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\$\$: empty formula or unmatched display?

When you try the following under T_EX's normal catcode regime, you will get an error:

```
$$ $21-09$
```

The message is:

```
! Display math should end with $$.  
<to be read again>
```

```
2  
1.7 $$ $2  
1-09$
```

But how about this then:

```
\halign{###\cr $$ & $21-09$\cr}
```

It magically works! The actual effect is similar to

```
\hbox{$$} (or) \hbox{${}$}
```

In words of *The T_EXbook* (chapter 25, page 287):

One consequence of these rules is that '\$\$' in restricted horizontal mode simply yields an empty math formula.