

where it subsides, and every now and then is cleared out and thrown into a common heap. A great deal of chemical action then commences, salts of various kinds effloresce on the surface, and the mass becomes hard. After having been left for a year or two, and then rewashed, it yields gold; and this process may be repeated even six or seven times; but the gold each time becomes less in quantity, and the intervals required (as the inhabitants say, to generate the metal) are longer. There can be no doubt that the chemical action already mentioned each time liberates fresh gold from some combination. The discovery of a method to effect this before the first grinding would without doubt raise the value of gold-ores many fold. It is curious to find how the minute particles of gold, being scattered about and not corroding, at last accumulate in some quantity. A short time since a few miners, being out of work, obtained permission to scrape the ground round the house and mill: they washed the earth thus got together, and so procured thirty dollars' worth of gold. This is an exact counterpart of what takes place in nature. Mountains suffer degradation and wear away, and with them the metallic veins which they contain. The hardest rock is worn into impalpable mud, the ordinary metals oxidate, and both are removed; but gold, platina, and a few others are nearly indestructible, and from their weight, sinking to the bottom, are left behind. After whole mountains have passed through this grinding-mill, and have been washed by the hand of Nature, the residue becomes metalliferous, and man finds it worth his while to complete the task of separation.

Bad as the above treatment of the miners appears, it is gladly accepted of by them; for the condition of the laboring agriculturists is much worse. Their wages are lower, and they live almost exclusively on beans. This poverty must be chiefly owing to the feudal-like system on which the land is tilled: the landowner gives a small plot of ground to the laborer, for building on and cultivating, and in return has his services (or those of a proxy) for every day of his life,