

"I have here a specimen nugget of gold," said the tall stranger, at the same time producing the article and placing it upon the table. "This I wish you to examine and certify as to degree of purity, so that it can be disposed of without question."

"You have more of the same?" said the wise man, taking the nugget between his two fingers and hastily glancing it over.

"Yes, a goodly quantity."

"It is quite a curiosity?"

"A curiosity? What mean you? Trifle not with us, my dear sir, I beseech. Know that the store of nuggets, like unto this fair sample, cost a time of danger and many an innocent man's blood as well. Is gold only a curiosity to you?"

"Gold! True it looks not unlike. Some even go so far as to call it fool's gold. The learned term it iron pyrites. Your specimen is of this nature and utterly valueless except as a curiosity."

The short and stout stranger who had hitherto made no sound now reeled and staggered, as if about to faint.

"All is over, Your Highness," he gurgled forth. "This dashes our cup of ambition to the ground and leaves no further reason for striving."

"The right must always struggle with the wrong, even if it be without apparent success; otherwise, all good things upon this earth must perish and be forgotten," the tall stranger replied, as if repeating a lesson he had learned by heart.