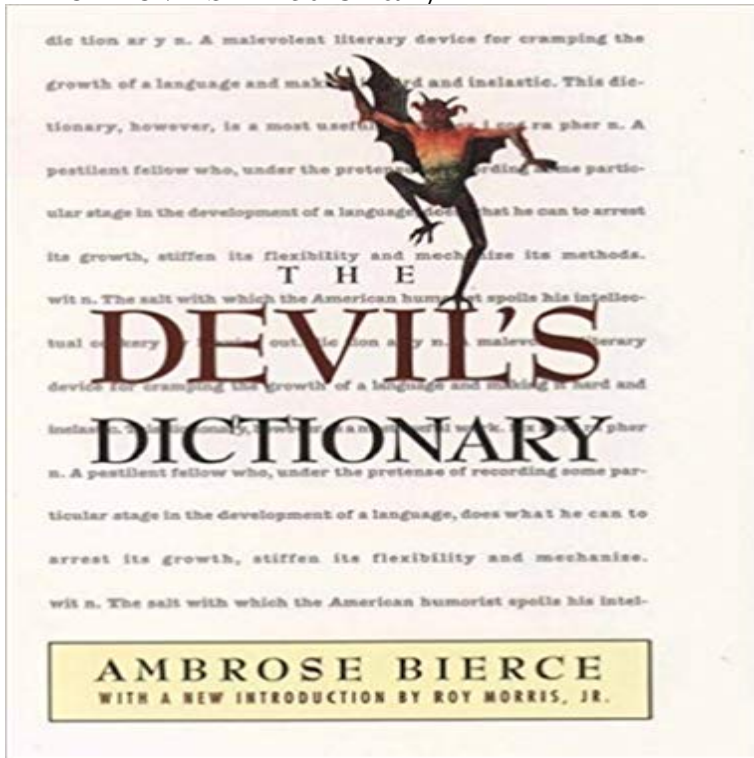


The Devils Dictionary



History, n. an account mostly false, of events mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves, and soldiers mostly fools. Marriage, n. The state or condition of a community consisting of a master, a mistress, and two slaves, making in all two. Self-Esteem, n. An erroneous appraisal. These caustic aphorisms, collected in *The Devils Dictionary*, helped earn Ambrose Bierce the epithets Bitter Bierce, the Devils Lexicographer, and the Wickedest Man in San Francisco. First published as *The Cynics Word Book* (1906) and later reissued under its preferred name in 1911, Bierces notorious collection of barbed definitions forcibly contradicts Samuel Johnsons earlier definition of a lexicographer as a harmless drudge. There was nothing harmless about Ambrose Bierce, and the words he shaped into verbal pitchforks a century ago--with or without the devils help--can still draw blood today.

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