

**REFLECTIONS OF A RAMBLER  
THROUGH THE RUINS  
OF MATERIAL, MENTAL,  
AND ARTIFICIAL CREATIONS**

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Reflections of a rambler through the ruins of material, mental, and artificial creations by  
Samuel Smith

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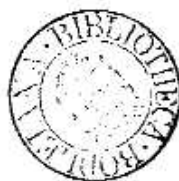
# REFLECTIONS OF A RAMBLER

THROUGH

## THE RUINS

OF

MATERIAL, MENTAL, AND ARTIFICIAL  
CREATIONS.



BY SAMUEL SMITH,

PROFESSOR OF HEBREW;  
AND AUTHOR OF "A SERMON ON THE FALL AND RECOVERY OF MAN."

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1847.



# REFLECTIONS, ETC.

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## CHAPTER I.

THOUGHTS on the original and present state of the intellectual powers—

The capacity of reason still great, though deteriorated by human depravity—Education flourishes under the auspices of civil and religious liberty—The intellectual temple—Man capable of accomplishing Herculean undertakings—The liability of the mental faculties to be impaired.

THE properties, destinies, relationships, and responsibilities, with which the lord of this lower creation was originally ushered into his dominions, have rendered him an object of supreme attention, even to the Father of spirits himself, as well as to the highest orders of finite intelligences. These divine and angelic regards have not been confined to the man of Paradise; they have been extended to the exile who was banished from the gates of Eden, was fettered with a curse, and loaded with the chains of moral slavery.

The theme which has so deeply engaged the purposes of heaven, involves the most valuable of man's personal interests, and consequently claims

his most serious consideration. Whether we view this rational and accountable agent as he appeared when he had forfeited no possessions nor privileges, or as he now stands, guilty of violating an infinitely holy law ; or whether we examine the powers of thinking, or investigate his character as amenable to the bar of God, a wide field of research opens to the eye of the understanding. We cannot perhaps form any adequate conception of the perfections which the federal progenitor of the human race enjoyed when in a state of innocence ; but since the results of his obedience naturally affected his physical frame, exercised great influence over his ideas, and was inseparably connected with the mind and its operations, the qualities of his intellectual system must have been free from any imbecility ; and his knowledge, whether regarded as pertaining to supernal or sublunary objects, must have shone with unobscured splendour. Let us, however, confine the attempts of our undertaking to the mental and moral aspect which the lord of this lower sphere presents to our notice in the conversion of his primitive rectitude into depravity, and in the corruption of his faculties as a necessary effect of this change.

Since a dissolution of the original union between God and man has taken place, the temple of intuitive wisdom has unavoidably sunk into ruins ;



the orb of human intelligence has been quenched in the night of sin ; the universe of thought does not now shine with untarnished rays, as it did in its pristine glory ; and chains of infirmity now entangle the machinery of the mind. Though reason is not now what she was, when enthroned by the Almighty with all the attributes and prerogatives of his vicegerent in this world, still, she is capable of converting the material into an ideal creation, of working her elements into the images of perception or into the combinations of reflection, and of summoning up here and there a master spirit from the confines of her obscurity, to irradiate the firmament of her immaterial regions.

Hence, though man is now no more what he once was, when he was animated with the illuminations native to unsullied genius ; still, even now, he has ability for acquiring, and qualifications for enjoying, the stores of literature. However inhospitable the shores of despotism may be to the aspirants to scholastic renown ; however inimical to the spread of education ; and however arbitrary in prescribing the modes, or denying the freedom of thinking ; still, even there some solitary individuals have been found furnished with those attainments which raise their possessor to an eminence far above the level of the ignorant multitude : but in kingdoms where civil and religious liberty reigns ; where Minerva

throws her shield, Pallas her mantle, and public patronage its protection over the competitors for academic honours ; and where science diffuses its light from the seats of learning, from the professor's chair, from the pulpit, the senate, the bar, the press, and even from the tomb, into the cradle of the poor man's offspring ; into the school of the peasant's child ; into the walks of the artificer ; and into the cottage of the labourer ; there an intellectual temple rises up, the framework of which the mind loads with the weights of its productions, and adorns with the collections of its images. The walls are composed of ideas which have received the impress of invention's seal, and serve as polished mirrors, or lucid gems of intelligence, to illumine the temple. A chaste and happy imagination invests the whole scene with her charms, by the rich colouring which she imparts to the interior ; so that this structure of ideal creations is calculated to amuse by an endless variety of entertainments, to inform by an infinite diversity of instruction, and to dignify man with wealth far superior to that of gold. Here reason nourishes her infants, teeming with the richest melodies of nature, or appearing with a lambent flame upon their brow ; or shining with a halo of natal stars around their head, or lisping with the silver tongue of eloquence, till they have imbibed inspiration from every muse, and been initiated into all the mysteries of minstrelsy ;

till they have acquired every microscopic view of the terrestrial, and every telescopic glance of the celestial, creation ; till they have ransacked every library, and learnt every language of the world ; and till the powers of the mind expand to maturity, and the tender branches of thought are taught how to shoot.

These considerations, therefore, lead us to the conclusion, that though man has been reduced to the degradation in which he is placed by sin, still he is not annihilated amidst the existences by which he is surrounded. He does not lie altogether prostrate at the shrine of imbecility ; he is not totally bereft of rational vision ; he can stretch it almost to the utmost bounds of the universe ; and he can exercise his senses to receive or communicate information. He can investigate almost every thing which can be brought within the compass of sight, from the mightiest orb to the minutest insect. He can follow the chain of ratiocination. A restless activity pervades his talents, and they are still sufficiently Herculean to conquer the greatest difficulties connected with his undertakings.

Whilst these immortal endowments are able, however, so to excel as to excite astonishment ; to accomplish stupendous achievements ; to attain the proudest eminence which the mind can com-