

## **The Moral Principle and the Material Interest**

by Ambrose Bierce

A Moral Principle met a Material Interest on a bridge wide enough for but one.

"Down, you base thing!" thundered the Moral Principle, "and let me pass over you!"

The Material Interest merely looked in the other's eyes without saying anything.

"Ah," said the Moral Principle, hesitatingly, "let us draw lots to see which shall retire till the other has crossed."

The Material Interest maintained an unbroken silence and an unwavering stare.

"In order to avoid a conflict," the Moral Principle resumed, somewhat uneasily, "I shall myself lie down and let you walk over me."

Then the Material Interest found a tongue, and by a strange coincidence it was its own tongue. "I don't think you are very good walking," it said. "I am a little particular about what I have underfoot. Suppose you get off into the water."

It occurred that way.