

A VISIT (IN 1831) TO
JEREMY BENTHAM

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The present text is the most detailed account that has hitherto appeared of how Jeremy Bentham lived at Queen's Square Place, his home in Westminster, during his final years.¹ The author, George Wheatley, visited Bentham in March 1831, and stayed with him for approximately three weeks. Six of Wheatley's letters sent to his sister during his stay, as well as six extracts from his journal, and a short commentary on John Hill Burton's 1843 edition of *Benthamiana*, were collated and printed privately for the author by P.H. Youngman, Maldon, in about 1853. The resulting volume, 64 pages long and entitled *A Visit (in 1830) to Jeremy Bentham* has been transcribed and lightly annotated, and is published online here for the first time. The only known copy of the text is in the possession of the Bentham Project.

Wheatley gives the date of his visit to Bentham as occurring in 1830. There is, however, both internal and external evidence that establishes without any doubt that his visit took place a year later, in March 1831. In a letter to Francis Place, dated 14 April 1831, Bentham mentions that Wheatley 'was with me for three weeks'.² In the same letter, Bentham also informs Place that he was 'on the point of losing [his] Brother'; Samuel Bentham died on 30 April 1831. Within the present text, Wheatley appears to refer to a visit to Q.S.P. by Edward Strutt, describing him as MP for Derby. Strutt was only elected to Parliament in July 1830, four months after the time Wheatley allegedly visited Bentham. Wheatley also makes reference to an exchange of letters between Bentham and Daniel O'Connell, the Irish political leader, which were only sent in February 1831, and to Bentham's disparagement of Charles Buller's pamphlet *On the Necessity of a Radical Reform*, which was not published until this time. In Wheatley's second letter to his sister, he mentions that Bentham was 83, an age he only reached in 1831. In his sixth letter,

¹ For an account of a dinner at Bentham's at a slightly earlier date, by Thomas Erskine Perry (1806–82), see S.R. Conway and T.P. Schofield, 'A Visit to Bentham, February 1831', *The Bentham Newsletter*, XI (June 1987), pp. 45–7.

² British Library Add. MS 35,149, f. 69.

the reference to a parliamentary ‘Bill’ which Wheatley calls ‘no measure of reform’ is almost certainly to the first Reform Bill, which had been presented to Parliament on 1 March 1831 and obtained its second reading on 22 March 1831.

Bentham and Queen’s Square Place

Upon the death of his father Jeremiah in 1792, Bentham inherited the family home in Queen’s Square Place, Westminster. Queen’s Square Place consisted of two houses, and it was in the larger of these two residences that Bentham lived for the next forty years. Bentham referred to his abode as the Hermitage and himself as the Hermit. Despite this apparent reclusiveness, many notable statesmen, politicians, lawyers, and intellectuals visited him, although some equally prominent figures (such as Madame de Staël) were refused an audience.

Bentham’s house was demolished in the 1880s. The site is now occupied by 102 Petty France, otherwise known as the building which houses the Ministry of Justice. Between 1978 and 2004 this building (then known as 50 Queen Anne’s Gate) was the main location of the Home Office. On 12 October 2004, Councillor Catherine Longworth, Lord Mayor of Westminster, and Professor Malcolm Grant, President and Provost of UCL, unveiled a commemorative plaque to Jeremy Bentham on the gateway of the building.

Apart from half the year spent at another notable Bentham residence, Ford Abbey, between 1814 and 1818, Bentham spent the majority of his later years at Queen’s Square Place. Bentham died within its walls, aged 84, on 6 June 1832.

Wheatley provides a rich first-hand account of both the house (such as the front garden or ‘paddock’, the steam central-heating, and Bentham’s ‘workshop’ with attendant ‘platform’ and ‘ditch’) and its permanent and temporary inhabitants (such as Bentham himself, his secretaries, and his visitors). Details are given about Bentham’s peculiar meal times (and his ‘preprandial circumgyration’) as well as descriptions of the dishes served. Illumination is also given to Bentham’s working practices, such as his unique ink-conserving

writing style and his preference for ‘preaching’ (dictating to an amanuensis) whilst being shaved.

George Wheatley

Wheatley was born in Cumbria and, about the time he stayed with Bentham, had become editor of the *Carlisle* (or *Carlisle*) *Journal*. Wheatley described himself as ‘certainly the least known individually of [Bentham’s] disciples’ and relatively little is known about him apart from what he himself reveals in the present text, which is that he is a nervous, apparently shy character with strong republican convictions. It is possible that Wheatley was the nephew of Christopher Benson, a clergyman who was master of the Temple and canon of Worcester. Although it is unclear how Wheatley was introduced to Bentham, in a letter to Joseph Hume, Bentham relays the opinion of Richard Doane, his amanuensis, that ‘Wheatley is one of the *faithful*’. Bentham also describes him as ‘zealous’ and says that he ‘has done, and will do a good service to the cause of the people.’³

A Note on the Presentation of the Text

The present text corresponds as closely as possible with the style and conventions, including spelling, capitalization, punctuation, the use of italics and other devices, of the text Wheatley had printed in about 1853. There are some minor variations: editorial corrections of typographical errors have been indicated with the use of square brackets, and the review of Burton’s *Benthamiana* has been made a discrete section. The meaning is in some parts obscure, possibly due to transcription and/or typographical errors. Editorial footnotes have been marked with superscript numbers. Dates in square brackets have been editorially supplied. For the purposes of clarity, Wheatley’s use of initials to refer to people have been expanded using footnotes where appropriate.

³ British Library Add. MS 89,039/1/1.

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LETTER I.

Queen's Square Place, Westminster.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I have now to tell you of my introduction to, and my reception at, this far-famed but secluded spot, standing in the midst of that wilderness of humanity—London.

I came to Q.S.P. about seven in the evening; I was shown into a parlour in which there was no fire; it did not feel cold, but genially warm, which made me wonder, this being the cold season. I remained for some time alone, when a voice, sounding from the ceiling above, pronounced my name; at hazard I said “Sir.” “I will be with you immediately”:—from this I supposed it was Mr. Bentham himself who spoke, as indeed it was.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Bentham came into the room, and addressed me in these words—at any rate to this purport—“I am glad to see you; you are heartily welcome to this, my hermitage; everything is at your service,—make yourself at home:” being agitated, I bowed my acknowledgment; still, disturbed as I felt, it sounded very Spanish,—I hoped it might not turn out a Spanish welcome. We then went into the garden, a spacious one—so large, that he seemed to take pride in telling it, that few noblemen if any had one so large. He preceded me in a kind of trotting pace, a singular mode of progression I could not help thinking. He pointed out different houses, saying, that is Mr. Mill's,¹ which abuts on part of the front garden. Next to his own domicile was Lady — —,² “a crazy woman, poor thing, but I have nothing to do with her but to receive my rents, which are paid with punctuality.” All this is his

¹ James Mill (1773–1836), political philosopher. Mill and his family lived at No. 1 Queen Square, now No. 40 Queen Anne's Gate, from 1814 until 1831.

² Possibly Lady Mary Crawford/Crauford, who occupied a property owned by Bentham and known as ‘Queen Anne's Lodge’ between 1812 and 1834. See *Survey of London: volume 10: St. Margaret, Westminster; part I: Queen Anne's Gate area*, ed. Montague H. Cox, London, 1926, pp. 142–3. A letter detailing the difficulty Bentham had in collecting rent from Lady Crawford in 1817 is in *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. ix, ed. Stephen Conway, Oxford, 1989 (*CW*), p. 113.

own property, and very valuable, no doubt, it must be. He then took me into the inner or kitchen garden, in which were produced various vegetables, among which I noticed a mushroom bed; finding I was fond of them, some were served up at table daily, which he was pleased to call my dish, and he had it always set before me. The garden contained a quarter of an acre or more, and as you may be aware how dear space is, you may form an idea how valuable these gardens are; as a commoner he prided himself greatly in having such large plots. Again, fronting this garden is a house in which Milton³ once lived; Mr. Bentham seemed to pride himself greatly, too, in possessing it; then saying, I should not see him till the dinner hour, he left me alone.

I was soon joined by one of his secretaries, the junior one,⁴ who undertook to show me through the house, by way of making me free of it I suppose. The hall entrance is full of bales of printed works—no very profitable speculation, I suspect, being intended for posterity. What is called the study is a pleasant room looking into the back garden; there is a grand piano-forte in it, all in ruins by the bye; on it is placed a bust of Bentham, by David, the famous French sculptor,⁵ which has on it Bentham's as famous motto, *Maxima felicitas*. The library is a large narrow room with many books in it covered with dust—oh an inch thick; the floor is strewed over with printed papers; also there is a collection of geraniums and some hot-house plants, but in the last stage of an invalid condition it must be confessed; yet even the decay of such things show in what direction his taste had been formed in younger years. I viewed them with regretful reverence; and I make bold to say, had I been keeper, neither books nor plants would have been in the state in which I saw them,—the books certainly cared for, and probably a few pans of water bestowed on the plants every day.

Our sitting room is the same size as the library, octagonal at one end in which are the windows. As it is our residence in particular, I

³ John Milton (1608–74), poet.

⁴ Arthur Moore, Bentham's amanuensis.

⁵ Pierre Jean David (1788–1856), (David D'Angers). The bust is now in Senate House Library, University of London.

shall give a more detailed account of it. Know then, it has to boast two large mirrors; a smaller one, over what elsewhere would be called the chimney-piece, only, though there is a chimney there is no fire; there is also a small oval one over the sideboard which stands in a recess. Here, too, resides a splendid double-bass which the older secretary plays on; he is a barrister, which it would seem is not incompatible with being a musical genius, which he is;⁶ his junior is a young man scarcely out of his boyhood, very free and kindly.⁷ I should wrong my friend Richard D. (for we are friends already) whose noble, manly, free, sincere, countenance won my liking and confidence at sight; if it were allowable to judge according to the system of Lavater,⁸ I pronounce him a noble hearted fellow; I think he is besides very handsome, and so intelligent looking he makes me fear as well as like him. His kindness is great, so I hope there may be some mutual attraction; I mark a cheerful openness of disposition in him.

And now for Blue Beard's blue room,⁹ the mystery of mysteries, hermetically sealed to the world at large, still not altogether impenetrable, as I have proved; and surely if it is allowable to be proud, it may be permitted to be so, by an insignificant unknown like myself having penetrated within its sacred limits! One of Mr. Bentham's eccentricities, as you would call them, is to give things odd names, and this room of his, it is his pleasure to call it his workshop; a strange lumbered up place it is. I observed a large organ, if not out of repair, as my ears told me certainly out of tune, though the musical secretary sometimes performs upon it. On the floor is a raised platform some two feet high or so; the genius of the place sits thus enthroned, a moveable bookcase on one side, a table in front which performs the double part of being his writing desk and our

⁶ Richard Doane (1805–48) had been Bentham's amanuensis since about 1819. The son of a lawyer, Doane was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1824 and called to the bar in 1830. Doane is often referred to throughout this text as 'R.D.' or 'D.'

⁷ Arthur Moore.

⁸ Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801), Swiss physiognomist.

⁹ Bluebeard is a character in Charles Perrault's *Contes* (1697). He forbids his wife to enter one room in his castle; when she does so, she finds there the bodies of his previous wives, whom he has murdered.

dinner table; on the opposite side is an arm chair, the place of honour dedicated to the special guest of the day; at each end are two more seats, very few you would say, but enough, as seldom more than three or four have the honour of dining with the hospitable hermit.

My bed room is a small oblong chamber; the bed such a one as we used to call a crib, at school. One side of this my room is filled up with bundles of printed papers. On the walls are hung portraits of Shakespear,¹⁰ Milton, Dryden,¹¹ Gower,¹² Cowley,¹³ Ben Jonson,¹⁴ and Waller,¹⁵ also the plates of Hogarth's *Hudibras*,¹⁶ all which are a source of amusement to me, thinking what manner of men the poets were in their personal every-day intercourse, laughing at Hogarth's caricatures, which I think would have been more pointed had they been less caricatured than they are; however, they bear inspection over and over, and something new always starts up. I sometimes get on my only chair half undressed the better to see them. I found I had not moved so lightly, as for J.B. who sleeps underneath me not to hear my movements. Looking very comical, he said to me,—Pray, sir, are you fond of dancing? Looking, as you may suppose, much surprised, I replied—no, sir; and in turn may I ask, what could lead to your asking me, of all people, such a question. Certainly. Occasionally I hear you moving round your room as if practising, for anything I know, the minuet *De la cour*¹⁷—if not dancing, then may I ask what are you doing? Simply reading *Hudibras*. Why, my dear sir, there is no *Hudibras* there, unless you brought one with you. I said, oh yes there is, though it is hung against the wall, and the edition is by Hogarth; I get on the chair for better sight. Oh, ah, turning to R.D. I say D. we must have a care of this country fellow—yokel eh?—he

¹⁰ William Shakespeare (1564–1616), dramatist and poet.

¹¹ John Dryden (1631–1700), poet.

¹² Possibly John Gower (d. 1408), poet.

¹³ Abraham Cowley (1618–67), poet.

¹⁴ Benjamin Jonson (1572–1637), poet and playwright.

¹⁵ Edmund Waller (1606–87), poet and politician.

¹⁶ William Hogarth (1697–1764), painter and engraver. *Hudibras* was a mock-heroic poem by Samuel Butler (bap. 1613, d. 1680), for which Hogarth prepared twelve large plates.

¹⁷ i.e. 'court minuet'.

knows something, and has his eyes open! I could not help laughing at J.B.'s manner, putting on the sheepish nervous look in mimicry of said yokel, his eyes beaming with fun and the richest of good humoured badinage.

In our sitting room there is a little said-to-be likeness of Miss Frances Wright,¹⁸ represented leaning against a horse; underneath is written *Frances Wright, Nashoba*.¹⁹ She is apparently very tall, with a masculine expression of countenance, too much so to be agreeable in a woman, having more the bearing of a grenadier rather than of a tall female. They tell me she had to stoop in entering the room. I can tell you no more, than that F. W. is of Scotch extraction, and an enthusiast in philanthropy, especially on the question of Negro slavery; I know you will not think the less of her for that, notwithstanding she is also a law reformer, at which you may laugh perhaps—fairly enough. J.B. told me he had adopted her abbreviation of a certain form of deed; if it was her doing, I confess it makes me feel rather lowered. She must be clever; but in spite of all her methodical arrangement there is a want of system. It strikes me the most feasible of her speculations are more fertile in imagination than applicable to the affairs of life. Her notions of utility seem to be vague; add to which, I suspect, she is a mere system-monger; if open to her, she would do everything; as it is, she will superintend everything, leaving nobody to work out their own happiness; schemes based on any such way of carrying out are impracticable; they may go on for a while, but they carry the seeds of their own destruction within; define your principle, but if success is to be looked for, people must be let alone to work out the detail. When you have reduced the human animal to the level of the inanimate machine, your system-mongers may get on. Adieu for the present.

¹⁸ Frances Wright (1795–1852), writer and freethinker.

¹⁹ The commune Wright founded in Tennessee in 1825.

LETTER II.

Queen's Square Place, Westminster.

You will fancy we must be starved this cold weather, when I tell you, we have neither fire nor candle; the secret of this has just been told, the whole house is warmed by steam, which is extremely comfortable, for you feel a genial warmth around you very delightful compared with fire-side heat rather than warmth which Cumberland folk know is being burned in front and starved behind. J.B. lives in a high temperature; not having been used to such heat, it gave me a head ache very like seasick head ache, or perhaps a tendency to slight apoplexy; after a little while this unpleasant sensation wore off; then I found how very agreeable it was, warm in whatever part of the room you were; the *ne plus ultra* mode of warming apartments; perhaps it may have this drawback, though use will overcome any such feeling,—to those used to a fireside it seems cheerless. It is, also, one of the whims not to use candles; consequently we have lamp-light stationary and portable, which some one had persuaded J.B. was a grand discovery! Without doubt a portable lamp is a greater security against fire than a lighted candle; but for all that I have a prejudice in favour of candle-light, when it is stationary at any rate. In fact like the pitmen, you are not to tell me, as respects light, a Davy's lamp (so murderously misnamed the safety lamp), can give out a light equal to that of a candle. In this case seeing is believing. The lamp domestic does nothing of the kind.

I learn the kitchen is on the ground floor; and I am informed we are attended by three female servants, though I only see one—Ann who waits at dinner and generally upon us. The cook had been with that great banker, Rowland Stephenson;¹ if she did him no more justice than she does our table, he was more easily pleased than I am, which is much to be doubted. You are aware this great banker turned out one of the greatest of rogues; having robbed the till of his own bank, he got safely off to America, where he lived in a style

¹ Rowland Stephenson (1782–1856), banker, was bankrupted and fled to America in 1828.

that proved him to be as callous of other people's suffering as he was careful of his own comforts. One of his victims was this cook, who lost her savings, fifteen hundred pounds, I was told, by trusting to her master's honesty. J.B. said he had long ago discarded men servants; he found he was growing too old to manage them; and besides they were perpetually found out in committing petty depredations,—a species of robbery I never could submit to, said J.B., therefore I have ever since employed none but females, whom one can keep under control. That might be as it happened I thought; for though Ann was a good servant, notwithstanding her seeming submission to the whims, and oddities, and ratings, of her somewhat provoking master, to me it was evident J.B. rejoiced in little more than nominal authority in minor household affairs, like the rest of us.

In the study, as I before mentioned, there is a bust of J.B. by the celebrated French sculptor David, at whose request it was taken; he afterwards made a present of it to Mr. B. Probably you will accuse me of imagination with all my matter-of-factism, when I tell you it looks like a head from the antique. Issac Watts,² that good man you know, was a very little man; on hearing an exclamation made by some one surprised at his smallness, he made the well known impromptu verse;—

Were I as tall to reach the pole,
Or grasp the ocean in my span,
I must be measured by my soul,—
The mind's the standard of the man.

Shortness of height in J.B. reminded me of this. Mr. B. is so little in stature he almost comes under the denomination dwarfish. I query even if in his youth he has been as tall as I am, who am barely of the lowest standard required for the militia. He is of much the same proportions, though perhaps his shortness makes him appear broader than he is; for a little man he is a well proportioned compact one, wonderfully so for his years. He is eighty-three. And he delights in surprising me by the strength of his lungs; he has a tremendous volume of voice, when he pleases to exert it. One of his feats is to hold out at arm's length a large jug of water full to the brim

² Isaac Watts (1674–1748), Independent minister and writer.

without spilling a drop. He is, too, very active in his movements—some of which are curious enough. He writes nearly as fast as I can write; when he is so minded, more legibly. And except by his own admissions, he bears few of the usual marks of his great age. He says four of his senses have failed him, hearing, seeing, tasting, and smelling, or nearly so; he has made his own peculiar pudding very sweet, otherwise he could not taste it. However I much doubt, if good manners permitted it, he would be pleased with any allusion to his infirmities of age. Nevertheless, with a certain gaiety he quotes Shakespear's "Sans eyes, sans teeth, sans everything."³ Lively and vivacious, he jokes about everything and spares nobody. Seeing how ill I got on, he joked me with saying—I had taken a vow of abstinence; he particularly recommended his water, which, springing from ground rented of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, he called holy water; then he quoted some nursery lines of the old woman who had nothing to live upon but victuals and drink; in short he did what he could to elevate me from the manifest state of depression I was in, proving himself in liveliness the younger by fifty good years and more; but as our little cousin Richmond calls me, "the most silentest man," I proved the justice of his boyish remark. You will hear from me soon again.

³ Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II. vii. 170.

LETTER III.

Queen's Square Place, Westminster.

Suppose me now looking at J.B., as I tell you what struck me. He has great benevolence expressed in his countenance. Some think it bears a resemblance to that of the American Franklin;¹ there is certainly something of a like expression, if not of feature, but allow me to say, I hope no congeniality of disposition, for Franklin, with great ability, was a narrow-minded man; his first start in life, a trying one, necessarily made him one all his life-time. Consider how he fought for money—how much money was the beginning, middle, and end, of his thoughts and actions; consider too what mean sentiments such a fight creates. He was like myself, a self-taught man, but I have either a finer natural disposition, or else a better means of knowledge; I am content with being a poor one—Franklin had always the main chance uppermost. J.B. asked if I did not perceive the resemblance as shown in portraits; he seemed rather disappointed on my replying—some but not much. But on second thoughts and after comparing the two portraits, there is more than I thought. J.B.'s forehead is high; from it silver locks hang down luxuriantly. It is a face indicating great powers of understanding and depth of thought; the dominant trait is benevolence; the eyes are blue—very light, or grey; the nose inclined to the aquiline—pretty Miss Jacqueline with her nose aquiline,² you know, and J.B.'s is a remarkably handsome feature—he would say proboscis, by your leave! The expression is thoughtful, but benevolence is the chief characteristic. In a word, my dear sister, it is the face of a philosopher who has adopted the human race for his children. He has taken for his motto *Plurimum maxima felicitas*, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and of so magnificent a thought worthy is the adopter in word and deed.

Now then somewhat on the *per contra* side. It will admit of no question, he is singular in his manners and habits. In the garden

¹ Benjamin Franklin (1706–90), American statesman, author, and man of science.

² From a note by Byron, referring to Samuel Rodgers, *Jacqueline*, 1814.

there is a circular walk, walking round which, or rather trotting or taking up a trotting kind of step, he terms *gyrating*: a mill horse going his round, were he ambitious of a reputation for oddity, might exclaim, I circumgyrate; that, being interpreted, means walking in a circle, as some few people are apt to argue. Walking in his workshop between the platform and the wall, a space called the ditch, this he calls *vibrating*: probably, being a short walk, his constantly going and returning has a pendulum-like motion. He told me he usually rose at nine, and after performing the ablutions which not his Mahommedanism but his infirmities render necessary, he drinks a couple of cups of coffee. He studies till about three, when he takes his breakfast; during this meal sometimes Mr. D.³ plays on the organ; sometimes the newspapers, his letters, and other documents are read to him; previous to breakfasting he *circumgyrates*, that is, trots his rounds in the garden. After breakfasting, he again commences his studies till half-past seven or eight o'clock, which is the general dinner hour; and, as before breakfast, he *circumgyrates*, so before dinner he has his *gyrations*. One might suppose he had read Peter Wilkins⁴ for his odd phraseology; if so, what harm?—it is simple, and innocent, no question—well, absurd also if you will.

At dinner time we go up, and if he has any specially invited guest, as soon as dinner is over we leave. If there is no special, that is, invited guest, we stop and talk or read to him,—that is his secretaries do, for you will readily suppose I take little part in talking, none in reading. I suppose my nervousness had been noted, and I was not asked to read, though it was customary with him to require it of his domestic guests.

Now I imagine you set it down as a matter of course that the father of the utilitarians dines on air. You never made a greater error. No such thing. We have good dinners daily,—soup, fish, meat, sweets or pastry, or game, and dessert, with French wine and Spanish. J.B. dines chiefly on puddings made very sweet, because he tastes sweetness best; he eats heartily, though he only takes wine

³ Richard Doane.

⁴ Robert Paltock, *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins, a Cornish Man*, first published 1750.

when he has fish; generally he drinks a small quantity of ale—his own beverage being prepared with infusions of certain herbs, very like Jonathan Oldbuck's, so famous.⁵ He strenuously insists upon all eating heartily; not obeying his precept, he calls having taken a vow of abstinence;—I must say neither his precept nor example are quite lost upon us. For myself I am compelled to be cautious, the dishes being richer than those I have been used to—not so well if plainly cooked as I observed. By the way, we had a capital dish of curried fish—flat fish; the best sorts are cheap enough in your latitude; try it with boiled rice as usual; you will find it excellent, unless the X banker's cook alone has the art of preparing it; also the back of mutton roasted with onions in it (not onion sauce), carrots, and sliced pickled cucumber; very good indeed, try it also; gravy thickened, you know of course what that means, for I am sure I cannot tell you. The soups are admirable, judging from their appearance,—the sweetmeats also. I tasted a millet pudding (I mistook it for rice, for which I was duly reprehended—called over the coals),—try it too, you will like it. Then dessert, with a bottle of white wine for those who like it; this is the usual bill of fare.

Of course we are no such Benthamical pagans as to breakfast at 3 p.m.; our breakfast is at the usual hour for such meals; of course, between breakfast so early and dinner so late, we need some such sustenance as is called lunch. The tea hour, I may very appropriately term it—*vibrates*—from half-past ten to twelve—*minuit!* then we generally retire, that is, go to bed—though occasionally it is one or two; these are our regular irregularities. J.B. is usually the last to retire; old as he is, he carries the marks of age about him as little as any man I ever saw; his colour is fresh, and the skin exhibits but few puckers and wrinkles; in both his mind and body, he is a wonder; moreover he is one of those geniuses who appear but once in centuries. A quarter past one I leave J.B. up. Your's, &c.

⁵ Jonathan Oldbuck, a character in Walter Scott's *The Antiquary*, drank 'a sort of beverage called *mum*, a species of fat ale, brewed from wheat and bitter herbs'.

LETTER IV.

Queen's Square Place, Westminster.

On Saturday, the day I came here, Mr. S—, M.P. for D—shire,¹ was the guest specially invited; generally we have a stranger four or five times in the week; so that although J.B. sees but one at a time, in this way he sees a good deal of company. This Mr. S— is a young man of easy manners and quiet address, and though horribly disfigured by a terrible squint, his countenance is nevertheless a pleasant one. Next Saturday, I hear, is O'Connell's day—the great Irish patriot.² Monday Dr. B.³ has the honour of the chair of state. I am glad to learn we shall be alone the day following; on Thursday his nephew, the son of Sir Samuel Bentham,⁴ occupies the place of honour; and so on.

On Sunday we were a family party; on entering J.B. loudly greeting me, desired that I would take the state chair—which you do with acclamation, he added. Little worthy of even a note was said, but I passed an agreeable evening, not being called on to speak hardly. I thought J.B. was fagged, he looked so abstracted, not to say languid. Last night (Monday) I was the longest time I had been in his company, from half-past seven to twelve. A pamphlet was read, he making his remarks with a readiness and wit which in our ignorance we ascribe to Brougham alone;⁵ the writer, an M.P. for West Looe,⁶ had dined there a day or two before; J.B. playfully saying—I gave

¹ Edward Strutt (1801–80), first Baron Belper, MP for Derby 1830–47, Arundel 1851, and Nottingham 1852–6, President of University College, London 1871–9.

² Daniel O'Connell (1775–1847), Irish political leader who campaigned for Catholic emancipation and repeal of the Act of Union.

³ Sir John Bowring (1792–1872), politician, diplomatist, writer, and Bentham's literary executor.

⁴ George Bentham (1800–84), later a well-known botanist, was the son of Sir Samuel Bentham (1757–1831), naval architect and inventor.

⁵ Henry Peter Brougham (1778–1868), first Baron Brougham and Vaux, Lord Chancellor 1830–34 and MP for Camelford 1810–12, Winchelsea 1815–30, Knaresborough 1830 and Yorkshire 1830.

⁶ Charles Buller (1806–48), MP for West Looe 1830–31 and Liskeard 1832–49, was an acquaintance of John Stuart Mill and published a pamphlet entitled *On the Necessity of a Radical Reform* in February 1831.

the poor man a dinner, this I suppose is pay for it, and poor pay I think it is. During the reading he vibrated, shooting his paper pellets of the brain in a way that would have annoyed the author exceedingly. In the course of the night I saw him write, which he does rapidly and well considering his great age; his letters are firmly and distinctly formed. He has a peculiar way of applying the pen; he holds the paper in his left hand, a small part of which rests on the desk, and the pen is lightly traced over it, so that you will readily believe one pen lasts him six months; the inkstand—an immense one holding half a pint of ink—is sacred; the use to any one else is interdicted—one of his harmless whims. He admits, nay invites, the utmost freedom and familiarity; he says I play the philosopher's part, but it is all pretence,—he knows I could be as merry as any of them if I pleased. Truly for my own part I am still so nervous and agitated, I dread going up to dinner. I hope the feeling is wearing off; when rid of it, I hope to be able to show, if I played the philosopher's part, it was in spite of myself, like Moliere's *medicin malgre lui*.⁷

You will be pleased to hear his opinion of the political articles I have written under the signature of Publius Syrus,⁸ of which you will be no less pleased than I am, to hear he thinks highly; and the younger secretary told me also J.B. invites under his roof none but those whom he has reason to think clever men; I hope I have been measured by this standard,—if so, already it makes me feel bolder, and venture to think I ought not to feel so desperately nervous. Don't be afraid it will turn my head; the saddening realities of life are more than enough to ballast me. If one must not estimate oneself too highly, as little in self justice ought we to set ourselves below the fair standard. He expects to be told all you have seen and heard during the day. As yet I but hear and see, saying nothing. My hope is, a day or two's use may so improve me that I may find the use of my tongue.

As to the secretaries, the elder, the barrister,⁹ pays me all kind attention; the younger secretary¹⁰ is also particularly attentive to me.

⁷ *Le Médecin malgré lui*, first performed in 1766, was a comedy by Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (1622–73), known as Molière.

⁸ These articles have not been located.

⁹ Richard Doane.

So far as it is in their power, my way is smoothed; they do the kind act, and say the kind thing to re-assure me.

I think J.B. likes to hear himself spoken of—admit the parallel, just as I do in my little way—with just as much egotism and no more; and I am sure that is not much for the invited guest of the first of European juris-consults, still less for the great juris-consult himself, who yearns for praise as a child craves for its *bon bons*. How charmed you would be with his benevolent mildness of manner, which you say I so much want, not the benevolence but the mildness; well I think I have nothing of the bear about me save its skin; you add, but why have that? Because I may have thought too much about that faultless monster, Sir Charles Grandison.¹¹ I shall answer your queries as well as I can. Bulwer, the novelist, the author of *Pelham*,¹² is the brother of an M.P.,¹³ not one himself, though anxious to be one, that is, as soon as he meets with a constituency who will hearken to the voice of the charmer, which in all such cases is the chink of the purse. Dr. B.¹⁴ dined with J.B. the other day, so I suppose I speak on authority as to the fact; the Dr., I perceive, much too wary a person to commit himself by comment of any kind on any body. The laudatory article in last Sunday's *Examiner* is by John, a brother of Albany Fonblanque,¹⁵ by profession a barrister, who does not practise; this latter gentleman is the editor, and you have my permission to fall down and worship him, for he is extremely clever—if he only prove honest—but that time must prove. That article appears to me vastly too laudatory, and I rather suspect so does J.B.; but of that I know nothing further than surmise. With regard to Mill I cannot say whether or not you are right in assigning the authorship to

¹⁰ Arthur Moore.

¹¹ The eponymous hero of Samuel Richardson's *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, first published in 1753.

¹² Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–73), first Baron Lytton, was the author of *Pelham, or the Adventures of a Gentleman*, first published in 1828.

¹³ (William) Henry Lytton Earle Bulwer (1801–72) was elected MP for Wilton in August 1830.

¹⁴ Sir John Bowring.

¹⁵ John Samuel Martin de Grenier Fonblanque (1787–1865), legal writer. Albany William Fonblanque (1793–1872), political journalist and journal editor.

him; it may be so, but I do not feel in a position to ask such a question. I myself guess, the *Examiner*, from certain small indications, is not invariably approved of at Q.S.P. Indeed, you may remember how we found fault at times, especially in its abuse of Hume,¹⁶ and fulsome panegyric on Sir Cuddy Alphabet Graham¹⁷—in point of talent a poor creature, in point of principle a political adventurer, who started a radical and is going through his transmigrations. However, I tell you J.B. has formed a high estimate of this Netherby Baronet—I am at a loss to conceive why; I hope I am destined to have the honour of shaking it. He is a poor creature; you know he could not secure the chairmanship of the Cumberland Sessions, once an object—an ambition; but now having had some success in another direction, the Cumberland grapes have long been sour.

Oh, J.B. inquired if I had seen our redoubtable uncle, the Master of the Temple, “Mister Doctor,” as he pleased to style him; also making some pointed remarks on a clergyman becoming Master of the Knights Templars, whose morality was none of the strictest.¹⁸ I took leave to say not exactly that, for the Templars had been long extinct; but that I could not deny their having been succeeded by thieves as big as they were. Aye indeed! quoth J.B., looking very comical, tell me how that was?—The lawyers have turned the Temple into a den of thieves, and inhabit it themselves.—Oh you rogue, don’t you know I am a lawyer? Say that again, and a nest of hornets shall be let loose upon you; you are a pestilent fellow; if I had known how dangerous a person you are, you should never have set foot in my hermitage. D. don’t you see, he will get me clapped up in the tower along with himself for high treason, I mean law reform!

During a stroll through the streets, I saw an admirable caricature of Brougham M.P. represented as the Hunter in *Der Freischütz*,¹⁹ in Cupid’s uniform *a la chasse*, armed with a bow and arrow, which has

¹⁶ Joseph Hume (1777–1855), radical politician, MP for the Aberdeen Borders 1818–30.

¹⁷ Sir James Robert George Graham (1792–1861), second Baronet of Netherby, First Lord of the Admiralty 1830–4, 1852–5, Home Secretary 1841–6 and MP for Hull 1818–20, St Ives 1820–1, Carlisle 1826–9, 1852–61, Cumberland 1829–32, East Cumberland 1832–7, Pembroke 1838–41, Dorchester 1841–7, and Ripon 1847–52.

¹⁸ Possibly Christopher Benson (1788–1868), master of the Temple 1827–48.

¹⁹ *Der Freischütz*, an opera by Carl Maria von Weber, first performed in 1821.

been discharged at the target (reform) and lo! it has struck the object placed at right angles, the Chancellor's seals of office placed on the woolsack! As you are well acquainted with Brougham's features, you would laugh to see the look of cunning surprise expressed in his face,²⁰ which of course is somewhat caricatured, though it is undeniable it is one of those which is sufficiently exaggerated to the artist's hand to need an artificial one, being as it is one of nature's caricatures;—the idea is a capital joke; I desire to send it, but a double postage cannot be ventured on with purses no heavier than mine. I am sorry I can't send it, for it is the only real piece of good fun in the caricature of politicals, I have as yet fallen in with.

You will understand what perfect freedom we enjoy, when I tell you we have licence, within becoming limits, to do whatever seemeth best to each individual's taste; go every where—that is to say theatres, opera, balls (private of course), parties, the two first only being open to me. Whilst I am here, I shall but once avail myself of the opportunity of going to the theatre to hear *Der Freischutz*, and that only because I learn it will be performed for the last time this season. J.B. is amused at my enthusiasm for German music, and jokes me about it much; I understand that he himself was a good amateur performer on the violin; even now he takes great credit to himself, for his love of music; he may have had a fine ear, but assuredly no voice, unless it has been sadly impaired by time. On hearing one of his bravura impromptus, one would be apt to suspect a screech owl or an eater of thistles, so strangely combined are its high and low powers, was the performer;—don't suppose I make too free, none of us laughs so heartily at the strange sounds he emits, as himself. Write soon.

²⁰ This caricature has not been identified.

LETTER V.

2, Queen's Square Place, Westminster.

MY DEAR SISTER,

A few days have past since I wrote, during which I have had one of my very bad colds, which the mode of ventilating and warming in use here has made worse than usual. From this cause, a bad cold, much of my enjoyment has been greatly curtailed, through my inability to exert myself either to please others, or be amused with their attempts to give me enjoyment; and here, according to the established rule, which, like that of the Medes and Persians, in this respect knows not change,¹ everything has been made agreeable to me. I now feel at ease, in fact domiciled as quietly as if I was in the north, which J.B. in joke persists means Scotland, and if it does not, he says it ought, or the geography of his school-boy days has been altogether faulty. Like most of the north of England people, and I am a borderer, you know, though these southrons can form no idea of it, the dislike we have to being taken for Scots, of whom even the present race of cockneys seem to have little more advanced ideas than poor dear, prejudiced, Dr. Johnson;² good man, who had the manners of a bear, a most feeling heart—a most kindly human nature. J.B. pretends great pleasure in touching “the raw,” in hackney coachman's phraseology; he misses no opportunity of quoting the doctor's prejudiced remarks on Scotchmen and Scotland,³ and makes believe he wonders I don't cry “claymore!” The reason is, sir, I am no Scot. Well then, the more is the pity, since I have expended so much wit on you, taking you to be one, you understand,—at second hand, sir, mark me, wit at second hand though! The originality belongs to your friend Dr. Johnson, whom you will accuse of prejudice of course,—now I've done.

¹ An echo of Daniel 6: 15.

² Samuel Johnson (1727–1819), author and lexicographer.

³ e.g. ‘the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!’, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, London, 1791, p.120.

The senior secretary⁴ and I are one on the subjects of music and the fine arts generally. He seemed pleased that I—so mere a provincial as even he, not meaning anything offensive, terms me—had been able to cultivate a taste for them, so that, with my limited opportunities, I could converse upon them. He won me at once by telling me he saw how nervously abroad I was at the strangeness of things, and doing his best to set me at rest with myself, one of the kindest acts you do to a nervous person. He nevertheless laughed and enjoyed exceedingly the Germanified fashion in which I had accepted all the strange sounds which in fact annoyed me, as nervous among strangers as it is the ill fortune of persons constituted as I am always to feel. We talk over a great deal of politics, in which mainly we agree, though I doubt if my republicanism is quite to his taste. I said at once, if J.B. did not mean republicanism, I could go no farther with him, than as he so far travelled that road towards good government; and that if J.B. did not mean republicanism, the people governing themselves, I must consider much of his writings altogether deceptive. He remarked that “we” were not bound by the interpretations of the Westminster Review, which, as an exponent of J.B.’s principles, had been better employed in writing poetical translations from poets writing in languages all unknown, but which were deemed more congenial with the editor’s powers, certainly than his political exercitations. I confess this is my opinion also; yet I was not prepared to meet with the expression of it here, which seems odd.

You will of course be interested in being told I think my friend D.⁵ very handsome, allowing of course for the natural difference of judgment by male pronounced on male, and that which would be made by a female. This by the way. Luckily for me, he is the kindly pleasant person I have found him, and I believe he is not merely seeming fair.

Not being so versed in J.B.’s principles and writings, I am of course compelled, for the present, to accept his interpretation of the arcana; but I told him, I gave a much more republican turn to what I knew than any of the men, to whom so far had been entrusted, what

⁴ Richard Doane.

⁵ Richard Doane.

one might call, an authorized version of them. D.'s version may be called the extreme radical one. Mine may be termed the republican view of them.

Once more I mention the detail of our usual daily practice. We three occupy our own places constantly—D.'s the seat of the chief. Usually we rise about nine; breakfast; then read the newspapers, or write, or do what we like; about one there is a lunch of bread and cheese with ale or wine, and then frugal enough, wine not always being a luxury. After that I generally walk out in the parks, or the finer class of streets. What becomes of D. I don't know; he disappears and goes out to the law courts, I find, when they are sitting. The prince⁶ remains in attendance on J.B. who breaks his fast at three p.m.; during the time spent in taking this meal at this strange hour, Arthur reads the paper to him. The general dining hour is eight, when we ascend together to the workshop; D. just before dinner striking a few cords on the organ. Should a stranger dine, after partaking of the dessert we go down stairs; if no stranger is present, we remain at our pleasure. Sometimes we have tea with J.B. about ten or eleven; if not, we have it below in our own room. At twelve (midnight) when I stay so long I descend, on the signal being given, which is J.B. putting on his nightcap and wishing me good night. For the most part I sit up late, which everybody seems to do. I suspect all Londoners keep late hours; engaged in business all day, they freshen their worn-out faculties with a little innocent dissipation.

The dinner consists of soup, fish frequently though now dear, with half a dozen other kinds of dishes besides; wine and dessert, Burgundy when a stranger dines, when J.B. invariably tells us he imports his own. This is the routine. Both before breakfast and before dinner J.B. takes a few turns in the garden, which, as already remarked, he calls circumgyrating—properly, for he walks round a circular plot of grass.

When I last wrote, I think a Mr. E.,⁷ a gentleman (an oddish fish at all events) of some twelve thousand a year, had not dined here. J.B. sees no one till dinner time, be they whom they may. It

⁶ Possibly a name for Arthur Moore.

⁷ Unidentified.

so happened Mr. E. arrived when no one was in the way but myself; he seemed annoyed J.B. was not there to receive him, a great man of so much money's worth, and he certainly did take the pet at it; at last he turned a battery of inquisitive questions on me, as follows:—So you're a stranger come to live here; well, you've come to live with a great man.—No, sir, I am his guest.—What! do you sleep in the house?—Yes.—Then I presume you are intending to go to the bar?—I have no such intention, sir. Who this inquisitive little person was I did not know till afterwards; when I was told he was a retired conveyancer, immensely rich; indeed I heard him talk of a mortgage of fifty thousand pounds, which he had on the estate of an Irish nobleman, as a trifle; also, as if debating the matter with himself, in a kind of soliloquy or an aside, whether or not he would increase his eldest son's allowance to fifteen hundred a year; nevertheless, even after knowing this, I maintained my ground with perfect indifference. Then he went on questioning, as—Where did I come from? How had I obtained J.B.'s notice? So I told him.—Well, sir, allow me to tell you, you have arrived at great honour; when you return, you may tell them in Cumberland, what an honour has been conferred on you. I thought to myself, whatever in itself it may be, a prophet has no honour in his own land;⁸ therefore little will I tell; you know how little of a talker I am. However, I said, I fully appreciated it. After this little *pro* and *con* as to my status, it was evident the rich man thought somewhat better of me, inasmuch as I was a guest and not some sort of secretary or clerk. I can't say the man was so much purse-proud as he was what may be termed wealthily hypochondriacal, besides being rather queer. You never heard such radicalism as he broached. According to his own story, he it was who so magniloquently talked of not paying the assessed taxes, unless reform was granted. He would battle it out himself; they might distain; let them sell, who would buy if all followed his example? many members of his club were of the same way of thinking. Now, my dear E., hear what men of property say here, and after that listen more patiently to me! I cannot help saying I wish

⁸ An echo of Matthew 13: 57.

Sir Cuddy Self-seeker Graham had heard it;⁹ it might have made him think twice, when he indulges in his orations of common places, delivering himself of his platitudes, and assuming the air of a Sir Oracle; it is on such occasions he believes it is a political Balaam who speaks, whilst I myself hear nothing but his ass.¹⁰ Sir Jemmy is just the man of that calibre of capacity, who would be struck, not at all because of the matter, but because the speaker was three or four times as rich as himself, to hear such a one talk radicalism in such a strain.

Twice I have been disappointed in seeing O'Connell here, and almost begin to despair of the opportunity, as J.B. seems offended at him, and not without reason, as the aforesaid wondrous Irish leader seems to shirk a meeting, judging from the notes I have heard read from him, without giving a direct refusal, either fearing J.B. may give him a talking to, or ask him to make some motion unpalatable to the ministry whom he (O'C.) is courting, and with whom he is beyond doubt trying to patch up some unprincipled treaty of peace. I shall give you J.B.'s opinion of him, which is, that O'C. is a man of neither moral nor acquired principle in thinking or acting; to me this appears to be a just estimate of his moral powers. You are aware, I think, he is a man of extraordinary talent in managing popular assemblages, but devoid of principle. As to his strict observances of Popish Roman Catholicism, in him it was just the cant of religion, and nothing else. I think so, and, moreover, that the sincerely religious never make a parade of their religion, whatever it is.

J.B. has inquired after our relative, the Master of the Temple,¹¹ as what were his politics, what mine,—his being Tory, whilst mine were republican, how did we agree? oh, capitally, as I rarely saw him, and when I did, politics seemed dropped by mutual consent; at any rate were not mentioned. He then told me, his brother, General Sir Samuel Bentham, was an absolutist, which, knowing some little of his services in Russia,¹² I thought was very likely; that he (J.B.) had

⁹ Sir James Robert George Graham.

¹⁰ See Numbers 22: 21–35.

¹¹ Possibly Christopher Benson, as mentioned in Letter IV above.

¹² Samuel Bentham was in Russia 1780–91, and again 1805–7.

been a monarchist some ten or twelve years ago, though now he was quite a republican. We walked in the paddock, as it is called, in front of the house which faces the park. Of course a small crowd gathered to see an old gentleman with his white hair streaming from under a queer-shaped little straw hat with half an inch of rim, dressed in a green coat and Hessian boots, with a stick, trotting round and round a flower-bed, whilst I was walking rather quickly by his side, I dare be sworn, looking more serious than gravity itself—you know how grave I look sometimes, fancy it ten times greater, with a respectful look bordering on awe; you may then be able to conceive the *duo!* In the evening we had some private conversation, the tenor of which on his part was so much a surprise to me, that on the impulse of the moment I could not help asking, on what grounds he put such questions to me, for as concerned myself there had been an entire misconception? I did not like to say misrepresentation, though I had my suspicions. He replied, he had been given to understand so from Doctor B.¹³ I supposed as much, and I thought to myself, perhaps the gentleman had been taking measure of me by himself; it made me feel angry and worse—uncomfortable—tending as it might to do to set me in a wrong position in J.B.'s estimation. I have already had cause to modify my notions of the translator of Magyar poetry,¹⁴ I cannot say favourably; I see he is little else than a mere man of the world, if not a meaner character, a pure self-seeker, and nothing else. I do not forget he is a poet, and with some poets' warmth of temperament, he may have all their fickleness—and blowing hot to-day, he chills incipient kindly feeling by breathing icy cold to-morrow; whatever the cause, so I have felt it. Possibly I may be wrong, but hitherto such are my experiences. Be that as it may, so far as I am concerned, I find a want of exactness in his statements,—as it were, black to-day, though certainly white yesterday, owing, no question, to the excitability of a poet's temperament, who can doubt it? Since this took place, we have had no further private conversation.

¹³ Sir John Bowring.

¹⁴ Bowring was the author of *Poetry of the Magyars, preceded by a sketch of the language and literature of Hungary and Transylvania*, London, 1830.

Such a circumstance was calculated to provoke anger; I know it did mine, and as a relief I count on yours.

J.B. occasionally employs his guests as amanuenses; I flatter myself the Magyar's misinformation has worked no harm, as J.B. has since desired me to copy some of his correspondence; no easy task, for parts of it are written in a sort of hieroglyphic English, scarcely legible. Yesterday he had the company of his nephew George, son of Sir Samuel Bentham, formerly in the Russian service, to whom J.B. in his younger years paid a visit whilst his brother was living in the Crimea, superintending some engineering department; and who, from what fell from J.B., was a mechanical genius of no common order. The little I saw of his nephew I liked; I thought him a pleasant well-informed man, of retiring manners, with much of the foreigner in his speech and address. I understand he has translated one of his uncle's works into French;¹⁵ besides being himself author of *Observations on the Registration of Deeds*,¹⁶ from materials supplied by the former, which surely need be no secret, nor can be one. Relative to this subject there was a good deal of conversation between them, in which I took little interest, except remarking that J.B. spoke of one Duval (a famous conveyancer, I believe)¹⁷ much in the style of one Mrs. Grundy, if you ever heard of any such person!¹⁸ It seemed the jurist and the man of forms were contesting the points of reform of the law relating to deeds, which the jurist contended ought to be reduced to the greatest brevity and raised to the maximum of intelligibility; the conveyancer, *e contra*, as lawyers say, contending that to attempt any thing of the kind, would shake every title in the kingdom; honest man, in his zeal forgetting that once upon a time one of the early Norman Kings gave half a county of one of his feudal dependents by a writing on a piece of parchment not larger than your hand, never letting wit that titles

¹⁵ *Essai sur la nomenclature et la classification des principales branches d'art-et-science; ouvrage extrait du Chrestomathia de J.Bentham*, Paris, 1823.

¹⁶ *Observations on the Registration Bill now pending before the House of Commons, Addressed to the Commissioners on the Law of Real Property*, London, 1831.

¹⁷ Lewis Duval (1774–1844), lawyer.

¹⁸ Mrs Grundy was a fictional character proverbially referred to as a personification of the tyranny of social opinion in matters of conventional propriety.

could be endangered by increase of the form of deeds, with increased conveyancer's profit therewithal, and that such deeds have become so purely artificial, that no man knows what his title may be to the land, which has been hundreds of years in his family. It could not be otherwise, than that the jurist should have the best of the argument;—an allusion to the silversmiths of Ephesus¹⁹ seemed to have put the formalist into a fume which caused him to take leave of good manners, occasioning some show of temper, which did not add force to his argument, and was harmless so far as concerned J.B., who laughingly remarked that in his warmth his learned friend waxed wrathful.

I have looked over—for so hasty a perusal cannot be called reading—a work of J.B.'s, which, low be it spoken, he has with singular, indeed I may say studied, infelicity, entitled 'Crestomathia,'²⁰ a Benthamese Greek compound, which hardly one in a hundred of common readers can make any thing of. Some little skilled in these languages, I feel puzzled to give you an understandable translation of this odd title to a valuable work; nor until after having looked it over could I do so satisfactorily to myself. I think I am not far off the meaning, in terming it—a treatise on whatever relates to the acquiring of useful knowledge. It is a work of research and exhaustive of the subject, but I dare say scarcely known in England. What a pity that the style and terms are so purely, crabbedly, strange as to give the Edinburgh Reviewers a handle to attempt to sneer down the principles of utility under cover of a false pretence common to them, by laughing at the author's nomenclature, which must be a puzzle even to Greek and Latin scholars.²¹ The subject matter is to show what ought to be taught,

¹⁹ See Acts 19: 24–41

²⁰ *Chrestomathia*, published in two parts in 1817 (the first part having been printed in 1815 and reprinted in 1816), was Bentham's one published work on education.

²¹ The *Edinburgh Review*'s hostility to Bentham and his fellow Utilitarians can be seen in two articles published in 1829. The first, 'Utilitarian Logic and Politics', was a critique by Thomas Babington Macaulay of James Mill's *Essay on Government*. The second, 'Bentham's Defence of Mill: Utilitarian System of Philosophy', was Macaulay's reply to an article defending Mill that had been published in the *Westminster Review* by Perronet Thompson, and which was based in part on Bentham's *Article on Utilitarianism*.

and how. The grand thing, I think, is a table of human learning on his own scheme of nomenclature (any thing but happily conceived); this table he calls “Eudæmonics,” or the Science of Felicity; then proceeding to classify the different branches of human knowledge, making all subordinate to that divine rescript, found in the works of Helvetius, the greatest happiness (*au bien du plus grand nombre*),²² and conducive to it. He has this moment called me up, and has given me the French translation to compare with the original; examining which with even small degree of critical exactness will require time. In the meanwhile believe me, &c.

Macaulay mistakenly attributed the authorship of Thompson’s piece to Bentham, and the latter subsequently wrote a letter to the *Examiner* disclaiming responsibility.

²² Claude Adrien Helvétius, *De l’homme, de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation*, Liège, 1773, p. 261.

LETTER VI.

2, Queen's Square Place, Westminster.

I am so oppressed with a cold I feel hardly capable of any exertion in continuity, so you must accept odds and ends such as I can send. At this moment I have had an invitation to *circumgyrate*, and told to hold myself in readiness when called for. I have made some acquaintance with a Mr. H.,¹ one of the reporters for the *Mirror of Parliament*,² which professes to contain full-length reports—either written out from the reporter's notes, or self-supplied by the speaker; which, much as you may laugh at the vanity of so doing, at any rate finds spoken opinions past contradiction, no small advantage. When a man changes party and fain would change opinions as well *sub silentio*, which keeps many a rogue right, knowing the exposure otherwise awaiting him. Mr. H. lives in a small house belonging to J.B.; he is clever and full of little amusing anecdotes; in other respects he is quite an original though a grave M. A. of Oxford, perhaps, as he talks of mathematics, more likely of Cambridge. He exhibits a thorough contempt of honourable members. To one who asked him to post a letter, he said, you mistake, sir, I am not your footman; on my saying I thought it was going too far about so trifling a matter,—don't disturb yourself, if we did not do so, they would treat us like dogs; it has no personal feeling in it, we merely do it in self-defence. Now the other day Colonel Sibthorp³ said he was not a *radical* reformer, but a *root* and branch reformer, and he came to me complaining he had been mis-reported;—How so, Colonel? Do you find fault with the words, or the sense? Why, as it stands, it makes me speak mere nonsense; you know radical means the root

¹ Possibly William Hazlitt (1811–93), editor and translator, and son of William Hazlitt (1778–1830), the famous essayist and journalist. The elder Hazlitt had rented No. 19 York Street from Bentham between 1812 and 1819. The house was inhabited by the poet John Milton from 1652 to 1660.

² The *Mirror of Parliament*, a competitor to *Hansard*, was published by J.H. Barrow between 1828 and 1843.

³ Charles de Laet Waldo Sibthorp (1783–1855), known as Colonel Sibthorp, MP for Lincoln 1826–32, 1835–55.

of the thing, and you make me deny being a radical, but a root and branch reformer, which is such palpable nonsense that I could not have spoken it;—I don't see the force of your *sequitur*, Colonel;—(an aside eh! what! from Colonel S.); no matter, now depend on this, if it is reported, it is as you spoke it, the *ipsissima verba*;⁴ as to the sense that is your affair, the words are mine; if, however, you want to appear to talk sense, you had better let the reporter write your speech, for as to your doing it, that is out of the question. Thus you see how Cobbett's fourth estate⁵ treats the third estate of the realm. Now all this vituperative talk is either the result of bad manners, or the unwillingness to admit the progress of the lower or middle classes by the upper classes; it is the peasant's toe treading on the courtier's heel; and until each party finds out and acknowledges the relative position the one bears to the other, such exhibitions will occur, and heats and class animosities be engendered. Such consequences are inevitable, so long as we see gentlemen by birth and they who become such by education, treating one another as I have told you. Lord Brougham's eccentricities in the upper house and on the woolsack (that sacred altar of our Constitution) terribly annoy and torment old Eldon,⁶ who is ill. I suspect Chancellor B. is right glad the gout holds his old man of the sea fast; otherwise, with perhaps much flooding of tears on his part, with loud noisy talk on the other's, there would be a teasing opposition to B.'s so called Chancery Reforms—of chancery principles (if it have any), chancery law, and its mal-practices, of all of which he (B. Chancellor) is as ignorant as that “bauble” the mace, ostentatiously paraded before him, but in all which the said old man of the sea is an adept, and what is more still in his favour, of that skill so mischievous but so money-making you may not doubt. Except for Eldon's gout there would be a slashing onslaught on B. and his crude notions, for crude they must be, he being utterly ignorant of the subject he undertakes to remake. As it is, little dare be attempted, for B. would with his tongue and

⁴ i.e. ‘the very same words’.

⁵ i.e. the Press. William Cobbett (1763–1835), political writer and farmer, published the *Political Register* between 1802 and 1835.

⁶ John Scott (1751–1838), first Baron and first Earl Eldon, Lord Chancellor 1801–7, 1807–27.

his bronze put down any assailant he is likely to meet with, unless the assault were supported by the old man and his technicalities and speciousness eked out with tears, such as we are told crocodiles shed when they would beguile the unwary into that tremendous trap their jaws! For the time, he will run riot his own way, will the gentleman who first saw light in a flat “i’ the old toune o’ Edinbro,” such I ascertain was our Westmoreland hero’s birth-spot,⁷ no less imposing a location than a flat in the old town that used to be Edinburgh, but is now the modern Athens, save the mark!

Mr. H. mentioned some curious accounts of reporters, which I repeat for your amusement. Most of the men on the *Times* are Cambridge men, and a good many of the *Morning Herald* corps are of one or other of the old Universities, sad fellows for drinking, addicted to claret and other luxurious drinks, if what he said was at all correct. I was surprised to hear they have to pay five guineas a-year to the officials of the two Houses for their seats and privileges, consisting, as far as I could learn, in not being able to command the least convenience, besides being so placed they cannot see by much the greater number of the speakers, whom they guess at by the sound of their voices. They have to endure all the pushing and squeezing of the eager crowd, and to take notes as best they can. I had no idea of this state of imposition and confusion; as the popular feeling makes way into these owl-holes, all this will be remedied, because the people will it. Perhaps there is no more laborious occupation, none more trying to the physical powers, than this kind of mechanical headwork; for though in great measure mechanical, it is not the less harassing and trying, pressing so severely as it does on the bodily powers. Some use short hand, which is not a *sine quâ non*, others common writing. A turn may come five or even six times a-week, and the writing out at length all day; what rest can be had to support this tremendous work? The blood spitting speaks for itself, none. For the newspaper reporters the pay is good; and seeing what immense labour they undergo so it ought to be, and probably will be until the reporter’s qualifications become a drug from the numbers attracted

⁷ Brougham was born in Edinburgh, the son of Henry Brougham (1742–1810), a modest Westmoreland squire.

to the trade by the good wages; though from the competition for a living in these times, like as in everything else, there will be two or three for one place; then comes the bad pay and the over-worked report-concocter. This result may be some time in being brought about, because reporting demands mental as well as physical qualities. As regards Mr. H., during the sitting of Parliament he makes as much as keeps him the rest of the year doing anything he likes, but it is downright killing work he goes through. I have seen him in the morning with a handful of written slips pale as death, languid, powerless, and spitting blood, from the exhaustion produced by excessive labour. With most men ten years or less of such murderous work must destroy any one; none but certain kinds of constitution can stand it. I am, as the saying is, as strong as a horse, but the initiated tell me it would not require many months to kill me off—supposing a start in earlier life, the chances would be favourable for a person constituted as I am. Besides, like all else respecting employment and a living, the reporters, as I intimated, are a drug in the market, the supply so far exceeding the demand, which may easily happen, as will appear by a little calculation. Suppose that there are six morning daily papers; that the number of parliamentary reporters is sixty; that other newspaper and skilled reporting requires, say, forty more, and in all a hundred; here is the number of labourers stated, rather over perhaps than below the mark, whilst there may be safely assumed to be four or five times as many wanting employment, and the matter is plain enough; for there is no doubt some four or five hundred young men of average good abilities and suitably educated, each one who would be thankful to be thus employed; so that on this rough calculation there are four or five in the market, which being over-stocked causes what has been stated to take place. Indeed the *Times* and the *Morning Herald* as well, require as a first qualification that the applicant should have graduated at either Oxford or Cambridge. And not only in this department of journal literature, but also in every other department of general literature, every avenue to employment appears to me closed to the stranger without the gates, entrance through which is jealously watched by those within. No small interest must be required to get a footing on the reporting establishment of a newspaper; to all thus

circumstanced I perceive it is almost hopeless to make the attempt; besides, I doubt if one in twenty makes more than a bare competence, a thing in these times of struggling for a living which is of the first importance. My opinion is, there are more educated for head work of every description than by a great many there is employment for. Look at the rows of briefless barristers; see the yearly shoals of attorneys made only to have no clients; possibly it may be the same in the church, in which some of my former school-fellows inform me that even a poor curacy such as made Goldsmith's parson "passing rich on forty pounds a-year"⁸ is not to be had, some of them wranglers and among the first senior optimes, to whom, however, University honours have opened other sources of getting on in the world in case of failing to obtain a fellowship or a College living. My friend R. K.,⁹ now passing through the medical ordeal of what is called walking the hospitals preparatory to the examination required previous to practice, told me, that the medical gentleman he is with received no less than forty-seven applications for the place of assistant on the first appearance of the advertisement—the salary being next to nothing, though with board and lodging and liberty to attend the usual medical classes. This little circumstance shows the immense pressure there must be in all the learned professions.

So you persist in exclaiming against my calling the *Bill* no measure of reform.¹⁰ I always told you, in spite of your pretension to radicalism, that you had not cast the slough of whiggism; besides, in point of feeling you have some little too much in common with the aristocrats. I once was radical with unbaited breath; now I rejoice in having advanced to the *ultima Thule*¹¹ of the great principle of Helvetius, fully drawn to its fair (though, by way of giving an ill name, an Edinburgh Review would awfully call extreme) consequences, namely, the well-being of all men carried out into political practice through the people governing themselves, which

⁸ A line from Oliver Goldsmith's (1728?–74) *The Deserted Village*, first published 1770.

⁹ Unidentified.

¹⁰ The first Reform Bill, which was presented to Parliament on 1 March 1831 and obtained its second reading on 22 March, passing by one vote.

¹¹ i.e. 'to the very limit'.

is my definition of rational republicanism. So long as these are my principles and views, there must be not only difference, but a wide difference of opinion between us—yourself, and many others thinking as you do; yet I admit I am in the glorious minority; but mind you, in matters of principle, to set rules and guidance, minorities can neither give up, nor majorities impose, what a man is to accept as the rule of right. I will briefly state the reasons which influence the view I have taken of this “great measure” and vexed question, one I suspect which in no long time will be as vehemently decried as it is now upheld by the mad nation which now seems to deem itself highly honoured in having dust thrown into its eyes by an aristocratic Whig faction,—out of place vapouring, and in place deceptively mean, dishonest, and given to the lowest trickery for which your political diddlers are famous—and “something more.”

Deducting 168 representatives, discarded or pretended to be passed through the Whig mill for grinding old corruption into young purity of elective and elected, from the present total 658, remain 490 of the old leaven of political corruption, that is, who will continue, not perhaps individually, but from the same class as now, to be elected as heretofore, by reason of anti-popular influences. These 490 leavened with the old corrupt practices of Whigs *out* and of Tories *in*, through the influences indicated are sure of return; it may be with reform on their tongues, but hatred of it in their hearts and souls—pre-determined, if Whigs in office, to evade it, to give it the go-bye and nullify it all that in them is;—these 490 will be returned, and perhaps, with the exception of some 20 or 30, some such overwhelming majority will act and vote as before, that is, for keeping up the *statu quo* of affairs, no effective change whatever the appearance may be. Party, and faction, and class interests, will rule as heretofore; the people, good simple folks, submitting for a while longer to find the means, still submitting to bear the imposition of taxes which are wasted, in so far as regards popular good government which is the rare exception not the universal rule, as it should be. However vigorously progressing reform may seem, this influential majority will not suffer it to emasculate and ultimately extinguish their power,—don’t you fancy any such chimera.

Then again, supposing the 100 new members to be all reformers (an assumption not to be dreamed of), the result would be simply a larger minority. Even that false appearance of progress, which I take suppositionally, is exceedingly doubtful. Thus regarding practical working we may safely deduct 40 or more from this 100, say however 40, and this will leave some 550 to go on under some subterfuge or specious sham, until at some future day misgovernment and wasteful expenditure, which render taxation worse than if the money were thrown into the sea, may again cause a universal cry for reform which, let us hope, improved popular intelligence will not allow of its being tampered with, and once more made the sham I now say it is. I do hope, when reform is to be done over again, I may not see the people once more the self-deceiving dupes they have been, no sooner accepting the very measure they demand than almost instantly finding out the deceit they shall repudiate it, as I think they will do this Whig Reform Bill after trial of it.

And this is what you blame me for not accepting, for not adding my voice to the national chorus of the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill! Some one has said the nation is mad. Beyond question people are deliriously crazy at their supposed success. Were it not an affair of such deep import, I would merely add I wish them joy of it, and may they get it. In my next possibly I may briefly illustrate my position of the view I take of the question. As my visit is nearly expired you will scarcely hear from me more than once, and as I do not return immediately I may send you two or three extracts from my journal.—Yours, &c.

EXTRACTS FROM JOURNAL

[March 2 1831]

Attending him during his garden gyrations, I hinted I might not be heard easily; like most deafish people, *J.B.* remarked he heard people quite well who spoke distinctly not loudly. During the walk he said, in the church liberal politics were not the road to preferment. *W.*—I believe not; such opinions have been detrimental rather than otherwise, since the breaking up of the Eldon party. *B.*—But more liberal men being in power inclines me to hope for a better state of things. *W.*—I doubt that. *B.*—So, then, you have small faith in them? *W.*—What political faith can we have in any set of ministers until after reform has been carried; for my own part I add—and hardly then. *B.*—I don't know but you're right. But now to the point on which I wish to speak to you about; what is your opinion of Sir James Graham?¹ I understand you do not think highly of him; what may his reputation be among you in your county of which both he and you are natives? *W.*—As to my individual opinion you have been rightly informed. I believe that in general he does not bear any high repute in Cumberland. At one time, when politics seemed to hold out no great promise, I then fancied his ambition took a local turn; to me he appeared inclined to take the part of the first-rate county gentleman—I mean as the leading man of the county—he made a set at the Chief Justiceship of J.P.'s the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions; he did not succeed with impressing his brother magistrates with the high estimate he evidently held of himself in his own opinion. He might be neither better nor worse qualified than the rest of aspirants, but he was not in good odour with the general body, the majority of whom were Tories, the Lord Lieutenant being a tory; at the outset he was

¹ Bentham had sent his work *Official Aptitude Maximized; Expense Minimized* to Sir James Graham, who acknowledged receipt in a letter to Bentham sent on 19 June 1830. See *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. xi, ed. John Bowring, p. 51 [hereafter Bowring]. Bentham also sent the tenth chapter of the second volume of his *Constitutional Code*, entitled 'Defensive Force', on 13 December 1830. Graham had recently been appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in Earl Grey's government. Wheatley mentions Graham in letters IV and V above.

in a wrong position, being in the main point disqualified on account of his whiggism. His personal influence must have been small, as certainly, in point of position as family, fortune, he stood among the first rank. I thence inferred he had had little personal influence, and about that period, at any rate when Member for Hull his pretended radicalism, for it can only have been pretence, might tell against him. But I suspect his personal demeanour told still more heavily to his disadvantage, being haughty and assuming if not overbearing—thing which it strikes me no country gentleman will bear with in any but himself. If such was his design, he failed as simple Sir J.G. the radical M.P. for Hull. Had he been in place and a Whig as he now sets up for, no doubt many opponents would see him in quite a different light. For my part, his petty political coat-turning induces me to place no confidence in whatever he professes to be his polar star in politics; he affects being grandiloquent and the air of your Sir Oracles. *B.*—You don't flatter. *W.*—No. I have given you my sentiments as you requested me to do. Referring to several letters which he had sent down for me to read, he asked what I thought of them. *W.*—Being more formal than confidential I think number one proper enough as a mere official civility; of number two I can only say, considering to whom sent, in or out of office I would not have so written to you. *J.B.*—Eh, what? Do you think he will do nothing? *W.*—Officially, unless I err as to what official men may do, I would say nothing. As respects him personally still I say nothing, for as I understand the latter note it is wanting in common courtesy; as unlike the first, it is written and signed by deputy, the usual jack-in-office impertinent way of telling you to hold your tongue. *J.B.*—That is of trifling moment if he will do any thing what will he do, think you? *W.*—I am ignorant what officially his power may be, but judging from the style of his latter note, I must still say nothing. *J.B.* seemed annoyed at his want of success in trying to induce the first Lord to recommend the introduction of his code relating to naval matters, and kept repeating his query as if desirous I should say something more encouraging. All I could add, seeing how disappointed the old man was,—was that I might be in error, ignorant as I necessarily must be of official personages and their doings; yet he still seemed anxious and expecting I would say otherwise; he said he could not

doubt my sincerity, yet hoped I was mistaken. Bentham's knowledge and experience of men in office must have made him aware how slender that hope must be. I cannot help thinking some one, through flattery or self-interested motive, must have impressed his mind with quite a different result. No doubt *J.B.* felt for the spread of his own fame, about which, I must remark, he is impelled to speak and do strangely for one so sure of it; but he showed no symptom he felt the disappointment personally by any show of resentment. For the moment I indeed imagined his manner less cordial to myself, but if it was so, it soon wore off. Beginning to rain, he inquired the number of gyrations we had made, and telling him about a score, he retired to his workshop.

At dinner-time *J.B.* was as cheerful as usual, and the ploughman first Lord of the Admiralty seemed forgotten. He liked to ask me about my connections, but not inquisitively; I told him what would interest or amuse him; speaking of a relative, an unbeneficed clergyman, farming his own property, I said, he was a whig, a great friend of the then new-made Law Lord, my Lord Brougham and Vaux, pronouncing it *Vause*, and I supposed opposed the Ballot because the Chancellor did so. *J.B.*—Ah! he opposes the ballot, does he? Then you may tell him, I say the farm-yard is a fit study for him; but how do you pronounce that word Vaux (*Vox*)—*Vause*, eh? Yes. *J.B.*—Now in London here we pronounce it *Vox*. *W.*—The fashionable mode I suppose, but we say *Vause*. *J.B.*—Tut, tut, *Vox* sir, *Vox*; and after a moment's pause adding—*et preterea nihil*,² that's what I call him. It made me laugh and exclaim, capital, sir, the title and character in four words. I remarked I could understand why he titled himself Brougham, but not why he had assumed that of Vaux, an ancient Cumberland family, extinct as to name, from which there had been four principal offsets, from which there were many descendants; the Earl of Carlisle was the representative of the family now, if there was any to represent; that through my mother I was descended from the Caterlen Vaux, the descent having been proved in a Chancery suit against this very Lord Brougham, to compel

² i.e. 'a voice and nothing besides'. Brougham had taken the title of Lord Brougham and Vaux after a barony in fee to which his family claimed in descent. This title was a godsend to the wits, who quipped that he should have been dubbed 'vaux et praeterea nihil'.

the completion of a purchase of a domain come from this Vaux of Carterlen to my mother's family, and by them sold to this identical Brougham, who as a defendant had thus entered the Chancery Court before he was Chancellor; that Brougham had no claim by blood to take the name, under the pretence some ancient title went with it, but I supposed he had done so to persuade people he was of an ancient family of titled consequence; nobody knows who his father was, though his mother was a relation of the Scotchman or Highlander Robertson, the historian,³ so that by birth H.B. was past question a Scotchman, born in Edinburgh, where I had been told a brother of his was a wine merchant, and had been unfortunate in trade. *J.B.*—Well now, all this is news. *W.*—And true into the bargain, which all news is not.

After tea (10 p.m.) he talked of dictating, which he calls preaching. Seeing I was about to go, he said, if you desire you may remain, go or stay, as you please; you will be no interruption, it is indifferent to me. Now, Arthur,⁴ give Mr. *W.* a book; if any thing will keep him quiet I have a suspicion that will, as I hear when he is not writing he is reading;—I see, I understand the nature of the animal, so give him a book; though there's little danger of his talking at any time, especially when he's not desired to do it. Now, what shall I talk about; well let me see, I think, I shall preach Antimachiavel to night. Do you know, sir, that once upon a time I had a newspaper controversy with George the Third?⁵ *W.*—I never heard of it. *J.B.*—Ah! but I had though. Somehow I got to hear the king had it in contemplation—I don't think there's any danger now if I told who was my informant, he was a Lord and a near connection of mine,⁶ you see I have my bit of aristocracy as well as the rest; no matter how I

³ Brougham's mother Eleanor, née Syme (1750–1839) was niece of the historian William Robertson (1721–93).

⁴ Arthur Moore.

⁵ Bentham's four 'Anti-Machiavel' letters appeared in the *Public Advertiser* between 15–16 June and 23 July 1789, in response to a letter signed 'Partizan' and allegedly written by George III which had appeared in the same organ on 4 June 1789.

⁶ In a letter to José Joaquín de Mora written in 1820 and elsewhere, Bentham confirms that his informant was William Petty (1737–1805), second Earl of Shelburne and first Marquess of Lansdowne, leader of the administration 1782–83. See *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. x, ed. Stephen Conway, Oxford, 1994 (*CW*), pp. 90–1

got to hear, George the Third was intending to get Russia to join him in making a most nefarious unjust war on Denmark; I mean making war on mere pretences without real grounds for it. This injustice roused me to attack the war party in the newspapers. I assumed a name which showed at once the view I took of this so wicked a thing; I wrote my attacks, and I was not sparing of them, under the signature of *Antimachiavel*; and so deeply interested was he in the affair, the king himself actually replied to my writing; he answered me under that of *Partizan*.⁷ It was the means of preventing a most unjust war. There is no act of my life of which I am more proud than of this, because it was the means of preventing the bloodshed and misery of a most unholy war. For doing this George the Third never forgave me I have every reason to think; for he it was, who caused all the hindrance, opposition, delay, and ultimate rejection of my plans regarding prison discipline. Now as to my Panoptican scheme, all the ministry were in favour of it; Pitt himself⁸ approved of it; and the grant of the land where the Penitentiary now stands⁹ was ordered to be made out to me; the necessary documents were sent to the offices, and there they remained; somebody had said something to stop them there, and in consequence of this obstruction I ceased taking any further steps in the matter. As I had put a stop to the making of an unjust war, so George the Third prevented my prison scheme from taking effect,¹⁰ or I should have been the largest gaoler in Europe, and (looking very comical) have made an immense fortune. After this exordium preparations were made for preaching. *J.B.*—Arthur! get the papers—prepare!—where are the copies of the letters of *Antimachiavel* and *Partizan*?—hand them to Mr. *W.* to amuse himself with (turning to me)—What I am going to preach is

⁷ Either Wheatley's account or Bentham's memory is defective. The letter signed 'Partizan' appeared before the letters signed 'Anti-Machiavel'.

⁸ William Pitt the Younger (1759–1806), leader of the administration as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer 1783–1801, 1804–6.

⁹ Bentham is referring to Millbank Prison, which was built on the site originally purchased for the panopticon and received its first prisoners in 1816.

¹⁰ Bentham's scheme for the construction of a panopticon prison effectively ended in 1803, when he was informed by the Home Secretary that the government was officially abandoning it.

intended for a reply to the attack upon me in the *Quarterly Review*;¹¹ I intend it to be the preface to my work on Defensive Force.

At this moment the barber's boy, some twelve or fourteen, not more, very little in size, but quick and adroit, came in to shave Mr. B., who thus spoke to him:—Ah, you reprobate—it will be borne in mind this term was used for youth or boy—you here! Well set to work with you; which the lad did with great good will, smiling all the face over, and looking as if he were the barber of barbers in Cockaign Land,¹² seeing who it was he operated upon. I never was more surprised than at his dexterity, which was marvellous, seeing the test it was put to, Mr. B. constantly speaking whilst he was using the razor, which caused an unpleasant feeling that there must be a gash.

Arthur, as amanuensis, and a clever one he was, being seated opposite Mr. B., stated he was ready; and as soon as the boy had lathered his chin, Mr. B. throwing himself back on his chair, closing his eyes, he first of all gave out the heads of preachment, which having been read over to him, and having expatiated on them, he commenced preaching, the subject being the origin of society and the motives of men for forming it. Without hesitation he dictates the part or whole of a sentence as the length runs; then waiting until the amanuensis gives the word for more, he proceeds. Whilst the boy was shaving him, he dictated as much as filled five foolscap pages. All this seemed to me perfectly wonderful, that he could talk while undergoing the operation, and especially that youthful master barber did not seriously cut him, as without warning Mr B. spoke as the razor was going over upper and underlip. Shaving over, he combed his hair—long white locks falling on his shoulders—in which he takes great pride I guess, as he keeps his comb amongst his sealing wax, pencils, pens, knife, and scissors, in a large glass

¹¹ In an article ostensibly on the 'Moral and Political State of the British Empire', the *Quarterly Review* described the penitentiary erected at Millbank on the site of Bentham's proposed panopticon as a 'monument at once of Jeremy's philosophico-philofelon-philanthropy, of national folly, and of the futility of all such schemes of reformation. Well would it be if this were the only price which the nation has paid—or is likely to pay—for its lessons in Jeremy-Benthamism!' See *Quarterly Review*, vol. xliv, no. lxxxvii (January 1831), p. 277.

¹² London, i.e. 'the country of Cockneys'.

tumbler. Seeing I had finished reading, he added, well what do you think of my controversy? *W.*—I think, sir, in the first place that you did not spare his Majesty; in the second, having so much the best of the argument on your part, you left his Majesty not a leg to stand upon; though knowing his obstinacy and pertinaciousness in all he thought, said, and did, I can easily understand how he was so bitterly opposed to yourself; since his death, poor man, I at least have learned from his afflicted state of mind to make all due allowance, though I confess I once hated him with the intensest and I thought holy hatred, as one of the most viciously-intending enemies of English liberties such as they are, and still more as the enemy of all human freedom of mind and body. I need hardly add, that knowing now the actual state of the man, I have relented. Mr. *B.*, with a look of serene benevolence, said, mark that, Arthur; it was impossible for me to bear him ill will, but the excuse for his violence against justice and freedom was not known. I added that Mr. *B.* had completely demolished the sophistry of his antagonist, and with great vivacity he exclaimed, I exposed their machinations, thereby preventing a most atrocious and abominable war. The abbey¹³ clock having told twelve, he took up his night-cap, the signal for retiring, and wished me good night.

During the night Arthur asked him the meaning and derivation of several French and Latin words. The readiness Mr. *B.* evinced in giving the meaning, derivation, and the senses in which they had been variously used, was astonishing. He often tells me his memory has gone; of things of recent occurrence probably it has, but of things known of old it is as fresh, as accurate, minutely so, as ever. Only see this wonderful old man, verging towards ninety, the retention of mental and bodily powers is altogether wonderful.

March 3 [1831]

¹³ Westminster Abbey.

None at dinner but ourselves. *B.* conversed with *D.*¹⁴ for the most part O'Connell the subject. *B.* seemed displeased that O'Connell had declined several invitations, in a way that made it doubtful whether he *would not* or *could not* accept them. *B.* complained of this, and among other remarks said, O'Connell disliked coming, in fact that he was afraid to meet him (*B.*) on account of breach of promise in regard to matters of omission and commission as well. He intimated one more opportunity for retrieving his error should be accorded, and read the note intended to be sent, to the purport, that since *O'C.* acknowledged his sins by crying *peccavi*,¹⁵ if he appeared on a day fixed, he (*B.*) would give him absolution. Now, said Mr. *B.*, I don't know but he'll choose to be offended at my using the term *absolution*. *D.* thought not. *B.*—I doubt, for there is no knowing how to deal with him; there is no managing him, he is so inconsistent, so changeable, you have no certainty what he'll do or say. *D.*—My idea is, he dislikes meeting you after his vacillation and dilatoriness, but I can't think he'll be offended at the expression. *B.*—Ah! who knows, he is so straitlaced, so nice as to outward show, with such ostentatious observance of the forms of religion—I doubt him. *W.*—Allow me to say, sir, that after what I have heard of him and his religious observances, the parade of certain Catholic symbols he is said to have exhibited at his house in Merrion Square, in Dublin, there can be no doubt about it, as no contradiction was made of it, if such a phrase can be taken from a reformed to be applied to one of the unreformed church, I should say, he was a Catholic after the manner of the Methodist persuasion, whose religious observances we lax sons, as they style us, of old mother church consider so pharisaical. *B.*—I need hardly remind you, that a Catholic can be nothing else but a Catholic, some more, some less strict, rigid, and ascetic, that is all the difference admitted of among them—whether right or wrong you know, my dear sir, no one better, is their affair. Generally speaking, so far so good; now to descend to particulars, the conduct of individual members of the Catholic faith; concerning O'Connell's mode of proceedings I have a little theory of my own,

¹⁴ Richard Doane.

¹⁵ i.e. 'I have sinned'. This particular exchange of letters is in Bowring, xi, pp. 63–4.

and it is, that he goes upon no principle at all, it is all impulse or something less excusable. Now the reference continually in his mouth to a vow in Heaven as to his non-duelling, right by the way but too much spoken of, it is the parade of religion, I have been told, he has been seen kneeling before a crucifix in his own house, a sight thus to be seen daily, and no man performs his private religious duties publicly, but it is plain he thinks more of showing his light before men than of what he is doing, that his doing so may be seen and made a topic of public talk; he does so at the risk of his sincerity being questioned, that he has some object in view totally unconnected with religion. It is said too, that O'Connell goes beyond this,—that in the midst of company, in any place he will on the instant perform his private devotions; well, well, it may be sincere and truthful, but it has other aspects also. Most people would say, it could only be for show; seldom does it proceed from principle, because whether what are termed our private religious duties are performed in or out of sight of men, if done at all with sincerity we must concede their being done from the proper motive; but O'Connell's strictness enacted under the very noses of the passers-by in the streets, is a species of boasting 'I am not as thou art, a publican and sinner,' which justifies almost any doubt which may be cast on his earnestness and sincerity. *W.*—I understand he refuses to fight a duel, because in his earlier days he had the terrible misfortune to shoot his antagonist, who, however, provoked his own fate, a man named D'Estaing,¹⁶ an Irish character common at that period, a duellist, also the Orange or Protestant bully, as I would call him, of the then Ultra-Orange Dublin Corporation, as vindictive as corrupt towards all who dared to question their doings, whether really Protestants but suspected of Irish patriotism, or at once damned and banned as Irish Catholics. *B.*—Yes, but there is too much talking of a vow recorded in heaven. I don't like such protestations repeated without call; it may be parade of the right principle without feeling its obligation at all, mere parade and no more. *D.*—True, sir; but my friend *W.* must make all fair allowances; for as we here in town know every thing whilst he, poor young man, a provincialist, nay under suspicion of being a

¹⁶ John D'Esterre, a merchant.

Scotchman, can know nothing, and yourself too, must allow, that many aware of this permit themselves a license of duel-provocation, which otherwise they would hesitate to play off as really fearless bravadoes; such men provoke a fight when they know, what is well known, that O'Connell will not fight. This may be the cause of so many provoking him to a denial of fighting, an easy way of showing off, as we learn from Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour"—I need not to refer to Bobadil.¹⁷ Do you know, sir, our provincialist actually quotes Shakespear and other play wrights, who lived in the reign of good Queen Bess, whom he seriously believes existed as one Queen Elizabeth when the Spanish Armada made an attempt to invade us;¹⁸ and he gives me as an authority one Hume he calls David, or I think as he pronounces it, Douvit—Scotch, I suppose!¹⁹ *B.*—Aye, aye, indeed! *W.*—Very well, I can't help being Cumberland born, but I deny the imputation of being Scotch. *B.*—Oh! oh!! hear, hear him, as if *we* didn't know a Scotch from an English man! I suppose he'll call me a cockney just now! "Thy tongue betrays thee," as somebody said on some occasion.²⁰ *W.*—If the majority votes me Scotch, I must submit under protest of knowing I am not so. *B.*—Come, come, say no more, it is a sore point with the poor Scotchman I see. Perhaps he remembers what our countryman, one Dr. Samuel Johnson, said of both him and his country. I shan't quote it, but he may see what definition in his Dictionary is given to a species of grain called oats, and many other little compliments of a like kind!²¹ I relate this to show the good-humoured badinage current during the hour or two of relaxation; and having the pronunciation peculiar to the northern English counties, Mr. *B.* jocularly was pleased to speak

¹⁷ Captain Bobadil, a boastful character in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1598).

¹⁸ Elizabeth I (1553–1603), Queen of England and Ireland from 1558. The Spanish Armada was the great fleet sent by King Philip II of Spain in 1588 to invade England in conjunction with a Spanish army from Flanders.

¹⁹ David Hume, *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688*, 8 vols., London, 1763.

²⁰ Possibly a reference to Robert Moffat, *Cause and Effect; or Nature's Proofs of a Divine Creator: A Poem*, Edinburgh, 1819, p. 11.

²¹ In Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), oats are defined as 'A grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.'

of me as a Scotchman, and tease accordingly by suggestion of the things obnoxious to the well known national thin-skinnedness, and by pretending to translate my language into English, much to my amusement and satisfaction, as proofs of his being satisfied with me shown by such familiarity; at first I don't deny having been taken a little aback, soon dissipated when I saw how considerate, kind, and hospitable—why should I repress the expression of what I felt—of my deeply revered and loved master; it may be admitted among the last, certainly the least known individually of his disciples, surely as truthful as any, perhaps I am the most ardent of all. For one obscure and unknown like me, I feel it is a great thing to say, I too have sat at Gamaliel's feet.²²

Speeches on reform, one by orator Hunt,²³ the man of blacking, another by McCauley,²⁴ the wordmonger, the one radical, the latter mere whig-talk, were read to *B.*, who spoke approvingly of each according, I suppose, to its relative goodness, to its peculiar *ism*.

²² See Acts 22: 3.

²³ Henry 'Orator' Hunt (1773–1835), political radical.

²⁴ Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59), Baron Macaulay, historian, essayist, and poet.

March 4 [1831]

At dinner, a stranger, a Mr. *E.*,²⁵ who in virtue of being a millionaire engrossed the conversation, *B.* saying little. Addressing myself *B.* said, you have been out, where? I mentioned the Westminster meeting which proved not so large as I expected;²⁶ that Sir F. Burdett²⁷ in his speech made a quotation from his (*B.*'s) works, with a high eulogium of himself as the profound thinker of his age, emphatically the reformer of law. Mr. *E.*—I was not there; were there many speakers, sir, and what was the conclusion? As Mr. *E.* and I had had some previous talk, we had in a way become acquainted, so that I was not nervously silence-struck by his speaking to me; I replied, being a stranger to London, I could not say what number might be expected to speak on an occasion so exciting as the Reform Bill, but to me they seemed few. As to the result, I had not stopped to hear it, there was so much noise and confusion when the question of the ballot was mooted, the end could not be worth waiting for, the more so as the noise-makers seemed to act in concert, though in different parts of the room, one set giving the signal when to begin to hoot scrape and hiss, on anything objectional for its popular tendency being mentioned, as the ballot. Burdett, seemed to me a poor miserable speaker; Cam Hobhouse,²⁸ a squab fat little man, with a greasy pale unmeaning face, constantly waving a white pocket handkerchief with a dandy-like lackadaisical air, I thought a poor creature; the same of a Colonel De Lacy Evans,²⁹ a would-be military Hotspur, all “guns, drums, trumpets, blunderbuss, and

²⁵ The same, unidentified *E.* mentioned in Letter V above.

²⁶ This meeting of the inhabitants of Westminster took place at the Crown and Anchor Tavern on the Strand. A report of the meeting was given in *The Examiner*, no. 1205, 6 March 1831, p. 155.

²⁷ Sir Francis Burdett (1770–1844), MP for Boroughshire 1796–1802, Middlesex 1802–4, 1805–6, Westminster 1807–37, and Wiltshire North 1837–44.

²⁸ John Cam Hobhouse (1786–1869), Baron Broughton, MP for Westminster 1820–33.

²⁹ Sir George de Lacy Evans (1787–1870), army officer.

thunder”³⁰—signifying naught; a Colonel Jones,³¹ a burly, black-looking fellow, and truculent besides, and such was his speech; he swore tremendously, and talking like a bully, I set him down for a blackguard, which afterwards I learned was by no means a random guess, but his true character. Wakley³² seemed to me the only man of ability; of him I heard little, the moment he began being the signal for the noise and interruption spoken of. As much as a public meeting of the heterogeneous materials this was formed of could be said to be so, it was a packed one. And the press, the manœuvrers, and the political intriguers so contrived it, that its tone should be the facsimile for all which came after it; the spirit thus falsified, I saw how untruthful the accounts of public manifestations were at that period, inasmuch as I was able to verify how shamelessly they were turned into falsifications of the highly excited indeed extreme popular feeling then felt and expressed. Either my senses had failed me, *or these more than radical* opinions were the mere *mirage* of that desert—political morality.

Connected with this subject I remember the two or three talks I had with Dr. B.³³ How we differed, how he tried to put me down by referring to similar meetings, how I replied they were packed, and how we parted as Hudibras says—

A man convinced against his will,
Is of the same opinion still.³⁴

Such was the case with me, though I suspect the Dr. looked for implicit assent in the quarter from which he met civil but decided dissent from his own *suaviter in modo*³⁵ indications of a difference in opinion. The Dr. I see knew the world; I did not then, if I do now.

³⁰ A line from Alexander Pope’s translation of Horace, *Satires*, II. i.

³¹ Leslie Grove Jones (1779–1839), army officer and radical writer.

³² Thomas Wakley (1795–1862), medical journalist and politician.

³³ John Bowring.

³⁴ Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, III. iii. 547–5. The first line of this quotation should read ‘He that complies against his will’.

³⁵ i.e. ‘gently in manner’.

March 5 [1831]

To-day, at dinner, instead of O'Connell who again broke tryst, we had Colonel Thompson,³⁶ the far-famed editor of the *Westminster Review*, a project of Bentham's, who I believe did something besides suggesting towards giving it a start.³⁷ The Colonel is advancing in years, his hair is grizzly, his form compact, and his motion agile; and so seems destined for a green old age. His countenance pleasing, the expression good-humoured, with however a heaviness of look beneath which few would suspect there lay the acute profound power of one of the first logicians of the day. I don't know what people expect, but he is not an entertaining writer. One reason is obvious, his subjects are *caviare* to the general; moreover the mathematical writer, logician, and political economist, all which he is, does not care to be other than what he is; he does not pretend to amuse; they who delight in naught but light reading cannot appreciate the man of genius, who writes on dry matters of science, in which the Colonel's strength lies. He is one who speaks only when spoken to; like the ancient oracles, he responds but when interrogated. The little he says, shows he is conversant with science; he has large views, a logical mind stored with knowledge. In company he is a silent man. I liked him, as his manners were quiet, unassuming, and for his kindly civility. I was told, he writes the *Political Economy of the Westminster*, of which I imagine he is the managing partner, as he may always be found at the office. He is by profession a soldier, and, as I was told, saw service in the East Indies and Africa. He is versed in professional science, judging from several brief clear explanations he gave of certain military terms, in reply to *D.* who asked for them.³⁸

He seems on the most familiar terms with Bentham, who told us he had invited the Colonel as he thought it would be showing pity, that is by saving him the cost of a dinner; adding, I daresay, poor man, he often dines in the Park! For those who do not know it, it

³⁶ Thomas Perronet Thompson (1783–1869), army officer and MP for Kingston-upon-Hull 1835–7 and Bradford 1846–52.

³⁷ Bentham had provided financial backing for the *Westminster Review*, which had been established in 1824.

³⁸ Richard Doane.

may be stated the Colonel is rich, lest the joke should be taken in earnest. *B.*, turning to myself with a sly look said, Do you know, Mr. *W.*, you north-country men—I suppose I must not say Scotchmen—are suspected of frequently dining with Duke Humphrey?³⁹ *D.*—My friend *W.*, Colonel, is not a Scotchman; pay no attention to Mr. *B.*, as you see he pretends to compassionate your miserable state in your familiar acquaintance with the Duke! Colonel Thompson smiled, as we all did. Such is the light banter which passes among the sage and his domesticated friends.

Mr. *B.* spoke in severe terms of O’Connell, who ought to have come to-day, now his object was, as he remarked, to give him (*B.*) up without a quarrel. During the evening, he repeated the story about Judge Willes, who on my first evening I remember was called Yates.⁴⁰ Willes had a very peculiar voice, a squeak like Wynne’s,⁴¹ whom *B.* mimicked greatly to our amusement. As I find the tale in his “Elements of packing Special Juries,” I copy it as there related. Speaking of Lord Mansfield it is said, “his will has habitually the effect of law,” to which is appended this note,—

“This was among the known glories of Lord Mansfield. This the finale of his praises sounded in his ears by his serjeant trumpeter, who was moreover his master packer—Sir James Burroughs. ‘I have not been consulted, and I will be heard,’ exclaimed one of his puisnes, Mr. Justice Willes. At the distance of some forty or fifty years, the feminine scream issuing out of a manly frame still tingles in my ears. Whether any note of it may be found in Burroughs’s Reports may be left to be imagined.”⁴²

These little incidents of early days he frequently speaks of, as if his memory was rather tenacious of the past than of more recent matters. Before leaving him for the night Mr. *B.* gave me a number of papers to copy: some in his handwriting reminded me of a story

³⁹ i.e. to go dinnerless.

⁴⁰ Edward Willes (bap. 1723, d. 1787), judge, was appointed Justice of the King’s Bench in 1768.

⁴¹ Possibly Edward Wynne (bap. 1734, d. 1784), lawyer, scholar, and contemporary of Sir William Blackstone.

⁴² The passage quoted is from *Elements of the Art of Packing, as applied to Special Juries, particularly in cases of Libel Law*, London, 1821, p. 57 (also Bowring, v, p. 90).

told of one Bell,⁴³ in his day (no longer) a famous chancery lawyer, of whom even Eldon's self stood in awe. Mr. Bell used to say, he wrote three kinds of hand;—one nobody but himself could read; one that only he and his clerk could read; and one neither he, his clerk, nor anybody else could read! Mr. *B.*'s MS. looked very like Johnny Bell's third category.

March 6 [1831]

I was sent for early, Mr. *B.* giving me more papers to copy, and desiring that they might be given to Mr. Ellice, the Under-Secretary of State,⁴⁴ which I did. Some of the papers not being readily found, he said, I feel confused, stupid, quite *Eldonish*, my memory fails I think—by *Eldonish* meaning he felt like a drivelling old man which in spite of all his law—in reality nothing else than a game at push pin—he was from John Scot to John Earl of Eldon—a dear game for England however and dearly paid.

At dinner, Mr. *H.*, the reporter.⁴⁵ He began talking about the fidelity, the virtue of women, expressing an indifferent opinion of the sex, with much loose talk about chastity. Having no taste for such talking I did not care to conceal it, by showing dislike to the subject having been introduced. Mr. *B.* professed not to understand, yet I was surprised to hear him inclining to treat the idea of love with ridicule (in many cases it is no doubt ridiculous enough) adding, however, he was ignorant of the subject. At that time I little suspected that in youth he had been ardently attached to a young lady; being unsuccessful in his only suit in the Court of Cupid might account for seeming indifference, which is often the consequence with men of deep thought.⁴⁶ My obvious disrelish did not, however, hinder

⁴³ John Bell (1764–1836), barrister.

⁴⁴ Edward Ellice (1783–1863), merchant, MP for Coventry 1818–26, 1830–63, had been appointed Joint Secretary to the Treasury in November 1830.

⁴⁵ The same *H.* Wheatley mentions in Letter VI above. Possibly the younger William Hazlitt.

⁴⁶ In the 1770s Bentham had fallen in love with Mary (Polly) Dunkley, the orphaned daughter of an Essex surgeon. Bentham's father strongly opposed the relationship.

Mr. *H.* from continuing his remarks, in what I who certainly am free from straight lacedness, thought a loose manner, till Mr. *B.*, looking stern and severe, put a stop to it with a come, come, let there be no more of this, I don't understand what you are talking about, if you do yourself, so let there be an end. Pointing to some sea-cale on the table, he asked me if I knew what it was, pretending astonishment a north countryman could know. He inquired the botanical name, which, ignorant of botany, I could not tell. *D.*⁴⁷ said it was *Cramba maritima*. *B.*—Ah, I well remember that word in some Greek epigram, though I totally forget its meaning; repeating several Greek verses, I wonder how I can recollect them, I suppose it must be the metre which helps my fading memory; now I can only collect the sense from the context. He then repeated some Latin lines in which the word was used, again showing how much more vivid the memory of the past was; still it was an extraordinary effort for one past four score years.

March 7 [1831]

At dinner none but myself and Arthur,⁴⁸ who told us the King was going to the theatre.⁴⁹ *B.*—I should like to see him,—after a short pause,—but the gratification would be but momentary! No, I must not go; that settles the question, though I confess I should like it. But I can't spare time, so must stay at home; what I am doing will be lasting, I have little time to do it in, and therefore my time being so short does not admit of spending a moment in any way that would take me from my duties. He was at this period writing a treatise to be called *Posology*, a discourse on quantity, or, *Mathematics simplified and made easy*. I said, I understood he disapproved of going to the theatre. Arthur then said, Mr. *B.* himself went to the theatre, and not long since. You remember, sir, the *Spectator* in noticing your

Bentham's later offer of marriage to Caroline Fox, a niece of Lady Shelburne, was politely refused in 1805.

⁴⁷ Richard Doane.

⁴⁸ Arthur Moore.

⁴⁹ William IV (1765–1837), King of Great Britain and Ireland from 1830.

presence said, your face reminded the writer of Franklin's.⁵⁰ *B.*—Pray Mr. *W.* have you seen any portrait of Franklin? *W.*—None, sir, I can place any confidence in, except one in the American edition of his works, which I suppose may be a true likeness. *B.*—Does it strike you there is any resemblance? I replied, after looking at him, I think there is a resemblance, yes, on reflection, a striking one, though perhaps if I were to make a comparison of the features individually, they might little resemble one another. According to my recollection of Franklin's portrait, the likeness is about the forehead. I also think in the expression of the countenance there is a strong similarity between you. Mr. *B.* appeared to be gratified.

Some years afterwards this was brought to my recollection on seeing the portrait of Franklin, and it reminded me of the likeness it bore to Bentham; and now (1853), after comparing them, the likeness seems even stronger than I thought it was when at *Q.S.P.*

Something led to talk about the likes and dislikes for particular kinds of animals. Mr. *B.* mentioned how Cowper⁵¹ in his solitude diverted himself with his hares. The account of their habits is very interesting, it was given me by a Noble Lord (I could not catch the title). He then asked what kind I liked most; chiefly dogs, I said, and I felt interested in cats, which like asses were so cruelly used. Arthur, said Mr. *B.*, had a great affection for asses. *W.*—Indeed! *B.*—Yes; pray do you know anything about them? I myself, am fond of young asses for their amazing docility and innocent looks, as if appealing to you for protection. I had one under my special protection when at Ford Abbey.⁵² *Arthur.*—Yes, sir, you had; he was your gentleman ass; he would come to Mr. *B.* when he called. Mr. *B.*—Ah, poor thing, I made a great pet of him, he used to follow me about like a dog. A Latin phrase caused the subject of epigrams to be re-called; *Arthur* remarked his own (*B.*'s) would not be numerous. *B.*—No, I have made but two I think, for you must know, Mr. *W.*, I am a poet:

⁵⁰ The report of Bentham visiting the Adelphi Theatre and the comparison with Benjamin Franklin was given in *The Spectator*, no. 77, 19 December 1829, p. 7. Wheatley makes an allusion to the likeness shared by Bentham and Franklin in Letter II above.

⁵¹ William Cowper (1731–1800), poet and letter-writer.

⁵² Ford Abbey, near Chard in Somerset (then in Devon), was Bentham's country retreat between 1814 and 1818.

truly my pretensions are humble enough, yet I have the modesty not to call myself a Pope; but I'll give you a specimen, from which you may judge of my quality; this is it—

When sleeps injustice then may Justice too;
Delays the wicked make, the injured rue.

He then asked if I knew Italian; I said I could partly get at the meaning of it, with such help as my poor store of Latin afforded. *B.*—Well now, how do you translate, *Stavo bene: per star meglio, sto qui.* *W.*—Which I understand means I stood or was well; I would stand or be better; I am here. *B.*—Very well, I see I may have hopes of you; but in verse, let us have it in verse. *W.*—I know nothing of longs and shorts be it loss or not. I never could understand prosody, and thinking it useless I would not bring myself to take the trouble to learn it. I never made even a nonsense verse, I could not indeed. They tell me, it is singular, that having so correct a musical ear, I have none for versification. *B.*—That is strange; well, I suppose I must give my version, which I applied to the late Baron Macdonald,⁵³ an enemy of legal reform.—Attend!

Once I was well my friends most dear,
Thought to get better—so got here.

I found this in his *Elements of packing*, p. 144, said to be “thus done into English by S. Sternhold and J. Hopkins.”⁵⁴ *B.* then spoke of the odes sent to Court by the Universities; he ridiculed their fulsome eulogy and stiff pedantry, concluding with loudly repeating the only one he ever had attempted.

Alas! alas!! alas!!!
The King is dead.
Hush! hush!! we'll get
A better instead.

Never so good a king gone but his successor by prescription time out of mind is better. You know the prince who reigns is always the

⁵³ Sir Archibald Macdonald (1747–1826), judge and politician.

⁵⁴ Both the ‘*Epitaph on a Valetudinarian*’ and its English translation are given by Bentham in his long critique of Sir Archibald Macdonald’s letter to Sir Richard Phillips of 9 April 1808 in *Elements of the Art of Packing*, p. 144 (Bowring, v, p. 130).

best of kings; for example, a Nero,⁵⁵ or a Henry 8th,⁵⁶ a 4th George,⁵⁷ or a Sardanapalus,⁵⁸ no matter who or what, always the best is he who reigns.

In the middle of this pleasant chatting, and whilst *ore rotundo*⁵⁹ repeating and talking, he kept trotting backwards and forwards in the ditch, young master barber came to perform his daily duty. Mr. *B.* then told Arthur to prepare for preaching.⁶⁰ Preparations were accordingly made for both operations. Whilst being shaved, he dictated a chapter containing his ideas on the origin of the first principles of measure (mathematical geometry), which he calls the History of Posology, a word no one would understand in the sense he uses it. This is to be deplored, for whatever a man's knowledge may be, it is useless to the world unless the world can understand it; to the many it is a dead letter, useless as the hay laid upon by the dog in the manger,⁶¹ the intent so utterly the reverse. He gave me the following account of what his object was in writing on such a subject. I am going to try to simplify the science of mathematics, it is much needed, and it may be done—I shall try. But do you know I am as ignorant of it as a pig; I have everything to learn; when I begin I feel quite humiliated, but as I learn I feel I can teach, and then I am reconciled with myself. It was just so when I began with law reform; I knew nothing of law; I learned and taught at the same time, and that led me on.

At this moment, an accident trifling in itself, but extremely provoking to and trying the temper, an *impromptu* on all parts, (though paying no particular attention to Arthur who was the sinner,)

⁵⁵ Claudius [Tiberius Claudius Nero Germanicus] (10 BC–AD 54), Roman emperor.

⁵⁶ Henry VIII (1491–1547), King of England and Ireland from 1509.

⁵⁷ George IV (1762–1830), King of Great Britain and Ireland from 1820.

⁵⁸ Sardanapalus (c. 7th century BC), was, according to Ctesias of Cnidus, the last King of Assyria.

⁵⁹ i.e. 'with elegant speech'.

⁶⁰ See the entry for March 2 for a similar incident of 'preaching'.

⁶¹ An envious dog, finding itself in a stable full of hay, prevented the oxen from entering so that they were unable to eat the hay. See *The Fables of Aesop as first printed by William Caxton in 1484 with those of Avian, Alonso and Poggio*, ed. Joseph Jacobs, 2 vols., London, 1889, ii, p. 165.

I saw it was purely accidental, even then scarcely less provoking. I felt for the youth, seeing how it was; he, poor fellow, was considerably taken aback, expecting, as I did, an explosion from Bentham. Though of no concern to myself, I could not help feeling angry for a moment at the mischief. In moving something Arthur upset an unusually large inkstand, holding half-a-pint or more of ink, over a large and valuable table cloth—a perfect black sea he made of it. Knowing the common result on such occasions, an outburst of temper the more violent in proportion to the smallness of the mischief, I felt uncomfortable in expectation of a storm. A glance assured me how it would be; Mr. *B.* for a second or two looking very angry, very calmly and coolly said, you reprobate, (*anglicé* idle boy,) see what you have done! Seeing this was all, Arthur *now* nothing abashed, vindicated himself under the plea of accident. Mr. *B.* pausing a moment, in the best humoured tone, with an assumption of fierce displeasure gradually relaxing into his usual mildness of manner and characteristic benevolent expression, at length exclaimed, “How I could scold you! If it would set things to rights as they were, how I would scold you! I would annihilate you! But I know it won’t, so I’ll say nothing; I’ll keep my temper. You are a reprobate, yes, you are.” Arthur, seeing all had blown over, in his usual familiar way, said I know that. It would be strange if I didn’t, you so often say so. *B.*—Aye, because its true—reprobate! For my part I wonder why God made reprobates, can you tell me Mr. *W*? Not then knowing what meaning was really applied to the word, I did not know what reply to make; at hazard I said, I suppose to try our tempers. Mr. *B.*—Perhaps so, but for my part I cannot conceive why they are so mischievous—he must have been muddled, drunk I think. As already said, Bentham applied the word much as others would say idle, careless, petty, mischievous boy, or thoughtless, inattentive youth. Supposing the word to be used in the common sense, wicked, incorrigible offender, the frequent use of it rather shocked me, till an explanation of it was given to me by Arthur. Still I breathed more freely on leaving the workshop, knowing how painful it is merely to be a witness, when men like Bentham are roused to express their anger.

What a beautiful thing it was to behold this old man between eighty and ninety display such command of temper, such restraint, such command of mind over will, also showing that in him practice accorded with a theory of no common strictness. How this good old man has been vituperated there is no call now to notice; admitting his oddnesses and peculiarities, in themselves they were harmless, injurious to no one, whatever ill-nature, ignorance, and malevolence might insinuate.

The appearance of a Mr. C.,⁶² then sub-editor of the *Examiner*, gave occasion for the following jocular remarks by Mr. B., who, being told of the then recent marriage of the Editor in Chief,⁶³ (whose motto ‘Party is the madness of many for the gain of a few,’ it was found very soon afterwards convenient to drop) said, I understand the lady has expressed a desire to see me. Ah! well I see how it is, for though Mr. Albany Fonblanque must of course grow pale, I don’t see how I can refuse her request. He was then informed, the wife and daughter of a Mr. Sedgwick⁶⁴ had made a similar request. Mr. B.—Oh ho! then I’ll have them put into my harem also! Upon my word these are conquests! Thereupon some one exclaimed, Oh you Grand Turk! you are for having a perfect seraglio; which occasioned us considerable glee, B. laughing heartily at the comicalness of the notion.

Bentham’s hospitality was Arab in its feeling and no less odd was his way of showing it. A piece of roast beef was placed on the board as soon as he has taken soup and fish, or pudding, which he does *solus* before we fall to; he was vibrating in the ditch according to custom, when all at once he bursted out at the extent of his sonorous voice with, Oh! the roast beef of old England, oh! the English roast beef; after humming the tune, he said, Now you may fall to. He takes

⁶² Sir Edwin Chadwick (1800–90), social reformer, Secretary of the Poor Law Commission 1834–46 and Commissioner of the Board of Health 1848–54. Bentham engaged Chadwick in 1830 as a private secretary to assist him in the completion of the *Constitutional Code*. Chadwick moved into Bentham’s house at Queen’s Square Place in 1831.

⁶³ Albany Fonblanque.

⁶⁴ Possibly James Sedgwick (1775–1851), author. Adam Sedgwick, the geologist made the subject of an 1835 article by J.S. Mill in the *London Review*, was unmarried. See *London Review*, I (April, 1835), pp. 94–135.

pleasure in seeing what is eaten, that he may see and have your wants supplied, as he always does, pressing you to eat heartily. If you don't, he then says, I'll teach you. He had been observing my proceedings, when he said, Ah, that will never do Mr. *W.*, you eat nothing, you do me injustice for they'll say I starved you! I said, I thought I had a good appetite. Mr. *B.*—It may be so but you eat nothing, you fast, you have taken a vow of abstinence, have you not? I remarked, perhaps London air had affected me, also that I had not been well but hoped to improve in a day or two to his satisfaction. Mr. *B.*—You are fasting to-day, look at Arthur, you must follow his example; yet when he first came he was like you, but you see how I have taught him. You must eat heartily, I insist upon it. All this was said with such kindness of manner you feel at home.

He liked to be told what you might have been doing; for example, May I ask, said he, what Mr. *D.*⁶⁵ and you were talking and laughing about so loudly? Certainly, sir, nothing but the egregious mistakes I make in finding places, and the strange out-of-the-way spots I stumble upon instead of the places I want. Mr. *B.*—Ah, I myself was a bad topographer and so was my father before me. I should be quite lost now, I positively should not know which way to turn myself. If I was set down in Great George Street, I doubt if I should be able to find my own house. I suppose I should know nothing of London, I understand such great changes have been made.

Than himself few could be more inquisitive about sights, illustrious personages, even to those in Wombwell's menagerie.⁶⁶ Before dinner Arthur and I had gone to see an illumination at the Marquis of Londonderry's⁶⁷ (the illustrious person on whose pension petition Lord Liverpool wrote, "too bad,") the King and Queen going to a ball given on the occasion of christening a child for whom they stood sponsors. The arranged lights, the equipages, and the assemblage, mobility and nobility, made it a lively and magnificent sight enough. On sitting down to dinner he enquired where we had

⁶⁵ Richard Doane.

⁶⁶ George Wombwell (1777–1850) was founder of a very popular travelling menagerie.

⁶⁷ Charles William Vane [formerly Stewart] (1778–1854), third Marquess of Londonderry, army officer and diplomatist.

been. Of course seeing the so-much-talked-of illumination at the Marquis's, giving a detailed account of the sights, all which was listened to patiently till we had no more to tell—then quoth, Mr. *B.*—Very pretty amusement for children, fine employment for men, and for you, Mr. *W.*, a philosopher into the bargain! I could not refrain from hinting the little difference there was between philosophers who listened complacently to the tales sight-seeing philosophers [had] to tell. Mr. *B.*—Come, you rogue, that's fair; nor to tell you a small secret nor do I, nor do I, he added quizzically laughing. It appears he disapproves of sight-hunting and laughs at those who seek them; but he likes to be told of what has been seen. In this way living out of the world, he knows what is going on perhaps as well as those who live in it.

With permission asked and given, having absented myself from dinner in order to see Weber's opera, *Der Freischütz*,⁶⁸ instead of jeering about my fancy for such things, next day he was curious to know what I had heard and seen, and what effect it had produced on me. He was pleased with the relation I gave him, complimenting my taste in music, of which in his younger days he was very fond.

I confess Mr. *B.* has left an impression on my mind, that he allowed himself unjustly to disparage authors in general; he considered them as poachers on his manors! especially those who wrote on *similar* subjects. The jealousy among authors has become a proverb. I was sorry to find the great Jurist not exempt from that human frailty. At dinner a parcel evidently containing a book was brought in for Mr. *W.*, and on being given to him Mr. *B.*, said, May I ask what it is? I answered, 'Paine's Rights of Man.'⁶⁹ Mr. *B.*, with much eagerness and contempt apparently,—There's nothing in that book; it is written on a wrong principle; it never so much as mentions the greatest happiness principle. *W.*—Having heard it much talked of I wished to read and judge for myself, that was my reason for buying it never before having had an opportunity. Whatever faults it may have in other respects, the style was always praised as a pure English

⁶⁸ See Wheatley's mention of *Der Freischütz* in Letter II above.

⁶⁹ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*, London, was first published in 1791.

one, excellent for young writers to study and therefore I desired to see it. Mr *B.*—Style! well, I suppose he wrote English! It was his mother tongue, and perhaps he knew it well enough to be able to write it. Style is but the shell, the principle is the kernel; his was a rotten one, proceeding to argue the question as he did as one of *rights* and *duties*, a right in the people to good government, and the duty of governors to give it. To explain Mr. B.'s definition of the words *rights*—*duties*—would lead to a great length; to those desirous of knowing his ideas on the subject I refer them to his celebrated essay "*The Fragment on Government*," ch. 5, sec. 6,⁷⁰ in which his argument as to their definition will be found written in a style that for simplicity, clearness, and force, is not inferior to the despised one of Paine, who, as an author, is celebrated for writing English purely, forcibly, and elegantly, whatever may be thought of his opinions about which this is not the place to argue. One thing only is to be regretted, that Bentham ceased to write in the style of this essay his first chief work.

In further disparagement he proceeded to add, besides you know it is a forbidden book; it has been prosecuted, and I suppose I may fine you for having it in your possession? No, sir, you may not fine the buyer, whatever you may do with the seller. Mr. *B.*—No, no, no, the buyer. *W.*—I maintain it is the seller, so you cannot lay an information against me, to set off for the fine about having game after the 2nd of February, you will recollect the partridges we had for dinner being after that time. This I said to have the joke against Mr. *B.*, who said, By the way you were kind enough to send me some game. Very good of you, I suppose you thought you would help to keep me off the parish (a common joke in such matters) as far as they would go; very well, I take it kindly of you, and my other kind friends. You see the kind lady who sent the partridges you persist I am fineable for had the same kind intention; good woman she too thought she would keep the poor author from starving! By the bye, I may tell you I get many presents, chiefly books; these I call bribes, only they don't bribe me; unsubstantial food enough you'll admit! I pay not the slightest attention to them.—No wonder, for if

⁷⁰ See *A Comment on the Commentaries and A Fragment on Government*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart, London, 1977 (*CW*), p. 494–6 n.

some small pamphlet was sent, as I have seen done even across the Atlantic, with the modest request of his valuable works being sent in return, oh, how they would be valued! (Mr. *B.* aside, doubt it who can? not I, coming in a shape so disinterested! No, no, the old man's not to be taken in so easily.) His printed works alone would form a small library.

Shortly after this period I bought all his works then printed; the cost was about seven or eight pounds; so if such an exchange could be made, the gain would be in some such proportion to the value given as are most of the bargains of white with black and red men!

The great quantity of work he got through day by day apart from any other consideration, as to quantity, was astonishing. Considering the subject matter, that he was an old man above eighty, renders it wonderful. When he had done what he was pleased to consider a good day's work, he mentioned his performances with self-complacency and approbation. His standard was a severe one; he called it his *day's 'erk*, a south provincial phrase equivalent to '*darock*,' or day's work with us. One evening he remarked—'When I have worked well through the day, if I have done a good d'y's '*erk*', when the lamps are lighted after dinner and I must set to afresh, I feel jaded, wearied, and done up, and yet having so much to do, and the time so short, I have no choice but to do my duty and work voluntarily, yet am I a slave chained to the oar—of duty;—or to that effect. On the last occasion I remember telling him, that the mere physical effort of writing so much during the early part of the day, saying not a word of the mind exercise, the mental labour, the thought, that I somewhat more than a third of his years would feel tired. Ah, my dear sir, don't mention it, my faculties fail; I see you say no, but they do; my memory is altogether fading. Knowing his age, and allowing accordingly, his mental powers are extraordinarily vigorous.

I shall conclude my extracts, with the following self-expressed opinion of himself. One day, after musing some time during dessert the prince⁷¹ and myself only at table,—Well, said he, I think I have

⁷¹ Possibly Arthur Moore.

written more than Bacon and Locke together.⁷² Some day after I have gone to Davy's Locker⁷³ my works will be sought after, and I shall be known.—They will be known. His name, as with reason he might aspire to have it known in his life-time, sooner or later will be revealed; if somewhat later, than his what man's works are better fitted to wait their appointed advent? His works will be known to ages as yet far in the future, possibly too his name, whose life was spent in labouring to raise human nature to its least imperfect state, and place its national, social, individual, happiness on the surest foundation, may not burst out in the glory which awaits it, until mankind through extreme human suffering shall have been forced to seek, to perceive, and, by adopting it, to acknowledge, that the right social principle of human action, is—“*au bien du plus grand nombre.*”⁷⁴

⁷² Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Viscount St Alban, politician and philosopher, Lord Chancellor 1618–21. John Locke (1632–1704), philosopher.

⁷³ Davy's (or Davy Jones's) Locker was nautical slang for the grave of those who perish at sea.

⁷⁴ i.e. 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.

BENTHAMIANA

I have frequently heard Bentham express a desire, some one might make a selection from his works after the manner of Selden's *Table Talk*.¹ Something of the kind has been done by one of his former secretaries, Mr. Burton,² the author of several valuable works, among them a *Life of David Hume*,³ who needed a truth-seeking and fearless biographer, which at last he has found in Mr. Burton, whose works, speaking from experience, may be read with equal pleasure and profit. Formerly Mr. Burton was with J.B., how highly esteemed is shown by the bequest to him of Bentham's law library. I make no remark on *Benthamiana*, yet as Bentham referred to Selden's *Table Talk* as a guide, it is to be regretted in so far as size is concerned it was not followed; a shilling's-worth of Benthamese philosophy consisting of the choicest thoughts, also briefly expressed for a beginning, seems the very means for introducing Bentham's name and doctrine familiarly to a popular acquaintance, being as much, it is supposed, as the best disposed railway readers are likely to glance at—the indispensable *première pas* in the case of this philosophical St. Denis.⁴

The editor remarks the first forty years of Bentham's life is connected with the names of Shelbourne, Camden,⁵ Adam Smith,⁶ Hastings,⁷ Wilkes,⁸ Dunning,⁹ Pitt, and Mirabeau;¹⁰ while the

¹ *Table-Talk: being the Discourses of John Selden Esq.; or his sence of various matters of weight and high consequence relating especially to Religion and State*, ed. R. Milward, London, 1689.

² *Benthamiana: or, select extracts from the works of J.Bentham*, ed. J.H. Burton, Edinburgh, 1843. John Hill Burton (1809–81), historian and political economist, collaborated with Bowring in editing *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*.

³ J.H. Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1846.

⁴ St Dionysius of Paris, also known as St Denys (c. 250), patron saint of France. According to Gregory of Tours, St Denys was one of seven 'bishops' sent to convert Gaul and, after becoming bishop of Paris, suffered martyrdom. Wheatley's allusion may be to the sermon St Denys was said to have preached whilst carrying his decapitated head after his execution.

⁵ Charles Pratt (1710–94), first Baron and first Earl Camden, Chief Justice of Common Pleas 1761–6, Lord Chancellor 1766–70, Lord President of the Council 1782–3, 1784–9.

⁶ Adam Smith (*hap.* 1723, d. 1790), moral philosopher and political economist.

latter portion is associated with those of Cartwright,¹¹ Brougham, Burdett, Horner,¹² Mill, Mac[k]intosh,¹³ Hobhouse, O'Connell, Sidney Smith,¹⁴ Mina,¹⁵ and a philosophical disciple of Brama, (the original faith a pure deism most probably known to those of the highest caste,) one Rammahun Roy.¹⁶

In this selection of names there is either singular ill choice, or few to choose, fast approaching the celebrated choice of Hobson—these or none. Among them is only one name worthy of note as certain of the mint stamp of posterity—Adam Smith. The rest, in racing phrase well designated the ruck, were no more than notorieties of the day, some notorious enough. If such are your great names, of a truth they are sorry persons!

Even no long time ago, since they died their memories seem to have evaporated; and a brief glance at their more striking characteristics, will show how small the impress is they have been able to make on the people succeeding them but by a remove of one or two generations.

Thus, if there can be said to be any popular remembrance of a fact in itself extremely insignificant, what in 1853 is known of Shelbourne, except by virtue of being a Lord, that therefore he became the head of an administration? Camden, a partizan lawyer, successful in his trade, talking the constitutional popularities of the

⁷ Warren Hastings (1732–1818), governor-general of Bengal.

⁸ John Wilkes (1725–97), MP for Aylesbury 1757–64, Middlesex 1768–9, 1774–90.

⁹ John Dunning (1731–83), first Baron Ashburton, Solicitor General 1768–70 and close political ally of Shelburne.

¹⁰ Honoré Gabriel Riqueti (1749–91), Comte de Mirabeau, French statesman.

¹¹ John Cartwright (1740–1824), political reformer and Major in the Nottinghamshire Militia from 1775.

¹² Francis Horner (1778–1817), MP for St Ives 1806–7, Wendover 1807–12, and St Mawes 1813–17.

¹³ Sir James Mackintosh (1765–1832), lawyer, philosopher, Recorder of Bombay 1803–11, Judge of the Vice-Admiralty Court in Bombay 1806–11, MP for Nairnshire 1813–18 and Knaresborough 1819–32, rector of Glasgow University 1822–24.

¹⁴ Sydney Smith (1771–1845), author and wit.

¹⁵ Either Francisco Espoz y Mina (1781–1836), the commander-in-chief of the guerrillas in Navarre during the French occupation, or his nephew Martín Xavier Mina (1789–1817), another guerilla leader.

¹⁶ Rammohun Roy (1772?–1833), Indian political and religious thinker.

time, much as if his brief had been marked *King v. People*, and a—ship the fee, with the common whig interpretation thereof, with baited breath in place, out of that paradise loud according to the common law of sound,—that the hollowest vessel gives out most noise;¹⁷ adopting the popular cause not for the sake of right, but as the only road open to power, his principal rival, the clever unprincipled Jacobite law Lord Murray, Earl of Mansfield,¹⁸ who nevertheless licked the dust the German usurper trod on,¹⁹ being the only sure road to power—a pair *Arcades ambo*.²⁰ ADAM SMITH, bearing even greater relation to the science of political economy than Napier, of Merchiston, did to mathematics;²¹ of an enlarged mind, of liberal views, an original thinker, the genius of political economy—not the wretched stuff the pretenders (and their name is legion since his day) have contrived to reduce it to. Hastings, an unprincipled scoundrel of ability, of the Clive²² and Hastings’ school, of both of whom it may be said, under the guise of vigour and wisdom, their Indian policy, hellish in intent, remorseless in execution, surpassing those of Juggernaut²³ in atrocity, has failed to float their names down to 1853! Wilkes, an agreeable witty profligate, an English counterpart of the French Mirabeau; starting as a demagogue, factious because regardless of principle, and ending a chequered life, the pensioned renegade of a Court more decorous than he, yet to the full and as deeply sunk in political depravity and vice. Dunning, a whig lawyer, clever, no doubt; cool, deliberate, unprincipled, a political adventurer who suffered no honest principle, no “truth before the world” to stand

¹⁷ Possibly an allusion to Shakespeare, *Henry V*, IV. iv.

¹⁸ William Murray (1705–93), first Earl of Mansfield, Solicitor General 1742–54, Attorney General 1754–6, Lord Chief Justice of the King’s Bench 1756–88.

¹⁹ Mansfield was a political adviser to both George II and George III.

²⁰ i.e. two persons of the same tastes, profession, or character.

²¹ John Napier of Merchiston (1550–1617), mathematician.

²² Robert Clive (1725–74), army officer in the East India Company and administrator in India.

²³ Juggernaut was Bentham’s term for established religion. The word was derived from Jagannath, a title of Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu. An uncouth idol of this deity was annually dragged in procession on an enormous car at Puri in Orissa, under the wheels of which many devotees are said to have formerly thown themselves to be crushed.

between him and his small ambitions; his reputation, to call it fame would be an abuse of terms,—ended the instant his voice ceased to be heard in the Law Courts, the common fate of your great lawyers who think the hollow echoes from their tongues in those iniquitous dens of unreformed law, are the only guarantees of everlasting fame to be reaped by none save your would-be-great legislative jurists. Pitt, junior, (I imagine) may be dismissed with the scornful poet's lines;—

*** "Pitt too had his pride,
 And as a high-soul'd minister of state is
 Renown'd for ruining Great Britain gratis."²⁴
 And again—
 "With death doomed to grapple,
 Beneath this cold slab, he
 Who lied in the chapel
 Now lies in the Abbey."²⁵

Mirabeau, a name which makes one exclaim, alas! that Nature should form beings of so fair and full a promise, yet so foully false; of that high order of talent which barely falls short of genius; an orator, but a man of action rather than thought; in private life a debauchee, of passions so ungovernable, in him they looked like madness—if so, let us pity, not condemn, their wretched victim; a leader of the people equally famous and infamous, miserable creature that he was, betraying and selling them to the oppressor for a pension, to save him from the consequences self-vice had brought upon him.

Turn now to the latter lot, apply the dissecting knife to them, and let us see how they will appear. If indeed a man is by comparison to be judged of by the reputations of his contemporaries, a reputation such as Bentham's is in danger of being measured by a standard every way so low as to risk being unfairly depreciated. Consolatory, however, is the reflection, that a man can no more help living when such and such worthies existed, than during the plagues, the pestilences or the famines, which happened in his time.

²⁴ Lord Byron, *Don Juan*, canto IX, stanza VIII, in *The Works of Lord Byron*, vol. vi, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, London, 1903, p. 376.

²⁵ Lord Byron, *Epitaph for William Pitt*, in *The Works of Lord Byron*, vol. vii, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, London, 1904, p. 64.

Brougham, by profession a *nisi prius* lawyer, by trade a political adventurer, the sciolist of his times; a bar orator, a mere power-of-words man, not a lawyer, little as that is now acknowledged to have been and is; in all things connected with self, under colour of self-denial to simplicity, one of the most arrogant self-seekers; so uncertain in thought and deed, his friends, the better they knew his idiosyncracies, the more they distrusted him, no man ever yet knew where to have him; under suspicion of unsound mind, in that, as Dr. Cullen²⁶ observed, many of us have some excuse for our eccentricities; he left his native place, Edinburgh, with the name of a redoubted spouter, and that knowledge of all science, of everything, it is not possible to acquire solid information, learning so much he had no time to know anything; from impetuosity of temperament he fought his way as a party and clique man; he began life in the genteel demagogue line, and like his compeers in political profligacy, Wilkes and Mirabeau, with whom in ability he will bear no comparison towards the close of a turbulent partizan, miserably restless, life, foreswearing every former principle and profession, he has accepted a pension with a title as a parliamentary Law Lord, as *lucus a non lucendo*,²⁷ and become a virulent Tory!

Burdett, one of those spoiled children of the world, having so much they cannot learn what is enough; to the true man, be he rich or poor, for such baubles as a star, a garter, a ribbon, which after all he could not get, he sacrificed a fair popular reputation, to become a living mark for men to point the finger of scorn at.

Horner, a decent nobody, of the sciolist class, a qualification, however, of an early Edinburgh Reviewer, which he was; much cried up as a Whig clique man; his talents as moderate as his views, building a small reputation for acquaintance with monetary political economy; an amiable person in private life, but dying soon, he was as soon forgotten.

Mill, a much-cried-up writer in his day. Bentham described him as “a polisher of my ideas”—that is a bookmaker, an adapter, not a producer of original thought. Still the author of his History of British

²⁶ William Cullen (1710–90), chemist and physician.

²⁷ i.e. a paradoxical or otherwise absurd derivation.

India, it is evident, must have polished his own thoughts to some purpose. Be that as it may, the work, and a valuable one it is, can hardly be deemed popular any more than its author.

Mackintosh, a Scotch *feelosofer*, a politico-literary adventurer; a great bookmaker of little vitality; one of the Whig caw me caw thee clique; a mighty power-of-words man, which with Scotch canniness he turned to good money account; a rich Indian judgeship fell to his share of the political goods “the gods provide,” and the ungrateful rascal, some fourth or fifth-rate lawyer, called going to India—his banishment! He, like thousands of his class, has fallen into the wide pacific ocean of oblivion, which if its capacity were not infinite, long ago one would imagine had been crammed to repletion.

Hobhouse, one of those straws showing which way the wind sets; in youthful days a specimen of what rich brewery people may arrive at in the class of pure political fashionable humbugs; in office afterwards, witness Cabul, and that Affghan war as mischievous as his ignorance, which was immeasurable, such the “mystery king!” at the Board of Control; in literary affairs a still-born child of the press puffed into a sickly notoriety through connection with a lord, who, a poet of the highest order of genius, was such a poor creature as to be prouder of the illustrious by courtesy title of an English nobleman, than of the nobility—the gift of nature.

O’Connell, no question the first among the first of the clouds of political adventurers which Ireland has sent forth; a mighty clever fellow, too clever by half, he cheated himself, no uncommon case with knaves; than this man no one ever held such dominion over his countrymen, or so abused it; he might have led them to a national regeneration, with an imperishable name as the benefactor of Ireland; but no, wanting alike in enlarged views, regardless of principle, transmigrating into a political Jeremy Diddler,²⁸ he gulled them, the most poverty-stricken people on earth, into raising the wind, called “rint,” to keep his own head above water!

Sidney Smith, one of the early Edinburgh reviewers, an inditer of smart sayings, the dining-out man of wit, no principle, unpardonably self-indulgent, and a greedy church-preferment hunter.

²⁸ A character in James Kenney’s 1803 play *Raising the Wind*.

Mina, of the order Spanish cut-throat, the war of independence on his tongue, yet doing smart business on private account as a bandit in Spain, during the so nick-named war of independence.

RAMMAHUN ROY, by birth a native of India, location Calcutta, business a merchant possessed of half a million sovereigns, therefore a god ready made for John Bull and his family to fall down and worship like a golden calf, to which in olden times a certain petty tribe of wandering savages—a horde of ignorant barbarians, calling themselves Hebrews—idolaters bended the knee, and by consequence have never since been able to straight their legs! Rammahun Roy, a Bramin of the highest caste, an Indian heathen, yet no juggler, of him so worthy to be known the world knew little, and now knows nothing; in him the element of that which is greater than greatness in the worthiest and highest sense, had he been spared a few years, would have made his an Indian name honoured throughout “the wide expanse of Ind,” known only to be honoured in Europe. It has been said he was a high caste Bramin. In Europe the sacrifice cannot be appreciated, yet he had the moral courage, through conviction, to declare his conversion to the pure simple divine principle of Deism—which, before it was corrupted by the Braminical hierarchy, was the original pure principle of the religion of Brama, like all the ancient religions of this earth, of which aught remains—a sacrifice which none but an Indian can understand, being to him loss of world’s honor, station, rank,—placing an impassable gulf between him and the nearest and dearest ties; in a word, by such change, he who so far had been held divine, almost a living human god, becomes an outcast and a pariah, beyond which in the depths of human degradation, bodily and mental, in the mind of the Indian it is impossible to sink. As observed, in its first principles and outset, the religion styled that of Brama was simple Deism; in its progress, one of four thousand five hundred years, at least, older than the Pyramids of Egypt, whatever time they may date from. Like all other faiths, however, with barely half its duration, so to speak, the creeds of yesterday, however originally pure, through priestcraft have become signally and repulsively corrupt. For example, only see a Bishop of London, such the sample such are the sacks, riding in his carriage, clothed in purple and fine linen, surrounded by all the “pomps

and vanities of this wicked world,”²⁹ while their great teacher, the carpenter’s son, knowing not where to lay his head, whose rule of practical faith was entire self-negation of “the pomps and vanities of this wicked world,” most emphatically declared his kingdom was not of this world! Mahommedanism, the doctrine of the Koran, seemed most fitted to the Eastern mind, rationally changing from one, that of Brama, to some other faith, inasmuch as the system inculcated in the Koran in religious sentiment as well as in moral principle, being in treatment so essentially Eastern in substance and form, as to invite the Eastern mind aroused to investigate, and once freed from antecedent trammels so likely to invite acceptance. As we men of the nineteenth century, now half expired, are beginning to learn and to acknowledge, with some degree of toleration, that the Koran inculcates in the strictest sense the principle of unity as the attribute of the supreme Being; and such principles of morality, however variously interpreted in detail, as are substantially accepted by the various races of man so far emerged from the mere animal state of human existence as to think at all. Though the most likely course, it was not the one pursued by this exalted being, who adopted as his system of faith (so I have been told) that which of course, negating Mahommedanism, is the nearest approach to its grand feature, the principle of the divine unity, namely, Unitarianism—as interpreted by those holding its peculiar tenets—a sect, by its belief in one only supremely divine Being, adding one more to the continually dividing and sub-diving interpreters of the christian faith, which *we* of the Church of England denominate sectaries, or dissenters, whose name is legion. Adopting Unitarianism as understood in England, that was the rationally elected faith of this wonderful Indian, who, I believe, richly merited the eulogies that have issued from the lips of Bentham on this once follower of Brama, but ending by self-conversion in its place accepting some other creed; a man, like all intellectual Asiatics, of acute and penetrating understanding, but individually superior to most of them, being of singular purity of intent as well as entertaining a high-souled love of truth, which he pursued at any and

²⁹ A line from ‘The Catechism’ in *The Book of Common Prayer*. For Bentham’s interpretation see *Church-of-Englandism and its Catechism Examined*, ed. James E. Crimmins and Catherine Fuller, Oxford, 2011 (*CW*), p. 209.

all sacrifice—sacrifice but few men can credit, unless in themselves they are of a similar order of mind, and at the same time possess grasp of capacity equal to forming a just appreciation of Rammahun Roy, the self-converted Bramin.

Perhaps at one time I myself might not thus highly estimate this singular character, but after-consideration convinces me in what I have said, I have done no more than justice to the character of this excellent Asiatic.

The opinions I have formed of Bentham's contemporaries, being chiefly my own countrymen, may be thought strange and perverse. Probably were the holder of them of any the least repute in the world of literature, or otherwise, most likely they might give rise to much angry controversy with party men and their partizans, not so much as they quarrel with such strongly-expressed dyslogistic opinions, as having ground to fear what has been so freely spoken of the bubbles of their times may be as tellingly urged against themselves.

On a first perusal of Mr. Burton's *Benthamiana* I was much struck with the meagre character of the men selected as notable persons, a kind of English worthies, famed for personal worth or great ability, to be set forth as the contemporaries of Bentham, to the exclusion of men with better claims for the honor. This feeling induced me to investigate rather more narrowly "the wherefore" such persons should have been so distinguished, with what result has been seen. Being one of those who think single mindedness more conducive to human happiness than even transcendent talents, being one of those who venerate the mild yet radiant virtues of Washington,³⁰ who, sinking self instead of raising a monarchy, founded a great nation; because thinking such virtues are infinitely more beneficent than the splendour attaching to even so unquestionably great a genius as the first Napoleon;³¹—since it has become the fashion to ticket the name with a number, which has gone on at a rate so rapid that in reaching number three, it seems to me, it has been forgotten in the ordinary way of numbering, in

³⁰ George Washington (1732–99), commander-in-chief of the Continental forces in the war of independence and first President of the United States.

³¹ Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), Emperor of France.

order to get at three, number two should first have place; holding opinions such as these, the conclusions I have come to are the natural results. What is more, I believe what I have remarked of Washington, contrasted with Napoleon, would have received the imprimatur of Bentham himself; and of the others I do not very well see how it could have been rejected by him, seeing that he had expressed sentiments respecting some of them not so exceedingly dissimilar from mine. I can even fancy I see his serious benevolent look when listening to what I had to say, and with a smile of certain significance, saying “Well, I say nothing, I give no opinion, mind not but that I have one though; but of one thing make certain, if such are your thoughts, unless you keep them to yourself you will raise a nest of hornets about you.” I believe he might have made some such remark as I have indicated.

Bentham is, however, little known to his own countrymen. His works as yet obtain but small circulation, nor in one respect is this to be regretted, seeing the wretched editing of one of his latest works, “Deontology,”³² and the total suppression of another, “Not Paul but Jesus,”³³ which ought not to have been, after Bentham saw fit to publish it in his life time. In such a case suppression of opinion, no matter what or what the subject, is no better than falsifying it. His life has yet to be written, for at present we have but a raw material for such a work. It is greatly to be regretted he did not write his own life, no less for the charm which always attaches to an autobiography than the certainty which we should then have had of his sentiments, unless indeed those considered unpalatable should be burked or overlaid in the editing, as the careless or more culpable nurse did who gave occasion for the judgment of Solomon.³⁴

From notes made on the spot and at the time, I have given several trifling anecdotes of Bentham in his private or domestic character,

³² Wheatley is referring to the edition of *Deontology* produced by John Bowring and published in two volumes in 1834. For the authoritative edition of this work, see *Deontology together with a Table of the Springs of Action and Article on Utilitarianism*, ed. Amnon Goldworth, Oxford, 1983 (*CW*).

³³ None of Bentham’s writings on religion were included in the Bowring edition of his works.

³⁴ See 1 Kings 3: 16–28.

his own remarks [in] his own words, as nearly as I could report them. My own opinions and sentiments then or subsequently formed are obviously enough distinct not to be taken for those of the great master himself, into whose communion it has ever since been the pride and solace of a checquered life to have been admitted by himself, under circumstances which I cannot but feel honourable as respects myself, as will appear if ever they should be known. This much I will say, insignificant, unknown, unsought, I obtained the personal friendship of Jeremy Bentham, and the honor of spending some time under his roof, his invited guest.