Joe to deal as they might with their unwelcome guest. Save for these three human beings, the open space on the hill-side was a solitude, set in a vast gloom of forest. Beyond that darksome verge, the fire-lights glimmered on the stately trunks and almost black foliage of pines, intermixed with the lighter verdure of sapling oaks, maples and poplars, while here and there lay the gigantic corpses of trees, decaying on the leaf-strewn soil. And it seemed to little Joe—a timorous and imaginative child—that the silent forest was holding its breath until some fearful thing should happen.

Ethan Brand thrust more wood into the fire, and closed the door of the kiln; then looking over his shoulder at the lime-burner and his son, he bade, rather than advised, them to retire to rest.

"For myself, I cannot sleep," said he; "I have matters that it concerns me to meditate upon. I will watch the fire, as I used to do in the old time."

"And call the devil out of the furnace to keep you company, I suppose," muttered Bartram, who had been making intimate acquaintance with the black bottle above-mentioned. "But watch if you like, and call as many devils as you like! For my part, I shall be all the better for a snooze. Come, Joe!"

As the boy followed his father into the hut, he looked back at the wayfarer, and tears came into his eyes, for his tender spirit had an intuition of the bleak and terrible loneliness in which this man had enveloped himself.

When they were gone, Ethan Brand sat listening to the crackling of the kindled wood, and looking at the spirits of fire that issued through the chinks of the door. These trifles, however, once so familiar, had but the slightest hold of his attention, while deep within his mind he was reviewing the gradual but marvelous change that had been wrought upon him by the search to which he had devoted himself. He remembered how the night dew had fallen upon him; how the dark forest had whispered to him; how the stars had gleamed upon him, a simple and loving man, watching his fire in the years gone by, and even musing as it burned. He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life; with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and, however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother; with what awful fear he had deprecated his pursuit, and prayed that the Unpardonable Sin might never be revealed to him. Then ensued that vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his mind and heart. The idea that possessed his life had operated as a means of education; it had raised him from the level of an unlettered laborer to stand on a star-light eminence, whither the philosophers of the earth, laden with the lore of universities, might vainly strive to clamber after him. So much for the intellect! But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered, had contracted, had hardener, had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.

Thus Ethan Brand became a fiend. He began to be so from the moment that his moral nature had ceased to keep the pace of improvement with his intellect. And now, as his highest effort, and inevitable development—as the bright and gorgeous flower, and rich, delicious fruit of his life's labor—he had Unpardonable Sin!

"What more have I to seek? What more to achieve?" said Ethan Brand to himself. "My task is done, and well done!"

Starting from the log with a certain alacrity in his gait, and ascending the hillock of earth that was raised against the stone circumference of the lime-kiln, he thus reached the top of the structure. It was a space of perhaps ten feet across, from edge to edge, presenting a view of the upper surface of the immense mass of broken marble with which the kiln was heaped. All these innumerable blocks and fragments of marble were red-hot and vividly on fire, sending up great spouts of blue flame, which quivered aloft and danced madly, as within a magic circle, and sank and rose again, with continual and multitudinous activity. As the lonely man bent forward over his terrible body of fire, the blasting heat smote up against his person with a breath that, it might be supposed, would have scorched and shrivelled him up in a moment.

Ethan Brand stood erect, and raised his arms on high. The blue flames played upon his face, and imparted the wild and ghastly light which alone could have suited his expression; it was that of a fiend on the verge of plunging into his gulf of intensest torment.

"O, Mother Earth," cried he, "who art no more my mother, and into whose bosom this frame shall never be resolved? O, mankind, whose brotherhood I have cast off and trampled thy great heart beneath my feet! O, stars of heaven, that shone on me of old, as if to light me onward and upward! Farewell all, and forever! Come, deadly element of fire, henceforth my familiar friend! Embrace me as I do thee!"

That night the sound of a fearful peal of laughter rolled heavily through the sleep of the lime-burner and his little son; dim shapes of horror and anguish haunted their dreams, and seemed still present in the rude hovel when they opened their eyes to the daylight.

"Up boy, up!" cried the lime-burner, staring about him. "Thank Heaven, the night is gone at last; and rather than pass another such, I would watch my lime-kiln, wide awake, for a twelvemonth. This Ethan Brand, with his humbug of an Unpardonable Sin, has done me no such mighty favor in taking my place!"

He issued from the hut, followed by little Joe, who kept fast hold of his father's hand. The early sunshine was already pouring its gold upon the mountain tops, and though the valleys were still in shadow, they smiled cheerfully in the promise of the bright day that was hastening onward. The village, completely shut in by hills, which swelled away gently about it, looked as if it had rested peacefully in the hollow of the great hand of Providence. Each dwelling was distinctly visible; the little spires of the two churches pointed upward, and caught a fore-glimmering of brightness from the sun-gilt skies upon their weather-cocks. The tavern was astir, and the figure of the old smoke-dried stage agent, cigar in mouth, was seen beneath the stoop. Old Graylock was glorified with a golden cloud upon his head. Scattered likewise upon the breasts of the surrounding mountains there were heaps of hoary mists, in fantastic shapes, some of them far down into the valley, others high up toward the summits, and still others of the same family of mist and clouds, hovering in the gold radiance of the upper atmosphere. Stepping from one to another of the clouds that rested on the hills, and thence to the loftier brotherhood that sailed in the air, it seemed almost as if a mortal man might thus ascend into the heavenly regions. Earth was so mingled with sky that it was a day-dream to look at it.

To supply that charm of the familiar and homely which nature so readily adopts into a scene like this, the stage-coach was rattling down the mountain road, and the driver sounded his horn, while echo caught up the notes and intertwined them into a rich and varied and elaborate harmony, of which the original performer could lay claim to little share. The great hills played a concert among themselves, each contributing a strain of airy sweetness.

Little Joe's face brightened at once.

"Dear father," cried he, skipping cheerily to and fro, "that strange man is gone, and the sky and the mountains all seem glad of it!"

"Yes," growled the lime-burner, with an oath, "but he has let the fire go down, and no thanks to him, if five hundred bushels of lime are not spoilt. If I catch the fellow hereabouts again, I shall feel like tossing him into the furnace!"

With his long pole in his hand, he ascended to the top of the kiln. After a moment's pause, he called to his son:

"Come up here, Joe!" said he.

So little Joe ran up the hillock and stood by his father's side. The marble was burnt into perfect, snow-white lime. But, on its surface, in the midst of the circle—snow-white too, and thoroughly converted into lime—lay a human skeleton, in the attitude of a person who, after long toil, lies down to a long repose. Within the ribs—strange to say—was the shape of a human heart.

"Was the fellow's heart made of marble?" cried Bartram, in some perplexity at this phenomenon. "At any rate, it is burnt into what looks like special good lime; and, taking all the bones together, my kiln is half a bushel the richer by him."

So saying, the rude lime-burner lifted his pole and letting it fall upon the skeleton, the relics of Ethan Brand were crumbled into fragments.

The State Temperance Convention of Rhode Island have nominated a legislative ticket of anti-liquor men.

Official.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN.

NEW ORLEANS, March 22, 1853.

The Board met this day pursuant to adjournment. Members present—Hon. W. C. C. Claiborne, President; Messrs. Burke, Clark, Converse, Gipuel, Jones, Labatut and Wood.

The reading of the journal was, on motion, dispensed with.

A communication from the Surveyor stating that Mr. John Thorn, contractor for draining the Second District, had failed to comply with the requirements of his contract, was referred to the Committee on Streets and Landings.

A communication from the Treasurer complaining of the delay that has occurred in passing the pay rolls of laborers through the necessary stages preparatory to their payment, was referred to the Committee on Finance.

A petition of sundry citizens asking for the opening of a street in the First District, to be called "South side of Annunciation Market street," was referred to the Committee on Streets and Landings.

A petition of Vigilance Fire Co. No. 3, praying for the erection of a new brick engine house, was referred to the Committee on Fire.

STANDING COMMITTEES.

Mr. Clark, on behalf of the Committee on Streets and Landings, offered the following report, which was adopted, and the resolutions mentioned in said report were read a second time and concurred in:

The Committee on Streets and Landings beg leave to report in favor of concurring in the following resolutions from the Board of Assistants, viz:

No. 630. For the opening of several streets in the Fourth District.

No. 947. For the appointment of a commissioner to assess property of F. Lacroix, taken for public purposes, in the Third District.

GEO. CLARK, Chairman,
W. C. C. CLAIBORNE,
J. M. BURKE.

Mr. Burke, on behalf of the Police Committee, offered the following resolutions, which were read twice and adopted, the rules being suspended:

Resolved, That the vaults ordered to be built in the cemetery on Washington avenue, between Prytania and Coliseum streets, be and the same are hereby changed to, and ordered to be built in, the new cemetery on Washington avenue.

Resolved, That the sexton of the public cemetery in the Fourth District, be and he is hereby ordered to stop interments in the ground (except to those owning lots in the cemetery), in the cemetery on Washington avenue, between Prytania and Coliseum streets.

Resolved, That the Surveyor, under the direction of the Police Committee, be directed to make a plan and specification for the improvement of the cemetery on Washington avenue, between Coliseum and Prytania streets, in the Fourth District.

Mr. Claiborne, on behalf of the Committee on Education, offered the following report, preamble and resolutions, which were read twice and adopted, the rules being suspended:

The Committee on Public Education, to whom were referred the proposed ordinance, and the memorial relative to the Fisk Library, beg leave to submit the following preamble and resolutions as a substitute for the above named ordinance:

Whereas, the NewOrleans Mechanic Society, an institution founded for the diffusion of useful knowledge, and the encouragement of the mechanic arts, in conjunction with a large number of citizens, have petitioned the Common Council to obtain a transfer to the said Society, of the Fisk Library, founded under a bequest of the late Abijah Fisk, "for the use and benefit of the citizens of NewOrleans;" and whereas it is believed that the laudable objects of the donor would be better fulfilled by the transfer applied for.

Be it Resolved, That the Fisk Library, with all the property and effects appertaining thereto, together with the lot and building at the corner of Custom-house and Bourbon streets, be, and the same are hereby, transferred and assigned to the Mechanic Society of NewOrleans, to be held and used by the said Society, for the same uses and trusts under which they are now held by the City of NewOrleans—the said Library to be preserved and enlarged under the regulations of the Society, and the rent of the building where it is now located, to be by them applied towards its maintenance. Provided that the above transfer be approved of by Alvarez Fisk, Esq., heir to the original donor, and that his consent thereto be certified by a notarial act of transfer and assignment, in accordance with the above, to be signed by the said Alvarez Fisk, the Mayor of the city, and the President of the Mechanic Society, as approved by the City Attorney.

Resolved, That the present office of Librarian of the Fisk Library be, and is hereby, declared abolished as soon as the above shall have been carried into effect.

RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES.

Mr. Converse offered the following resolution, which was read twice and adopted, the rules being suspended:

Resolved, That permission be and is hereby granted to Jules A. Blanc, to erect a steam engine on his premises on Julia street, said engine to be placed to the satisfaction of the Street Commissioner, and to remain during the pleasure of the Council.

Mr. Clark offered the following, which was read twice and adopted, the rules being suspended:

Resolved, That the Surveyor be, and he is hereby, directed to prepare plans and estimates, (to be submitted as soon as possible) for the repairs and alterations necessary to adapt the buildings known as the Court-house and Second District Hall, for the use of the Courts.

Mr. Clark offered the following, which was read twice and adopted, the rules being suspended:

Resolved, That the election of Judges of the Supreme Court, on Monday, the 4th day of April next, to be held at the same polls, and under the superintendence of the same Inspectors and Clerks as designated in the election for Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen, on Monday, the 28th day of March next.

Mr. Clark offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Comptroller sell at auction, after ten days' notice, the contract for the construction of a plank road on Main street, from Broad street to the Bayou St. John, in accordance with plans and specifications on file in the Surveyor's office. Sale to be subject to the approval of the Common Council.

Mr. Claiborne moved to amend the above by adding, after the words Bayou St. John, the words, "and on Claiborne street, from Esplanade street to St. Bernard Avenue."

The resolution in its amended form was unanimously adopted by yeas and nays, the rules being dispensed with, as follows:

Resolved, That the Comptroller sell at auction, after ten days' notice, the contract for the construction of a plank road on Main street, from Broad street to the Bayou St. John, and on Claiborne street, from Esplanade street to St. Bernard Avenue, in accordance with plans and specifications on file in the Surveyor's office. Sale to be subject to the approval of the Common Council.

Mr. Clark offered the following, which was read twice and adopted, the rules being suspended:

Resolved, That the Comptroller warrant on the Treasurer in favor of Pelanne Brothers, for the sum of three hundred and ten dollars, for blacksmith work performed by order of Street Commissioner, from May, 1852, to January, 1853.

Mr. Burke offered the following resolution, which was read twice and adopted, the rules being suspended:

Resolved, That a committee of four members of the Board of Aldermen be appointed by the Chair, to meet a similar committee on the part of the Board of Assistant Aldermen, to receive Ex-President Fillmore.

Mr. Clark, being in the Chair, appointed on said committee Messrs. Burke, Claiborne, Giquel and Wood.

Mr. Jones offered the following resolution, which was read twice and adopted, the rules being suspended:

Resolved, That the Finance Committee be required to report to the Common Council at the first meeting in May, in each year, an estimate of the probable receipts for the ensuing year, separating the amounts to be received from ordinary and extraordinary sources; also, an estimate of the probable expenses for all ordinary purposes, with the view of enabling the Councils to so regulate their appropriations as not to exceed the current revenue.

The following message was read:

BOARD OF ASSISTANT ALDERMEN,
NewOrleans, March 22, 1853.

To the Hon. President and Members of the Board of Aldermen:

GENTLEMEN—I beg to return you the following resolutions of your Board, and notify you of the concurrence of the Board of Assistant Aldermen therein, to wit:

A resolution authorizing the Surveyor to issue a certificate to D. Cronan.

A resolution for the sale of a contract for brick sidewalks on Main street, from Miro to Broad streets.

A resolution tendering the hospitalities of the city to ex-President Fillmore.

A resolution allowing the use of horse-power on the Levee, Second District.

A resolution authorizing repairs to the roof of the house of Fire Company No. 21.

A resolution for the sale of a contract for the erection of vaults in the cemetry, Fourth District.

A resolution for the appointment of inspectors and clerks for the election of the 28th inst., locating the polls (with an amendment).

The Board have also accepted the amendment of your honorable body to

The resolution to sell the contract for digging ditches and clearing the land in the line of various streets, etc.

The following resolutions have been rejected:

A resolution for the payment of $300 to F. Buisson.

A resolution for the payment of $400 to L. Castera for correcting assessment rolls.

With much respect, your obedient servant,
WALTER H. PETERS, Secretary.

The amendment from the Board of Assistant Aldermen to the resolution appointing Inspectors and Clerks of the election to be held on the fourth Monday of March (28th), for Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen, changing the location of the twenty-second precinct to Altmeyer's coffee-house on Magazine and St. Mary streets, was concurred in.

The following message was read:

BOARD OF ASSISTANT ALDERMEN,
NewOrleans, March 22, 1853.

To the Hon. President and Members of the Board of Aldermen:

GENTLEMEN—I beg to hand you the following resolutions and substitute, in which you are respectfully invited to concur, viz:

A resolution (No. 970) for the payment of various claims.

A resolution to sell a contract for laying brick sidewalks on First street, between St. Charles and Nayades streets, Fourth District.

A resolution directing the Attorney to annul the judgment in favor of the city against D. Block.

A resolution directing the Attorney to delay proceedings against the Commercial Water-Works Company.

A resolution to abolish the office of store or pound-keeper of the Second District.

A resolution to sell a contract for cleaning the Galvez Canal.

A resolution for repair the walks of Coliseum Place.

A resolution for the payment of three hundred and fifty dollars to Michael Boylan, for extra work connected with his contract.

A resolution authorizing the Surveyor to purchase hose.

A resolution to sell a contract for building a house for Eagle Fire Company No. 7.

A resolution directing the Surveyor to repair the Armory on Broome street, and the Jackson and Jefferson School-houses, First District.

A resolution for the purchase of a tract of land on the Gentilly Road, for a House of Refuge, making appropriation in favor of same, and directing the removal of all juvenile delinquents thereto.

A resolution directing the Surveyor to examine and report upon the propriety of changing the grade of the banquettes in the rear of St. Charles (Nayades) street, Fourth District.

A substitute for the resolution authorizing the Keeper of the Court-house to fit up rooms for the Clerk's Office of the First District Court.

Very respectfully,
WALTER H. PETERS, Secretary.

The following resolutions, adopted