



The Devil's Dictionary: The Cynic's Word Book

Ambrose Bierce

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The Devil's Dictionary is a satirical "reference" book written by Ambrose Bierce. The book offers reinterpretations of terms in the English language, lampooning cant and political doublespeak, as well as other aspects of human foolishness and frailty. It was originally published in 1906 as The Cynic's Word Book before being retitled in 1911. The origins of The Devil's Dictionary can be traced to when Ambrose Bierce was a columnist in the San Francisco-based News Letter, a small weekly financial magazine which had been founded by Frederick Marriott in the late 1850s. The News Letter, although a serious magazine aimed at businessmen, contained a page set aside for informal satirical content, entitled The Town Crier. Bierce was hired as this page's editor in December 1868, writing with satire, irreverence and a lack of inhibition, thus becoming known as the 'laughing devil' of San Francisco.

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