

TITLES AND DEDICATIONS

I WANTED to call these exercises "Casual Ablutions," in memory of the immortal sign in the washroom of the British Museum, but my arbiter of elegance forbade it. You remember that George Gissing, homeless and penniless on London streets, used to enjoy the lavatory of the Museum Reading Room as a fountain and a shrine. But the flinty hearted trustees, finding him using the wash-stand for bath-tub and laundry, were exceeding wroth, and set up the notice

THESE BASINS ARE FOR
CASUAL ABLUTIONS ONLY

I would like to issue the same warning to the implacable reader: these fugitive pieces, very casual rinsings in the great basin of letters, must not be too bitterly resented, even by their publishers. To borrow O. Henry's joke, they are more demitasso than Tasso.

The real purpose in writing books is to have