

A Humane Word From Satan

[The following letter, signed by Satan and purporting to come from him, we have reason to believe was not written by him, but by Mark Twain. --Editor.]

TO THE EDITOR OF HARPER'S WEEKLY:

Dear Sir and Kinsman,--Let us have done with this frivolous talk. The American Board accepts contributions from me every year: then why shouldn't it from Mr. Rockefeller? In all the ages, three-fourths of the support of the great charities has been conscience-money, as my books will show: then what becomes of the sting when that term is applied to Mr. Rockefeller's gift? The American Board's trade is financed mainly from the graveyards. Bequests, you understand. Conscience-money. Confession of an old crime and deliberate perpetration of a new one; for deceased's contribution is a robbery of his heirs. Shall the Board decline bequests because they stand for one of these offenses every time and generally for both?

Allow me to continue. The charge must persistently and resentfully and remorselessly dwelt upon is that Mr. Rockefeller's contribution is incurably tainted by perjury--perjury proved against him in the courts. IT MAKES US SMILE--down in my place! Because there isn't a rich man in your vast city who doesn't perjure himself every year before the tax board. They are all caked with perjury, many layers thick. Iron-clad, so to speak. If there is one that isn't, I desire to acquire him for my museum, and will pay Dinosaur rates. Will you say it isn't infraction of the law, but only annual evasion of it? Comfort yourselves with that nice distinction if you like--FOR THE PRESENT. But by and by, when you arrive, I will show you something interesting: a whole hell-full of evaders! Sometimes a frank law-breaker turns up elsewhere, but I get those others every time.

To return to my mutttons. I wish you to remember that my rich perjurers are contributing to the American Board with frequency: it is money filched from the sworn-off personal tax; therefore it is the wages of sin; therefore it is my money; therefore it is "I" that contribute it; and, finally, it is therefore as I have said: since the Board daily accepts contributions from me, why should it decline them from Mr. Rockefeller, who is as good as I am, let the courts say what they may?

--Satan