

effect which the atmosphere produces on colours amounts to nothing in the picture. The third mode in which colours are affected, is common to natural objects and to paintings, and is connected with the law of vision which we have been considering, and to which we must now revert.

When we make experiments by looking upon coloured spots, the effect on the sensibility of the retina is remarkable ; and as this does not occur incidentally, but takes place more or less, whenever we exercise the eye, it must have its influence when we look to works of art. The familiar fact which we have to carry with us into this inquiry, is, that if we throw a silver coin upon a dark table and fix the eye upon the centre of it, when we remove the coin there is, for a moment, a white spot in its place, which presently becomes deep black. If we put a red wafer upon a sheet of paper and look upon it, and continue to keep the eye fixed on the same point, upon removing the wafer, the spot where it lay on the white paper will appear green. If we look upon a green wafer in the same manner and remove it, the spot will be red ; if upon blue or indigo, the paper will seem yellow. These phenomena are to be explained by considering that the nerve is exhausted by the continuance of the impression, and becomes more apt to