

**THE PHILOSOPHERS OF THE  
SMOKING ROOM;  
CONVERSATIONS ON SOME  
MATTERS OF MOMENT**

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The philosophers of the smoking room; conversations on some matters of moment by Francis Aveling

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**FRANCIS AVELING**

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MATTERS OF MOMENT

BY

FRANCIS AVELING, D.D.

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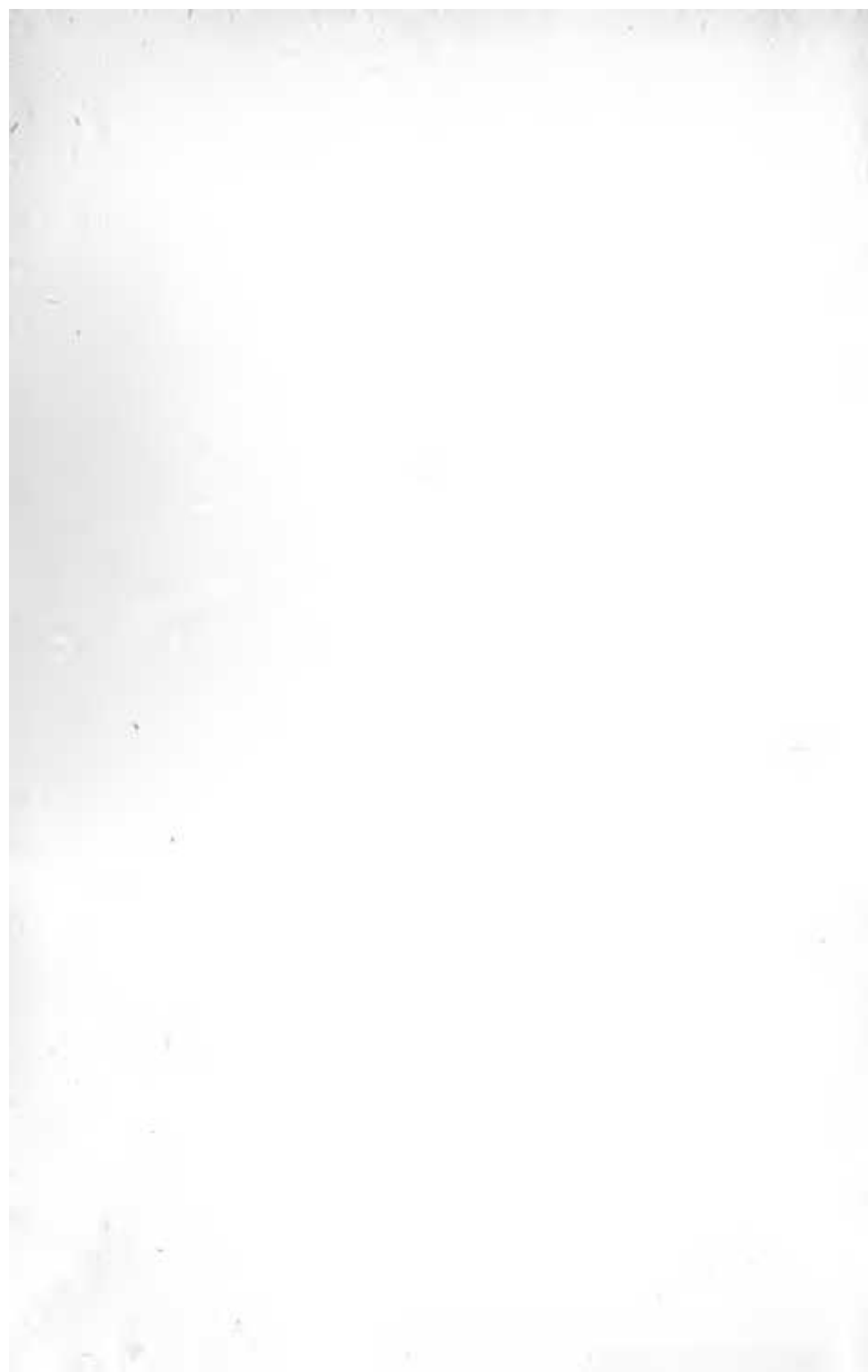
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## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. SUICIDE . . . . .	1
II. THE ETHICS OF FISHING . . . . .	18
III. THE SOUL DIVINE. . . . .	32
IV. GOD . . . . .	50
V. DRINK AND DRUNKENNESS . . . . .	69
VI. DEATHBEDS. . . . .	83
VII. THE CLERGY OF BOTH . . . . .	103
VIII. THE CLOSED DOOR . . . . .	122
IX. ATOMS AND MOLECULES . . . . .	138
X. <i>UBI SPIRITUS IBI LIBERTAS</i> . . . . .	156
XI. MYTHS . . . . .	172
XII. SPIRITUALISM . . . . .	189
XIII. THE CONCERT . . . . .	209
XIV. THE RIVER. . . . .	222
XV. THE PRIEST'S SOLILOQUY . . . . .	237
XVI. GOOD-BYE . . . . .	247





# THE PHILOSOPHERS OF THE SMOKING-ROOM

## CHAPTER I

### SUICIDE

THEY were sitting in the smoking-room, when the clergyman entered and took a place upon the lounge beside the Doctor, with a courteous "Good evening, gentlemen!"

It was the first night after leaving Liverpool, and the *Carinthia's* passengers were looking forward to a glorious, if probably uneventful, passage to Montreal. Last night they had come aboard late; and, hand-shaking and leave-taking over, had gone to bed. In the morning they found themselves already far from the land.

That curious ocean-voyage intimacy, the relic of sailing ships, had not yet broken the ice of casual acquaintanceship; but, in the smoking-room, the men at least, were beginning to feel their conversational legs.

After dinner the Doctor, the Poet, and the Priest

found themselves drifting, like straws in an eddy, towards one comfortable-looking corner, which they appropriated for the rest of the voyage. They had already exhausted the inevitable topics; and, under the soothing magic of the weed, were insensibly approaching the point where conversation becomes metamorphosed into a discussion of the underlying currents of thought.

Each, in his own way, was a keen observer, a student of humanity, a reader of the great book of the natural. But each had made his observations after his own fashion; and the lessons each had learned were unlike those of the others. Strong men they were, all three of them, including even the Poet; and stubborn—two of them at least. One could see that at a first glance. But enough! They need no introduction. You can find their fellows on every ocean steamer, in every town, in every parish for the matter of that. You can take that chair by the newcomer, and make one of the party, if you like. In ten minutes' conversation you will know them better than after twenty introductions.

"As I was saying,"—this the Doctor, removing his cigar from between his lips—"there's no knowing. The man may have seen his justification. . . ."

"One has no right to make suppositions," broke in the Poet. "According to the verdict, he did commit suicide: and the question is removed at once to the broader plane of fact. Any sentimental