

the sound of his fingers coming in contact with his head was a fresh source of pain, producing an effect similar to that of a pistol suddenly fired close to him. For a long time after, when spoken to, even in the lowest whisper, he complained of the distressing loudness of the sounds; and it was several weeks before this excessive sensibility of the auditory nerves wore off: by degrees, however, they accommodated themselves to their proper function, and became adapted to the ordinary impressions of sound. Some time afterwards, this gentleman had a similar operation performed on the other ear, and with precisely the same results; the same degree of excessive sensibility to sounds was manifested on the restoration of hearing in this ear as had occurred in the first; and an equal time elapsed before it was brought into its natural state.

The most striking illustrations of the extent of this law are furnished by the sense of vision. On entering a dark chamber, after having been for some time exposed to the glare of a bright sunshine, we feel as if we were blind; for the retina, having been exhausted by the action of a strong light, is insensible to the weaker impressions which it then receives. It might be supposed that the contraction of the pupil, which takes place on exposure to a strong light, and, of course, greatly reduces the quantity admitted to the retina, is a cause adequate to account for this phenomenon: but careful observation will show that the pupil very rapidly enlarges to its full expansion when not acted upon by light: while the insensibility of the retina continues for a much longer time. It regains its usual sensibility, indeed, only by slow degrees. By remaining in the dark its sensibility is still farther increased, and a faint light will excite impressions equal to those produced in the ordinary state of the eye by a much stronger light; and while it is in this state, the sudden exposure to the light of day produces a dazzling and painful sensation.

This law of vision was usefully applied by Sir William Herschel in training his eye to the acquisition of extraordi-