

Los Gatos,
Dec. 23, 1897.

My dear Walsh,

I return the stories, as directed, but have been strongly tempted to submit them for publication to the Examiner. For, mind you, they are no end good. You are a born humorist of a singularly rare and pleasing breed. I hardly know when to find anything better than the plight of the Egyptian soldiers, compelled to fight with one hand and hold up their trousers with the other!

In the mouse incident I think Rameses should not have completely outlived the stratagem in council, for that dulls the edge of anticipation and robs the performance of its novelty.

By the way, I wonder if you know that it was customary for Egyptian kings to turn loose lions upon the enemy. There is a famous painting of that same Rameses doing that. Some mention of the practice might advantageously have been worked in to the story. For example, Ram. might have ordered the usual "tactic," but the smarter subordinate entrusted with execution of the command might have substituted (to the reader's astonishment) the more formidable beasts.

But it is very good as it is; as is also the dominie yarn. I'm proud of you, my boy.

So, my Chicago books are not stories. One is satire—of the Lucian-Swift sort; the other is fantastic fables.

I'm buried beneath proofs of the Putnams edition of "Soldiers and Civilians"—somewhat enlarged and with a new title, or rather the title of the English edition: "In the Midst of Life." The publishers preferred it that way.

I wish you a Christmas. Fill the blank to suit.

Yours,
Ambrose Bierce.