

The Legislator and the Citizen

by Ambrose Bierce

An ex-Legislator asked a Most Respectable Citizen for a letter to the Governor recommending him for appointment as Commissioner of Shrimps and Crabs.

"Sir," said the Most Respectable Citizen, austere, "were you not once in the State Senate?"

"Not so bad as that, sir, I assure you," was the reply. "I was a member of the Slower House. I was expelled for selling my influence for money."

"And you dare to ask for mine!" shouted the Most Respectable Citizen. "You have the impudence? A man who will accept bribes will probably offer them. Do you mean to--"

"I should not think of making a corrupt proposal to you, sir; but if I were Commissioner of Shrimps and Crabs, I might have some influence with the water-front population, and be able to help you make your fight for Coroner."

"In that case I do not feel justified in denying you the letter."

So he took his pen, and, some demon guiding his hand, he wrote, greatly to his astonishment:

"Who sells his influence should stop it, An honest man will only swap it."