

prophecy that has come true as yet is the part about the extremity of Fate.

**The Prophet** (*in deep meditation*): The extremity of Blabre!

**The Most Venerable Elder**: The fool is wise for once. We had better trust the Herald, and accept the terms of peace.

**The Deaf Elder**: It is absolutely certain that the Emperor's letter is authentic?

**The Blind Elder**: It is absolutely certain.

**The Most Reverend Elder**: Here is another prophecy:

"The dragon helm! Like the red moon it glows!

See where amid the flying ranks of foes

The silver champion sweeps!"

**The Deaf Elder**: Yes: that is the same thought again!

**The Palsied Elder**: They all seem to be concerned with a warrior in silver armor.

(*The Dumb Elder gesticulates.*)

**The Deaf Elder**: My colleague says: "A giant."

**The Blind Elder**: Yes, a giant, wearing a helm with a dragon of ruby upon it.

**The Fool** (*apostrophizing the images of the gods*): Is it come to this, after all these years, that men take poets seriously? They have not sense enough to know that all these prophecies are but myths of moonrise!

**The Blind Elder**: But the dragon helm of rubies! How do you explain that?

**The Fool**: By the law of amputatoptatous ambubaboptaton!

(*The Dumb Elder gesticulates.*)

**The Deaf Elder**: My colleague says that this is ribaldry and blasphemy.

**The Most Reverend Elder**: The gods, who made him half-witted, cannot be offended at the outrushings of that feebleness.

**The Most Venerable Elder**: Yet what the Fool says is truth. The prophecies agree on the main point. We of Blabre have waited and longed for him these four hundred years. There is even a statue of him in the Guild Hall. But by what right do we assume that he will appear in this present crisis of our city? We must decide on action. My counsel is surrender.

**The Most Reverend Elder**: Are we all convinced of the genuineness of the letter of the Emperor?

**The Blind Elder**: It is positive beyond the possibility of doubt.

(*The Dumb Elder gesticulates.*)

**The Deaf Elder**: My colleague agrees with the Most Venerable. His counsel is surrender.

**The Palsied Elder**: Mine also.

**The Deaf Elder**: I agree.

**The Most Reverend Elder**: With regret, even with dissent, I must agree. Of what use would it be to divide the Council?

**The Blind Elder** (*in sudden exaltation*): I protest. I see him now; I see the Saviour! He is almost at the gates. He is followed by a vast victorious army. The Gnogues flee before the mere jingle of his harness. (*The moment of exaltation passes.*) Ah me! the visions of the blind! (*A pause.*) I agree.

**The Young Plump Elder**: I agree. Let us save ourselves, and leave Blabre to its doom.

**The Fool**: Oh, triple fools! Tricked by the forgery of the

letter! Rummaging antiquity for the rags and bones of folklore when you should have been taking measures for the defence of the city! Praying to your gods when you should have been making the enemy pray to theirs! Hold on but a day! The Emperor will surely be in time to save the city. Also, by all your gods, it were better we perish fighting than fall into the hands of the Gnogues. This offer is black treachery. I know them.

(*No one takes the slightest notice of the speech. The Dumb Elder does not even trouble to repeat it to his colleague, but makes a contemptuous gesture to indicate to him that it is rubbish.*)

**The Most Venerable Elder**: Summon the Herald of the Gnogues!

(*The Sentinel obeys.*)

**The Prophet** (*mechanically as ever*): Woe unto Blabre! Woe to the wicked city!

(*The Herald of the Gnogues re-enters.*)

**The Most Venerable Elder**: We have ended our deliberations. We are disposed to accept the terms of honorable capitulation offered to us by your master. It is understood that we depart unharmed, every man with all such goods as he may carry with him, and that the army of the Gnogues will not molest us on our march, or enter the city until four-and-twenty hours be passed.

**The Herald of the Gnogues**: It is understood. It is agreed. Give me the keys of the city.

**The Most Venerable Elder** (*rising, and detaching a bunch of enormous iron keys from his girdle*): Here are —

**The Prophet** (*with wild eyes, leaping to his feet with a furious gesture*): Hear ye the Word of the Lord! The whirlwind awaketh! The Lord is upon the whirlwind! The Lord flingeth forth the lightning! The Lord maketh to resound his thunder! Hear ye the Word of the Lord!

(*All the elders, dominated by his personality, spring to energy and resolution, or rather to the simulation of these qualities which is conferred by contagious hysteria, from their previous drooping dullness. They seem to drink his words gluttonously. The Herald and the Sentinel, even, abandon their military discipline, and listen with all their ears. But the Fool yawns, and appears bored, while the Herald of the Gnogues shows violent amazement, as one beholding the antics of some incredible animal.*)

**The Prophet**: The Lord hath lifted up his hand! The Lord hath appointed a Saviour! Behold, even now is the hour of our salvation! Glory to the Lord, that hath had mercy upon his servants! Blessed be these eyes, that have looked upon the moon of resurrection! The Saviour cometh! The Saviour cometh! The Saviour cometh! I see him with mine eyes; mine ears rejoice at the music of his harness as he strides to our salvation. O Saviour of the City of Blabre! Oh thou that art the sword in the hand of the Lord against the heathen!

**The Most Reverend Elder** (*in a thrilled intense voice*): Do you see him? Do you see him?

**The Prophet** (*very calm, on a sudden*): I see him. I see the champion of the Lord. He cannot come to us as long as we defend ourselves. It is by the ordeal of faith that the Lord tries our souls!

**The Most Reverend Elder**: What is he like?

**The Prophet**: He is an head above the common height of