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WRITING ENGLISH PROSE**

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WRITING ENGLISH PROSE

BY

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"ENGLISH COMPOSITION AND STYLE," "STUDIES IN
STRUCTURE AND STYLE," ETC.



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WRITING ENGLISH PROSE

CHAPTER I

WRITING AND THE STUDY OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

THE familiar jest that a man begins to write by chewing the end of his pencil, — or, now-a-days, of his typewriter, — is based on the tradition that writing is a very difficult act. Such words as *style* and *composition* suggest something that is outside the achievement of ordinary mortals, and in thinking of these terms most of us, with that idealism common to humanity, are likely to shut our eyes to all but the finer aspects of writing. There is, however, no cause for alarm. The truth of the matter, as Mr. Chesterton would say, is, first, that writing, along with speaking, eating, sleeping, putting on clothes, and coming out of the rain, is one of the great universal acts of modern life. In the second place, it is also true that writing is in its finer aspects comparatively rare, a distinction which it shares with speaking, cookery, dressing, house-building, and the sleep of a tranquil and untroubled mind.

This common act of writing may be conveniently called informal composition; there is no need to enlarge on the amount and variety of