

of a clear angular polished piece of glass called a *prism*, the course of the beam from that place will be seen to be bent aside in a direction towards the thicker part of the glass—and not only so bent or *refracted*, but spread out to a certain degree, so that the beam in its further progress grows continually broader, the light being *dispersed*, into a flat fan-shaped plane: and if this be received on white paper; instead of a single white spot which the unbroken beam would have formed on it, appears a coloured streak; the colours being of exceeding vividness and brilliancy, and following one another in a certain fixed order—graduating from a pure crimson red at the end least remote from the original direction (or least *deviated*), through orange, yellow, green, and blue, to a faint and rather rosy violet. This beautiful phænomenon—the *Prismatic Spectrum*, as it is called—strikes every one who sees it for the first time in a high degree of purity, with wonder and delight; as I once had the gratification of witnessing in the case of that eminent artist the late Sir David Wilkie, who, strange to say, had never seen a “Spectrum” till I had the pleasure of showing him one; and whose exclamations, though a man habitually of few words, I shall not easily forget. I shall not attempt to give any account of the theory of this *prismatic dispersion* of the sunbeam; but an illustration of it may be found in a very familiar and primitive operation—the winnowing of wheat. Suppose I had a sieve full of mixed grains and other things—shot, for instance; wheat grains; sand; chaff; feathers; and that I flung them all out across a side wind, and noticed