

📖 Topic Page: [Bierce, Ambrose, 1842-1914?](#)

Definition: **Bierce, Ambrose Gwinett** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

US satirical writer and journalist. A one-time associate of Mark Twain, Bierce is best-known for *The Devil's Dictionary* (1906), a collection of epigrammatic definitions.

Summary Article: **Bierce, Ambrose Gwinett**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(ăm'brōz gwīnĕt' bīrs), 1842–1914?, American satirist, journalist, and short-story writer, b. Meigs co., Ohio. He fought with extreme bravery in the Civil War, and the conflict, which he considered meaningless slaughter, is reflected in his war stories and to a great extent in the deep pessimism of his late fiction.

After the war, he turned to journalism. In San Francisco he wrote for the *News-Letter*, becoming its editor in 1868. He soon established a reputation as a satirical wit, and his waspish squibs and epigrams were much quoted. In London (1872–75), he wrote for the magazine *Fun* and finished three books, including *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull* (1874). After his return to San Francisco, he wrote for the *Argonaut*, edited the *Wasp* (1881–86), and was a columnist for Hearst's *Sunday Examiner* (1887–96); his writings in the *Examiner* made him the literary arbiter of the West Coast. Later he was Washington correspondent for the *American* and a contributor to *Cosmopolitan*.

Bierce's famous collection of sardonic definitions, originally called *The Cynic's Word Book* (1906), was retitled *The Devil's Dictionary* in 1911. His short stories, often dark in tone, grisly or macabre in subject matter, and masterful in their spare language, were collected in such volumes as *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (1891) and *Can Such Things Be?* (1893). He was also highly praised for *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* (1892), which he adapted from a translation of a German story. Bierce's distinction lies in his distilled satire, in the crisp precision of his astringent language, and in his realistically developed horror stories. Disillusionment and sadness pervaded the latter part of his life. In 1913 he went to Mexico, where all trace of him was lost.

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