2013

A Devil's Abecedarium (26 of Ambrose Bierce's Cynic's Definitions)

Jonathan D Green, Illinois Wesleyan University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jonathan_green/218/
A Devil's Abecedarium
26 of Ambrose Bierce's Cynic's Definitions

Score

Text - Ambrose Bierce

Music - Jonathan D. Green

© Verdant Music, 2013
Said a man to a rauculent youth: "I thought you a total abstainer, my son." "So I am. so I am," said the scrap...
grace caught—"But not sir a bigoted one."

Bacchus, noun:

Bacchus, noun:

Bacchus, noun:

f

cup mute

marimba - very hard mallets

f
A con-ven-i-ent de-i-ty in-ven-ted by the an-cients as an ex-

A Devil's Abecedarium

convenient deity invented by the ancients as an ex-

One who believes that the

Christian, noun: vibes or marimba - medium


Christian, noun:
New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor. Die, noun: The singular of "dice." We seldom hear the woodblock - small hard beater leggero
word, because there is a prohibitory proverb, "Never say die." At

long intervals, however, someone says: "The die is cast," which is not true,

marimba - very hard mallets
for it is cut...

Edible, adjective: Good to eat, and whole-some to di-gest, as a worm to a toad, as a

Edible, adjective: 

Edible, adjective: 

edible,
ap\dot{e}dible, adjective: Good to eat, and whole-some to di-gest, as a worm to a toad, as a

toad to a snake, a snake to a pig, a pig to a man, and a man to a worm. Freedom noun:

Freedom noun:

Freedom noun:

Freedom noun:
A Devil's Abecedarium

"Freedom, freedom, as ev'ry school-boy knows, Once shrieked as Kosciusko fell; On ev'ry wind, indeed that blows I hear her yell. She"

"snare drum - light wooden sticks"

"straight mute"
screams whenever monarchs meet, And parliaments as well, to
bind the chains about her feet And toll her knell. And when the sovereign
people cast The votes they cannot spell, Upon the pestilential blast Her

clamors swell. For all to whom the power's given To sway or to com-
pel, Among themselves apportion Heaven And give her Hell.

Gunpowder, noun: An agency employed by civilized nations for the

Gunpowder, noun: sostenuto

Gunpowder, noun: p cresc. poco

Gunpowder, noun: p sostenuto cresc. poco
settlement of disputes which might become troublesome if left unadjusted

Milton says it was invented by the devil to dispel angels, and
this opinion seems to derive some support from the scarcity of angels.

Homocide, noun: The slaying of one human

Homocide, noun:

Homocide, noun:
being by another. There are four kinds of homicide: felony,

marimba - medium yarn mallets

excusable, justifiable, and praise-worthy,
but it make no great dif – f’rence to the per – son slain whe- ther he
fell by one kind or a - no - ther — the clas-si-fi-ca-tion is for the ad-
van • tage of the lawyers.

Immortality, noun:

Immortality, noun:

Immortality, noun:

Immortality, noun:

Immortality, noun:

Immortality, noun:

Immortality, noun:

toy which people cry for,

And on their
knees apply for, Dispute, contend,

tend, and lie for, And if allowed Would
Jealous, noun: Unduly concerned about the preservation of
that which can be lost only if not worth keeping. Kiss, noun: A word invented by the poets as a rhyme for "bliss." It is supposed to signify, in a
in general way, some kind of rite or ceremony appertaining to a good understanding, but the

man-ner of its performance is unknown to this lexi-co-grapher.
A Devil's Abecedarium

Liberty, noun: The rising People

woodblock - small hard beater

hot and out of breath, Roared around the palace: "Liberty or death!"
"If death will do," the King said, "let me reign; you'll have, I'm sure, no reason to complain."

Marriage, noun:
The state or condition of a community consisting of a

marimba - medium yarn mallets

mas-t-er, a mis-tress and two slaves, ma-king in all, two.

Noise, noun:
A Devil's Abecedarium

\[ \text{f} \]

A stench to the ear. Un-do-mes-ti-ca-ted mu-sic. \[ \text{straight mute} \]

\[ \text{ff} \]

marimba - very hard mallets

With apologies to Stravinsky

The chief pro-duct and au-then-ti-ca-ting sign of ci-vi-li-za-tion.

senza sord.
Ocean, noun: Glockenspiel, or marimba with hard beaters up an octave.

With apologies to Saint-Saëns
man — who has no gills. Politics, noun:

finger cymbals Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:

Politics, noun:
principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage. Queen, noun: marimba - very hard mallets
A woman by whom the realm is ruled when there is a

king, and through whom it is ruled when there is not.

Rumor, noun:

Rumor, noun:

Rumor, noun:
Sharp, irresistible by mail or shield, By guard unparried as by flight unstayed, O

serviceable Rumor, let me wield Against my enemy no other blade.
His be the terror of a foe unseen, His the inutil hand upon the hilt, And

mine the deadly tongue, long, slender, keen, Hinting a rumor of some ancient
301

A Devil's Abecedarium

So shall I slay the wretch without a blow, Spare me to celebrate his

305

overthrow, And nurse my valor for another foe. Sacrament, noun:

Sacrament, noun:
solemn religious ceremony to which several degrees of authority and significance are attached.
Rome has seven sacraments, but the Protestant churches, being less prosperous, feel that they can only afford two, and these of in-
A Devil's Abecedarium

Some of the smaller sects have no

Some sacraments at all — for which mean economy they will indubitably be damned.
Telephone, noun: An invention of the Devil which abrogates some of the ad-

Telephone, noun: marimba - medium yarn mallets

Telephone, noun:

van-tages of making a disagreeable person keep his distance.

Telephone, noun:
A Devil's Abecedarium

Unction, noun: oiling or greasing.

The rite of extreme unction consists of
touching with oil consecrated by a bishop several parts of the body of one engaged in dyeing. Marbury re-
lates that after the rite had been administered to a cer____tain

wick - ed En-glish no-ble-man it was dis - co - vered that the oil had not been pro-per-ly con-se-

A Devil's Abecedarium
crated and no other could be obtained. When informed of this, the sick man said in anger: "Then I'll be damned if I die!" "My
son," said the priest, "this is what we fear, my son—this is what we fear."
A Devil's Abecedarium

fool of him-self and a wreck of his coun-try. War, noun: A

by - pro-duct of the arts of peace. The most me-nac-ing po - li - ti-cal con-

by - pro-duct of the arts of peace. The most me-nac-ing po - li - ti-cal con-

The most me-nac-ing po - li - ti-cal con-

The most me-nac-ing po - li - ti-cal con-

The most me-nac-ing po - li - ti-cal con-
Di\(\text{tion}\) is a pe\(\text{ri\-od}\) of in\(\text{ter\-na\-tion\-al}\) a\(\text{-mi\-ty}\)...

The soil of peace is thick\(\text{-ly\,\,sown}\) with the seeds of war and sin\(\text{gu\-lar\-ly}...
A Devil's Abecedarium

426

sui-ted to their ger-mi-na-tion and growth. X, noun: X in our al-pha-bet

426

X, noun:

426

X, noun:

431

be-ing a need-less let-ter has an add-ed in-vi-vi-bil-ity to the at-

431

f

431
A Devil's Abecedarium

tacks of the spelling reformers, and like them, will doubtless last as long as the language.

Youth, noun: Youth is the true Saturnian Reign, the Golden Age on vibes or marimba - medium yarn mallets

Youth, noun: Youth, noun:
again, when figs are grown on thistles, and pigs be-tailed with whistles, and
wear- ing silken bristles, live ever in clover, and cows fly o-ver, de-

earth, figs are grown on thistles, and pigs be-tailed with whistles, and
pigs be-tailed with whistles, and pigs be-tailed with whistles, and

li-ver-ing milk at e-ve-ry door, and Jus-ice ne-ver is heard to snore, and e-v'ry as-sas-sin is
made a ghost and howl-ing, is cast in- to Bal-ti-most! Zany, noun: A
Zany, noun: marimba - very hard mallets
Zany, noun:
po-pular char-ac-ter in old I-ta-lian plays, who imi-tated with lu-di-crous in-
com-pe-tence the buf-fo-ne, or clown, and was there-fore the ape of an ape,
for the clown him-self i-mi-ta-ted the se-ri-ous cha-rac-ters of the

play. The za-ny was pro-ge-ni-tor to the

A Devil's Abecedarium
A Devil's Abecedarium

spe•c•i•a•l•i•st in hu•mor, as we to•day have the un•hap•pi•ness to know him.

In the za•ny we see an ex•am•ple of cre•a-

finger cymbals marimba - medium yarn mallets
tion, in the hu-
orist the trans-
mis-sion. A

no-
er ex-
cel-lent spe-
cimen of the mo-
dern za-
ny is the

A Devil's Abecedarium
A Devil's Abecedarium

A curate, who apes the rector, who apes the bishop, who apes the arch-

dim.

f

dim.

dim.

bi-shop, who apes the devil.