

“The other method was adopted with as little judgment; to extract it they began by mineralising auriferous metals by means of sulphur, which has no action on gold, the specific weight being greater than that of other metals: but to facilitate its precipitation iron was added, which loaded itself with the superabundant sulphur, and this method is still followed. The force of fire vitrifies one part of the iron, the other combines itself with a small portion of the gold, or even silver, which mixes with the scoria, from whence it cannot be drawn but by strong fusions, and being well instructed in the suitable intermediums which are made use of. Chemistry, which is now arrived to great perfection, affords, in fact, means to extract the greatest part of this gold and silver: but at the time when the Spaniards explored the mines of Peru, they were, doubtless, ignorant of the art of mining with the greatest profit; besides, they had such great riches at their disposal that they, probably, neglected the means which would have cost them trouble, care, and time; there is much reason therefore to conclude that they contented themselves with a first fusion, and threw away the scoria as useless, as well as the sand which had escaped the quicksilver, and perhaps they made a mere heap of these two mixtures, which they regarded as of no value.

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