

Tales of Van

Tale the First

Concerning the Eldermen elect and the ambitions that they had

The Eldermen and the Seers and the Prophets of the City of Van sat them together round a great table, and over them, did preside the Major Mind, even he that is called the Mayor.

And they spake, yea, verily they talked; for some would do this thing and others that thing, yet did they all agree to do some great thing.

Out of the City of Van, that lieth at the feet of the mighty hills, they would make Utopia, and they cried with one voice: "We shall".

But one among them, being learned in the logic of language, said: "Brothers, since we be of one mind in this matter and are determined, should we not rather say: "We will".

And the light of high endeavor shone forth from their eyes, and they smote upon the table with their clenched hands, and shouted: "We will".

Thus did the pains of a new creation begin!

And so they spake of this matter and of that matter also, which also was of no matter, and they became impressed with themselves, and said: "We will".

Of the earth did they speak and of the sea, even did they talk of the air.

They discussed the earth and the things thereon and those things which are hid in the bowels of the earth, and which no man can see.

But the Eldermen and the Seers and the Prophets had imagination, and clearly they peered into the very heart of the earth and were mightily pleased, so that they roared out: "We will".

They talked also of the sea and of

the fishes therein, and of the sands of the sea and the treasures thereof, and they hinted also at the weeds of the sea as a commendable substitute for vegetables, for verily the times were hard and many there were that had empty bellies.

And they said: "We will".

They argued also of the sun and the moon, and of the stars in their courses, and their minds became much elevated. And one, the most original, said: "Brothers, let us consider the poor"; but they that were cast in a business mould spake the word, "Damn!" asking "Have we not the poor with us always?"

But he of the most original mind persisted, saying: "Gentlemen—" and it was as though they were struck speechless—"Comrades, there is the red planet Mars! Could the poor poor not be made to dig more canals thereon?"

And they were astonished, and spake with emphasis and slowly: "We will".

And, after that they had spoken of Mars in many, many wise and witty words, one, he that had his eye turned to the flesh pots of Egypt, said: "Brothers, how splendid! for, when it shall come to pass that the poor poor have dived and have builded roads and placed in the earth sewer pipes and laid out gardens, we will transport to Mars, free of all charge, the Realsters, and they shall sell unto the poor poor lots and fields for the very love of it."

And they became as men that are stunned, for the width and wonder of their own imaginations, singly and col-