

sheets laid on top of each other to equal the thickness of this single sheet of paper.

The process by which mined gold is reduced to such extraordinary thinness is one requiring time, patience and unusual skill. First, the gold is colored to any one of the ten acceptable shades by the addition of alloys, such as copper and silver. In the deeper, or reddish shades, there is a preponderance of copper; while a larger proportion of silver produces the paler shades. As alloys are added the metal becomes less malleable so it is not adulterated below a 23-carat grade. The gold, with the added alloy, is then melted in a clay crucible which may not be used a second time for fear of breaking. Once is too often to spill a pot of gold in the ashes. The molten metal is poured into a mold one inch wide and several inches long and it forms a bar about  $1/4$  of an inch thick.

This bar is then passed between steel rollers again and again to extend its length. During this ironing process the operator guides the bar so that the width does not increase. When the gold bar has attained a length of about 10 yards and a thickness of  $1/800$  of an inch it is cut into squares and each one is placed between sheets of vellum, made from calf or lamb gut, imported from France. These vellum sheets are 3 inches square. The inch squares of gold are bound closely in the larger vellum squares by parchment bands. This pile, called the "cutch", is now ready for the first beating.

The "cutch" is placed on a padded granite block 18 inches square which is supported by a wooden block embedded in ashes, to assure the necessary resilience as the 18-pound hammer descends. It requires more skill than strength to guide the strokes of the hammer so that the little squares in the packet will be evenly beaten.

When the gold has reached the edge of the 3-inch vellum wrapper, the squares are removed by long wooden pincers, and are folded and