

The Hell Merger

PROLOGUE.

The Devil and Hell are in an awful stew!
(And just between the gate-post, me, and you,
His Satanic Majesty has reason to fear.
For J. Pierpont Morgan is drawing near.
To form a merger on his arrival thence
That'll make all the hellions like 30 cents.)

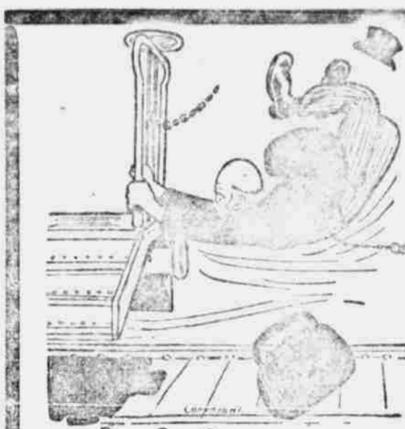
I.

The Devil on his throne in the depths of hell,
When the messenger came from without, to tell
Of a procession to this land of dread,
With a high-mighty man its forefront and head,
By his presence, he with consternation, knew
'Twas J. Pierpont Morgan and his trustful crew.
What was in the mind of this man of earth power,
Made Old Satan quake and his brows to lower,
For with all his presence and foresightedness,
He was forced with pain to himself to confess,
That in this, without doubt, an hour of need,
He could not the great mind of J. Pierpont read.
So he ordered the messenger to return
And strive the purpose of Morgan to learn.
But arrived, J. Pierp. the battlements viewed,
Having long since consideration eschewed,
He made Perkins shout to the guard of Hell-Gate,
"Open, damned yokel, mighty Morgan don't wait."
The astonished guard the massive gate threw wide,
Striving in vain his trepidation to hide.
He, punctilious, saluted with trembling hand,
The King of Trusts and his sycophant band.
Here the messenger arrived frantic with haste,
But Morgan disdained on him words to waste,
And pointing downward with extended arm,
He commanded, "Lead on, you shall take no harm."
The messenger, as the guard, dumb-founded, went,
Forgetting the mission whereon he was sent,
Led Morgan, the merger, by the short-cut route,
To the private throne-room of the King of Soot,
J. Pierpont walked in, erect head and stern mien,
And, first time since the Fall, Lucifer was seen,
In despondency, deep and dark to be sunk—
In fact he was just in a blue, blue funk—
And with head dropped in arms he groaned aloud,
"Pierpont, what wilt thou and thy trustful crowd?"
Morgan folded his arms a moment, then spoke,
"Beelzy, my call upon you is no joke,
I've come in the interest of transportation,
And demand of you now a combination.
That I may extend my railroads down to Hell,
And increase your damned by more than tongue can tell.
I'll build me a station just outside the gate,
And good Deacon Baer shall on the crowd wait;
The road-bed shall be of anthracite coal,
To vex and harass those strikers' damned souls,
And my steam whistles shall the echoes awake,
And make all the shades of this Hell country quake.
A railroad into Hell, O, Devil, what a graft!
It's worth to me a day a million dollar draft,
For you shall be one of my subsidized band.
And now since I've blockaded the heavenly land,
The ghosts of the earth-born shall hellward be turned,
And then at your pleasure they shall be burned.
You shall pay tariff on each soul Baer brings you,
And turn in to him what each day is my due.
I know that to you are great heaps of lucre,
And you mustn't try me of one farthing to euchre;

All else you shall have saving me and mine,
And you shall be happy from now till all time."
As Satan listened to Morgan's Pierpont tones,
He cast off despondency, he ceased his groans,
And with a baleful eye and hot, smoking breath,
He shouted, "The world is mine after death!"
So great his belief in Pierp. Morgan's power,
To give him the souls of earth for a dower.
J. P. with sardonic smile now made request,
For a place where he might lay him down and rest.
Beelzebub led him to a hell-fired cot,
And swathed him in a coverlid warm and hot,
Where he took a long, transmogrifying snooze,
And woke feeling as if full of red-eyed booze.
Then, rather surly, he bade his host adieu,
Of his previous talk made a brief review,
Anticipating Beelzebub's command,
He inspired his guide by a wave of the hand,
To lead him from before the King of Soot,
To the outside gate by the short-cut route.
There he slapped good Deacon Baer on the back,
And said, "Deacon, in your duties be not slack;
From the Devil each day collect every cent,
For the souls that I have by you to Hell sent,
I will not forget you for work that's well done,
But will reward you as I would my own son."
Morgan, the great, in gratulation then stepped
Upon the earth, which in his absence had slept;
He touched the button which awoke it to life,
And stirred up the poor to misery and strife,
By drawing more hardly across them his reins,
To increase his already ill-gotten gains.

II.

To himself he said: "Over all men I've power,
Earth and Hell are both my eternal dower,
And though I can't own Heaven, I've blocked the way,
And thus send to the Devil a vast array.
That will to me untold millions be worth!
Save Heaven, I can buy the universe.
But what, indeed, is this Heaven to me?
The road to it is so narrow, I can't see
What value it has, for it's without money,
And who cares for the flow of milk and honey?
The count' that can make me whoop and holler
Is the one that'll give me the almighty dollar."
Communing thus, ecstatic, he fell asleep.
He loosened his reins and the poor ceased to weep.
He dreamed he was a boy at his mother's knee,
That she was praying he might from sin be free,
That he might never his fellowmen oppress,
But show mercy and charity to distress.
He lay back in the mother-arms contented;
That he would be a tyrant, he resented
Most bitterly then, but later when he felt
The "itching palm," all his good intentions melted
Ed into thin air, and he too soon became
A son most unworthy of his mother's name.
And on and on through all the devious ways
He had trod, even to treading Hell's maze!
As awake, so in sleep, he knew himself right,
Till sudden, as it were, an X-ray searchlight
Turned inward, shamed him a pusillanimous soul.
All distorted and shriveled in its lust of gold,
Sweating cold beads, he writhed and groaned as in pain,
But the searchlight shone on and on and amain,
Till his smallness of soul did in big-ness appear,
And every fibre of flesh quivered with fear—



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Then from the light he heard a voice say,
"Down on your knees and earnestly pray."
Most humbly he bowed as did Jacob of old,
And prayed the Lord to remove the curse of gold,
The curse of gold—gold! he could recall no word
Of the prayers which in his childhood he'd heard,
Which he'd heard so often at his mother's knee,
But only—"From the curse of gold, Lord, make me free."
As he prayed, something seemed to soften his heart,
His ambition for riches dissolved apart,
His soul, long repressed, expanded amain,
There came, long forgotten, to his mind again,
The text: "And a little child shall lead them."
He is saved by the Babe of Bethlehem!
BEN ADAM.

A Tenable Supposition

I did, indeed, cut out a slip from the Birmingham Morning News, last September (12th, 1871), containing a letter written by a gentleman signing himself "Justice in Person," and professing himself an engineer, who talked very grandly about the "individual and social laws of our nature," but he had arrived at the inconvenient conclusions that "no individual has a natural right to hold property in land," and that "all land sooner or later must become public property." I call this an inconvenient conclusion, because I really think you would find yourselves greatly inconvenienced if your wives couldn't go into the garden to cut a cabbage, without getting leave from the lord mayor and corporation; and if the same principle is to be carried out as regards tools, I beg to state to Mr. Justice-in-Person, that if anybody and everybody is to use my own particular palette and brushes, I resign my office of professor of fine arts. Perhaps, when we become really acquainted with the true Justice-in-Person, not professing herself an engineer, she may suggest to us, as a natural supposition: "That land should be given to those who can use it, and tools to those who can use them;" and I have a notion you will find this a very tenable supposition also.—John Ruskin, Fors Clavigera, page 149, Vol. I.

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The baronial type exists still, I fear, in such manner, here and there, in spite of improving centuries.—John Ruskin.