

by external agents, or because it is easily wrought into useful and ornamental forms, the evidence is clear enough that gold has had a widely-spread and a long-continued reign. We are told of an age of iron, and an age of bronze, and of the golden ages, *par excellence*; and these metaphors are founded on certain characteristics of certain periods in history; but, in one sense, the golden age never dies, if we judge from the estimation in which this one metal is held. Whether a country possessing iron mines is not richer than one which boasts of its gold, is quite another question, which must be discussed on a much wider basis.

As different centuries in past history have exhibited differences in the supply of gold, so does the geographical distribution differ greatly. All the four quarters of the world (what to designate Australia is now a puzzle: a "fifth quarter" not being quite orthodox) contain gold mines, though in very unequal degree. For a considerable number of years before the discovery of the mines of California, the world was chiefly supplied with gold from Siberia and the Indian islands in Asia, from Hungary and Transylvania in Europe, from a few scattered places in Africa, from Brazil in South America, and from Carolina in North America. Taking the average of many years before 1847, the annual produce was supposed to be about 80,000 lbs., having a money value of somewhat less than £5,000,000.

Many have been the eager hopes and anticipations that our own little island may be a golden land. It is certain that the Irish of early times had abundance of gold ornaments, the material for which seems to have been derived from their own "green isle." But there is now very little reason to expect that the age of gold will supersede the age of iron, so far as regards the mineral wealth of the British Isles. There are traces of gold in Ireland, in Wales, at Leadhills, at Glen Turret, at Cumberhead near Lanark, and in other places; sometimes they occur in quartz veins, sometimes in alluvial deposits.

The most notable attempt yet made in this department of mining among us has been in Wicklow. On the boundary line between Wicklow and Wexford counties is a mountain called Croghan Kinshela: many streams descend from this mountain, and in the muddy bed of these streams gold was discovered about half a century ago. It was not merely fragmentary morsels which thus presented themselves, but the eye of the gold-seeker was tempted by pieces or lumps up to twenty-two ounces weight. The gold was accompanied by other metals, and was generally found several feet below the surface. This discovery made, we may be sure, no little stir at the time. One of the stories connected with the subject tells how an old schoolmaster, about the year 1770, was wont to talk about the riches of the district; how he wandered out at night, until his neighbours thought he was a little touched in his intellect; how he married a young wife, and communicated the secret to her; how she gossiped about it to her neighbours; and how the good news thereupon spread. But the matter was not seriously taken up till 1796, when a man, while crossing a valley-brook, picked up a glittering fragment which proved to be nearly half an ounce of gold, at least as pure as that of standard coin. The news got wind; young and old, male and female, hale and infirm—all hied to the valleys, and groped about for the precious treasure; it was not a hoax nor a day dream, for the peasants gathered several thousand pounds' worth in two months. It was at once thought that a bright day had arisen for poor old Ireland; that she had the means of (golden) regeneration within herself; but alas, the hopes were "too bright to last." The Govern-