

Wright's, Cal.,
Jan. 25, 1899.

Dear Walsh,

I could not read this manuscript at once, but have now done so. I think it has fault,—perhaps you did not hope that it was an exception to all other things. It seems to me to need condensation, being too long for the amount of incident that it carries. It should also, begin at the place that I have marked with a star on page 3.

In the later part—when the citizens arm and march to the coffin—the narrative of their doing so [struck out text] leads one to expect a denouement which is necessarily absent. Less expectation would be aroused if you told all this in a sentence.

Something of the same pernicious prolixity I observe in the account of the dominie's visit to the sick man; it led me to expect something that did not occur; what occurred being just the natural thing.

Cut it down, by all means—or rather by means of erasure. I suppose if the story is intended for a magazine prolixity is no objection, but I know of no magazine that the grim coffin laugh would not frighten out of its seventeen senses.

I'm thinking of writing more stories and of using your notion of a bad tempered automaton chess player. Thank you for it.

Peace be with you.
Ambrose Bierce.

[Text next to letterhead]:

I've mislaid all the 1000 letters that I've not answered—your letters among them. So—!