

rapidly, but successively, presented to it. It is easy to show, that if the eye were steady, vision would be quickly lost: that all these objects, which are distinct and brilliant, are so from the motion of the eye: that they would disappear if it were otherwise. For example, let us fix the eye on one point, a thing difficult to do, owing to the very disposition to motion in the eye: but by repeated attempts we may at length acquire the power of fixing the eye to a point. When we have done so, we shall find, that the whole scene becomes more and more obscure, and finally vanishes. Let us fix the eye on the corner of the frame of the principal picture in the room. At first, every thing around it is distinct; in a very little time, however, the impression becomes weaker, objects appear dim, and then the eye has an almost uncontrollable desire to wander; if this be resisted, the impressions of the figures in the picture first fade: for a time, we see the gilded frame: but this also becomes dim. When we have thus far ascertained the fact, if we change the direction of the eye but ever so little, at once the whole scene will be again perfect before us.

These phenomena are consequent upon the retina being subject to exhaustion. When a coloured ray of light impinges continuously on the same part of the retina, it becomes less sensible to it, but more sensible to a ray of the