

Journey to Hydrargyros
a found poem

A shallow trough of quicksilver
to form an artificial horizon, used for observing altitudes.

In the principal hall stood a porphyry basin
full of quicksilver
so contrived that it could be agitated
by hidden mechanism,
reflecting the rays of the sun with dazzling brilliancy,
and striking with terror the mystified beholders.
New inhabitants may come here
already hardened into the mold of some class;
but they or their children usually soften soon into the quicksilver like consistency of
their surroundings

When that heaving, sparkling, jerking mass of quicksilver
at last was captured
shining all through the brown meshes of the net
the younger lads sat down quite exhausted,
wet through,
and happy
Together they looked across the valley,
a wonderful panorama of vine- clad slopes and meadows
starred with many- coloured wild flowers,
through which the river wound its way,
now hidden,
now visible,
a thin line of gleaming quicksilver.

*This poem originated from a Facebook challenge: 'Flinders took 2 horizons of quicksilver with him on the Investigator voyage. There's a poem in that, surely.' The original words are from William Black's *The Beautiful Wretch*, *The Pupil of Aurelius* and *The Four Macnicols* and E. Phillips Oppenheim's *The Avenger*.

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