

The Short Stories of Ambrose Bierce, Volume 1



Horror and the supernatural are the background of Bierces short stories. His style is marked by vivid description, grim situations, and sardonic twists of fate. In terms of technique, he was far ahead of his time and his short stories are among the very best in American literature. Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce (1842 ? 1914?) was the tenth child in a family of thirteen born on a simple farm in Meigs County, Ohio. He joined the Union army as a private and distinguished himself in many engagements throughout the War Between the States, including the horrific battle of Shiloh. By wars end, he had been commissioned a major. But Bierce despised war and grew to see in it nothing but pain and wasted lives. He moved to San Francisco in the 1870s and drifted into a career as a journalist and then as a writer of short stories. To his friends he was known as Bitter Bierce. A well-traveled and troubled man, he constantly relived the horror of war, and was obsessed by the specter of sudden death. Disappearing into Mexico in 1913, he was never seen again. Included in Volume 1 is The Moonlit Road, one of the most unforgettable ghost stories ever written. Other examples in this volume of his power to chill are Beyond the Wall, An Adventure at Brownville, and An Inhabitant of Carcosa. An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge draws on Bierces war experiences and the ever-present reality of death. Masterpieces of this genre include One of the Missing, Parker Adderson, and A Baffled Ambuscade.

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