

of the hole, and the clay hauled up by means of a bucket, one man windlassing and his mate filling the bucket below. The bottom of the hole was the rock, which was sometimes slate, sometimes schist, and in some cases sandstone and quartz; above this was a layer of pipe clay, sand and gravel, varying greatly in thickness as well as in colour and composition, according to the character of the underlying rock. This contained the gold and was called "washing stuff;" if very rich, rounded grains of gold, and little water-worn nuggets might be seen in it and picked out with a knife; but this would be an exceptional case and the stuff would even then require to be washed in order that the finer gold might not be lost. The washing stuff having been sent up to the surface, was carried to the nearest water and *puddled* in a large tub or trough, and the water changed and poured off repeatedly, until the clay had been washed out and only sand and gravel with gold remained. This was transferred to a cradle, closely resembling the domestic article; but in place of the roof there was a sieve and beneath the sieve a sloping board fitted with ledges or bars.

The cradling was done by placing the sand in the sieve, pouring on water and rocking at the same time; the light sand was carried away by the water, while the gold, passing through the sieve, was caught against the ledges beneath, and was then freed from any remaining sand by being manipulated in a washing dish.

Such was the usual plan; where water was plentiful long troughs, called "Toms," and sluices were sometimes employed advantageously.

As a general thing, gold was obtained only by sinking at the diggings I visited during my ten months' stay. No crushing was then carried on, though gold-bearing quartz cropped out in several places, and I frequently broke off with a hammer pretty specimens streaked and dotted over with gold. In some places the alluvial deposit on the surface or only a few inches beneath, was found to be exceedingly rich. But these surface diggings were exhausted almost immediately from the very facility with which they were worked. Strange to say, the richest sinkings also, were those which were first discovered. At the time of my arrival, the excitement which had about eighteen months before almost depopulated Melbourne and had left scores of vessels without crews in Hobson's Bay, had in a great degree subsided. There were plenty of new diggings but none of them very rich; and hundreds of reckless fellows who at the first rush to the gold fields had in a few months gained hundreds and even thousand of pounds' worth, and who with the expectation that the gold would always prove equally abundant, had returned to Melbourne and had "knocked down" as they called it, in the wildest dissipation, their easily

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