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<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>The 'Bowring edition' of The works of Jeremy Bentham, 1838-1843: its formation, editorial problem and editors</th>
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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Otonashi, Michihiro</td>
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Michihiro Otonashi

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The first English collected edition of Bentham’s works was published ‘under the superintendence of his executor, John Bowring’ in 1838–1843. This is a commonplace today, but little is known about the processes by which *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* was edited and published under John Bowring.

As is well known, since its appearance, the so-called ‘Bowring edition’ of *The Works* has been widely criticised for defects in the texts, and therefore for its failure to reproduce Bentham’s thought. Besides being printed in a discouraging format of double columns in small type, the texts for many works were taken from Dumont’s French versions as well as from Bentham’s original writings. Not only were Bentham’s religious writings excluded from Bowring’s edition, but also many manuscripts were left unpublished. The *Memoirs of Bentham*, which was compiled by Bowring himself and included in the last two volumes of his edition, was called by Lesley Stephen ‘one of the worst biographies in the language’ on the grounds that Bowring’s descriptions were ‘hasty’ and unreliable. As for Bowring’s edition of *The Works* as a whole, it was regarded in its early days as ‘incomplete, incorrect and ill arranged’, and more recently as being edited without any ‘consistent or uniform method’. Bowring himself was even looked upon, by William Stark, as ‘not fit to be Bentham’s intimus because he did not understand his philosophy, and because he would not have been in sympathy with it if he understood it’.

* Emerging from my preparatory research for *A Bibliographical Catalogue of the Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Tokyo, 1989), this paper was presented to the Bentham Seminars on 16 February 1991 at University College London. I should like to thank Professor Fred Rosen and other staff of the Bentham Project, who offered me every possible facilities for research while I was staying there as a visiting fellow between 1989 and 1991, for their helpful comments, criticisms and encouragement. My special thanks are also due to Ms. Jane Haville for assisting me in preparing this paper. Needless to say, the responsibility for any error or shortcoming that may remain in the following pages is mine.
In spite of these criticisms, Bowring's edition has been, at least until recently, the only English collected edition of Bentham's works. This situation is in part explained by the very nature of Bentham's writings. Bentham wrote voluminously on many subjects, and yet his concern for the published form of his writings dwindled as his long life advanced. Therefore, as Professor J.H. Burns, general editor of the new collected edition of Bentham's works, once pointed out, any editor or editors from any single field of scholarship were almost incapable of presenting all of them in an acceptable form.7

However, I am not going to estimate the value of the texts of Bowring's edition by comparing them with Bentham's original writings. My purpose in this paper is to present several facts which have not been fully brought to light by Bentham scholars, examining them in the history of Bowring's edition of *The Works*.

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I

Bentham died on 6 June 1832, leaving a will which was produced just before his death with the assistance of Edwin Chadwick, Richard Doane and a lawyer named Gregory.8 During the last years of Bentham's life, Bowring had been worried about the final settlement of the will. Although Bentham had repeated the promise to appoint him as executor, Bowring was very apprehensive that there might be any change in Bentham's mind at the last moment.9 But he proved to have been oversolicitous. Bentham appointed Bowring in his will as executor and bequeathed him the greater part of his manuscripts, including those on religion. Bentham also left him two thousand pounds for the publication of 'a complete edition' of his works, and allowed him to pay from his bequest to the editor or editors of his collected edition. At the same time Bentham left his nephew, George Bentham, other manuscripts relating to Logic and Language with his residuary estate, charging him 'to co-operate cordially' with the executor and to 'lend him all the aid in his power' in the preparation of the collected edition.10

However, George Bentham who had helped Bentham arrange his writings or translate them into French could not accept the idea that Bowring had a full right to the publication of Bentham's works. He decided to challenge Bowring's power. He claimed the right was limited to the works which could be published for the sum of two thousand pounds. This news irritated Bowring, since he was anxious lest there should be the possibility of the dispute being prolonged. He
wrote or talked to Chadwick and others concerning the matter to hear their opinions. Bowring was not confident about his success in court, because he was aware that the will had been 'harried too much to be very maturely considered'. But as he wrote in a letter to Chadwick, George Bentham's action appeared to him 'a most naked attempt to unhorse the Executor and to plant himself in the saddle', which made him determine to keep full control over Bentham's papers. Attempts for a compromise were made, in vain, by Francis Place and others, including George Bentham himself. In the event, the dispute was taken to court by George Bentham.

On 9 February 1835, a court decision was finally given in Bowring's favour. It was not until two and a half years after Bentham's death that Bowring could totally start preparing for the publication of Bentham's writings. In fact, an article advertising the publication of the collected edition of Bentham's works appeared in the *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for September 1836. This article, written by William Tait, announced that the arrangements had been made for the 'speedy publication' of the collected edition of Bentham's works, giving a sample of the format for the text. This fact shows that the plan for the publication of *The Works* rapidly materialised over one and a half years after the court decision. I quote a few passages from the article, since they give valuable information about the early plan for the collected edition of the works:

We have the satisfaction of announcing to the public, that arrangements have been made for the speedy publication of a complete and uniform edition of the works of Jeremy Bentham, in the form best calculated for a very wide diffusion of writings so valuable in the eyes of all friends of true morality and good government into whose hands they have fallen.

Indeed, the notion that Bentham's works are utterly unreadable, has been so industriously propagated by those who had good reason to wish that they should not be read, that it has been very generally believed; has prevented thousands from once looking into any one of Bentham's writings. That this notion is not applicable to all his works, we offer the best proof, by subjoining, entire, one of the number, (*Truth versus Ashurst (sic)*); ... 

This first uniform edition, in English, of the works of our great English moralist and lawgiver, will be comprised in seven volumes octavo. It will include a reprint of all his works formerly published in English; a translation of those hitherto only to be read in the French or other foreign languages; and a selection from valuable manuscripts left in charge of his friend, Dr Bowring. A portrait of the excellent author, and a short account
of his life and writings, will impart interest to the edition; and a very complete index, compiled with especial care, will contribute greatly to its usefulness. The issue of the works will be in Parts, all of which be sold separately; and it will be possible to complete sets at any time, as the work will be stereotyped.

When the matter of thirty volumes is to be comprised in seven volumes, it may be supposed that these seven volumes must be large, the type small, and the price of the volumes considerable. Such will be the case. But, by adopting this mode of publication, the price will be reduced, as well as the bulk of the works. Instead of thirty volumes, at perhaps £21, purchasers of the whole works will have only seven volumes and about £6:6s. to pay.15

As can be noticed, Bowring's edition of The Works was in its early plan to be published in seven volumes, not in eleven, in parts, and to be stereotyped in small type. These were apparently intended to reduce the price of the book, and to follow in its format Tait's Magazine, as the sample given after these passages shows. In fact, according to A. Muirhead, each part of The Works was sold for nine shillings.16 Moreover, it is noteworthy that Bowring's Memoirs of Bentham was not, at least explicitly, mentioned at this time. It was written afterwards to be included in the collected edition.

II

The Edinburgh publisher, William Tait, had been the only distributor of the Westminster Review for Scotland since the 1820s,17 of which Bowring was political editor from its start in 1824. It was probably Tait who recommended Bowring as a candidate for the Clyde Burghs of Scotland at the general election of January 1835. After Bowring's having won a seat in Parliament, Tait accompanied him several times to Kilmarnock in the constituency for his support. Bentham had also named Tait in his will as a person among people to whom to leave his ring with effigy and some hair after his death.18 Tait was therefore not only Bowring's friend but his political colleague, a man to be relied on and entrusted with the publication of Bentham's collected works.19

During these years and after, however, Bowring himself was almost always engaged in commercial missions abroad and in Parliamentary or other activities at home. For instance, in 1834 he was in France on a commercial mission of the government except the months of February, June and July. From January 1835 to July 1837, on the one hand he acted as a member of Parliament and on the
other visiting Switzerland, Belgium and Italy. He was in Egypt and Syria for one year from August 1837 to August 1838. From July to October 1839, he went to Germany on a commercial mission, and from July 1841 to 1846 was again a member of Parliament. While not engaged in these activities, he was making reports for the government of his commercial missions or was touring round the Midlands and the north of England, Scotland, Southwales or Cornwall in order to secure nomination of a candidate for Parliament.20

He was so absorbed in his own business that it was virtually impossible to perform by himself the duty of arranging Bentham's writings for publication. This duty was put into others' hands. However, this did not mean that he had nothing to do with compiling the collected edition. As his correspondence with Tait, John Hill Burton and others shows, in the first place, he retained the authority to decide which works of Bentham should be included in or excluded from the collected edition. Secondly, he more or less supervised the progress of the editorial tasks. Thirdly, he demanded the change of editor, as in the case of Edwin Chadwick. The latter had been entrusted with editing the Constitutional Code, but was replaced afterwards by Richard Doane on the grounds that he was too slow in compiling the Code. Fourthly, Bowring occasionally read the proof-sheets and advised or directed the corrections when he thought necessary, though it is not clear as to the extent of his advice or direction.21 The collected edition of Bentham's works was compiled and published under Bowring's such 'superintendence' as literary executor. But it was nearly one and a half years after Tait's article that the first part of The Works appeared.
THE
WORKS
OF
JEREMY BENTHAM,
NOW FIRST COLLECTED;
UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF HIS EXECUTOR,
JOHN BOWRING.

PART I.
CONTAINING
THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALS AND LEGISLATION.
ON THE PROMULGATION OF LAWS; WITH SPECIMEN OF A PENAL CODE:
EDITED FROM THE FRENCH OF DUMONT, AND THE MSS. OF BENTHAM.
ON THE INFLUENCE OF TIME AND PLACE IN MATTERS OF
LEGISLATION:—FROM THE MSS. OF BENTHAM.
A TABLE OF THE SPRINGS OF ACTION.
A FRAGMENT ON GOVERNMENT; WITH THE HISTORICAL PREFACE
TO THE SECOND EDITION.

EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM TAIT, 78 PRINCE'S STREET;
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO. LONDON; JOHN CUMMING, DUBLIN.
MDCCCXXXVIII.

[Fig. 1]
THE WORKS OF JEREMY BENTHAM,

NOW FIRST COLLECTED;

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF HIS EXECUTOR,

JOHN BOWRING.

PART XXII.

CONTAINING

CONCLUSION OF GENERAL INDEX;

AND

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF BENTHAM'S WORKS,

BY J. H. BURTON, ESQ., ADVOCATE,

ONE OF THE EDITORS.

EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM TAIT, 107, PRINCE'S STREET;
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO., LONDON; JOHN CUMMING, DUBLIN.

MDCCCXLIII.

[Fig. 2]
Bowring's edition of *The Works* was eventually published in eleven volumes, not in seven, in twenty-two separate parts. A copy of *The Works* in the British Library fortunately preserves the original title-page of each part. On the title-page of each part, there appear contents, publishers' imprint and date of publication. The volume number of each part was previously printed in Roman numerals at the bottom of the first leaf of each sheet or gathering of the texts; and the texts of each two parts have serial signatures and pagination in one volume. From these, we can compose a table of the publication dates and orders of parts and volumes in the original issue. (See the table on p. 9.)

As can be seen from the table, the first six parts, from Part I to Part VI, were published in 1838. The second six parts, from Part VII to Part XII appeared in 1839. Only two parts, i.e., Parts XIII and XIV were brought out in 1840. In this year, William Tait moved his office from '78 Prince's Street' to '107, Prince's Street' in Edinburgh, and at the same time he started printing *The Works* by himself. As a result, printer's imprints on the verso of the title-pages of Parts and at the bottom of the last pages of the texts of volumes were changed from 'STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY STEVENSON AND CO. THISTLE STREET, EDINBURGH' to 'EDINBURGH: Printed by WILLIAM TAIT, Prince's Street'. The next three parts, i.e., Part XV to Part XVII, and four parts from Part XVIII to Part XXI appeared in 1841 and 1842 respectively. The last part, Part XXII, was published at the beginning of 1843.

While the parts were published in order, the volumes were not always so. The order of their publication was considerably complicated, as follows: Volumes I, IV, V, II, III, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X and XI. It is noteworthy that these volumes in twenty-two separate parts were distributed in Dublin by John Cumming as well as in Edinburgh by William Tait and in London by Simpkin, Marshall and Co.

However, these facts and others were kept from the public eye after 1843. After Part XXII was published in 1843, every two succeeding parts were bound up into one volume with some changes. At this binding, original title-pages were usually cancelled, and new title-pages were attached, all dated 1843 and 'JOHN CUMMING, DUBLIN' dropped out. (See Fig. 3.) The contents of each volume were inserted next to the title-page. The list of errata which had been prefixed to Part XXII was transferred to Volume I. The most important change was probably that of the location of Burton's *Introduction to the Study of the Works of Jeremy Bentham*. It has occupied the space in Volume I preceding
### Publication of *The Works*

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### Notes:
- \(\pi\) : original title-page of each part.
- Part X, 2Q2; Part XVIII, 2T4; Part XX, 2Q8 : fly-leaves.
- Part XXII : sheets 'a–f' were transferred to Volume I in 1843 and inserted between sheets [a] and [b].
THE

WORKS

OF

JEREMY BENTHAM,

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF
HIS EXECUTOR,

JOHN BOWRING.

VOLUME I.

EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM TAIT, 107, PRINCE'S STREET;
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO., LONDON.
MDCCCLXXIII.

[Fig. 3]
Bentham’s *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* after 1843. But it is clear from the title-page of Part XXII that Burton's *Introduction* was originally intended for the last part of *The Works* and was to be placed after the *Analytical Index.* (See Fig. 2.)

Burton's *Introduction* was apparently written in the latter half of 1842. Evidence: First, it has a printer’s imprint ‘EDINBURGH: … WILLIAM TAIT …’ on the last page of the text. This suggests that the *Introduction* was printed after 1841. Second, many references to Parts I to XXI appear in the footnotes to the text of the *Introduction.* The last part of these, Part XXI, was published in the summer or autumn of 1842. Third, most decisively, in one of the footnotes we can find passages from a newspaper, *The Globe,* dated 7 December 1842.23 Thus it can be concluded that Burton’s *Introduction* was completed after 7 December, presumably at the end of December 1842 or at the beginning of 1843. In fact, a copy of Part I without Burton’s *Introduction* is preserved in the British Library.24

While the copy of Part I can be found, we have not succeeded unfortunately in finding any perfect separate copy of Part XXII. Therefore, it can not be decisively proved whether the original plan on the title-page of Part XXII was put into practice. However, a separate copy of Burton’s *Introduction* is preserved in the University College London Library.25 As this copy shows, Burton’s *Introduction* was printed with its own serial signatures (a—e8f2) by William Tait, and separately published in 1843. The text of his *Introduction* inserted in Volume I at the binding of 1843 has exactly the same serial signatures (and pagination) as those of the copy in the University College London Library, with the exception of the cancellation of the title-page. From these, it can safely be affirmed that: separately printed, Burton’s *Introduction* could be attached to Part XXII and placed after the *Analytical Index.* In this sense, it can also be said that the original plan was put into practice. But it was transferred to Volume I during the binding in 1843.

As for the copies of the 1843 issues of *The Works,* several but minor differences also appear among them, apart from the imperfect copies. Some copies have on the title-page ‘EDINBURGH: … PRINCE’S STREET …’ (emphasis added) as the place of publication and on its verso a printer’s imprint. But other copies have ‘EDINBURGH: … PRINCES STREET …’ (emphasis added) as the place of publication and no printer’s imprint on the verso. In the former copies, the contents of each volume are inserted next to the title-page, but they are omitted in the latter copies. In spite of these differences, however, all the copies have the same type-setting. Therefore, those differences mean the dis-
tinctions among issues, but not among editions. Although we could not find and check enough copies to classify all differences into groups, it can be said, as far as we know, that *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* was issued more than twice in 1843.

IV

As Tait wrote in his article, Bowring's edition included reprints of the works formerly published in English, translations from Dumont's French versions and selections from Bentham's original manuscripts. There are many notes by editors added to the works in Bowring's edition. These notes give the dates when the works were written, printed or published, and explain, if not sufficiently, their material sources in some cases. Their authorship is not given. But we can identify their authorship by checking the *Index* or other sources, and thus specify the editors of the greater part of the works in Bowring's edition. On the one hand, there are many notes not mentioned at all in the *Index*, and on the other, if mentioned, different kinds of notes by different editors are added to the same work. As for the works which have no note, almost all of them were reprints of the works formerly printed or published in English.

As we shall see in the list of the editors of the works (see pp. 15–20), the substantial editorial tasks for Bowring's edition were carried out by Richard Smith, Thomas Southwood Smith, Richard Doane and John Hill Burton. However, as Bowring's correspondence with Tait and others suggests, the greatest and final responsibility for the editorial tasks seems to have been in Burton's hands. He not only compiled many works by himself but frequently added his own notes to the notes of other editors.

As for the *General Preface* signed 'W. W. Glasgow, December 1837' in Volume I, evidence for the authorship is not given. However, an article with a title 'New issue of Jeremy Bentham. — State and prospects of the country' appeared in the *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for January 1838. This article has partly similar contents to the *General Preface*, though its authorship is not given either. But during these years, there appeared political articles in the *Magazine*, many of which have been attributed to Tait. The article 'New issue of Jeremy Bentham' also has a similar tone to those political articles. From these, it can be said that the *General Preface* was almost certainly written by Tait himself.

The *Memoirs of Bentham* was first serialised in Tait's *Edinburgh Magazine* from January 1840 to July 1842 and, after revisions, was included in the last
two volumes of *The Works*.

In one of his letters to Burton, Bowring had written on the importance of an index to a book. The *Analytical Index* was compiled in accordance with Bowring’s insistence, and occupies nearly four hundred pages of the last volume of *The Works*. A brief description by the editor can be read on the verso of the half title-page of the Index: ‘For the accuracy and completeness of the following Index, the writer of the Introduction to the Study of the Works is responsible’. From this description, we can identify the author of the Index. It was prepared for the collected edition by John Hill Burton. He also published a selection from Bentham’s works, *Benthamiana*, in the same year (1843). From the same material sources, it can be supposed, he wrote the *Introduction* and at the same time compiled the Index and *Benthamiana* in the last years of editing the collected edition.

Burton did many of the editorial tasks for the publication of *The Works*. As can be observed from the list of editors, he edited, directly or indirectly, more than half of the works included in the collected edition. He was also probably responsible for the reprints of the works. It is not too much to say that the greater part of the works, including reprints, in the collected edition was edited by Burton. Therefore, the first English collected edition of Bentham’s works should be called Burton’s edition rather than Bowring’s.

During Bentham’s last years, Bowring had taken pains to secure the position of literary executor. As a result, the collected edition of Bentham’s works was published under Bowring’s superintendence within ten years or so after Bentham’s death. However, Francis Place, Edwin Chadwick and Peregrine Bingham who had assisted Bentham in arranging his writings for publication were not even named in the Index. The Mills’ involvement in Bentham’s works was also neglected. The collected edition of Bentham’s works was brought out with a partiality resulting from the conflicts within the Benthamite circle since the 1820s. It has been said that when Macaulay attacked Utilitarianism, Joseph Hume urged Place to persuade the Mills, not Peronett Thompson or Bowring, into writing a response to Macaulay. Here, again Stark’s highly critical words can be recalled. Bowring was ‘not fit to be Bentham’s intimus because he did not understand his philosophy, and because he would not have been in sympathy with it if he understood it’. These words against Bowring may sound too severe, but they were based on his long and laborious experiences as the editor.
of Bentham’s economic writings. The image of Bentham in the history of thought might have been different, had the Mills held the right to editing the collected edition of Bentham’s works.
Vol. I.

General Preface. [ Signed 'W. W., Glasgow, December 1837.' ] pp.v–xv
( Probably William Tait )

Introduction to the Study of the Works. John Hill Burton 1–83

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2 "Swear Not at All" alone was included in *The Works*, vol. v, pp. 187–229.

Almost all of Bentham's religious writings were excluded by Bowring on the grounds that they were 'not' 'safe to give the world, even after his [Bentham's] death', since they were 'so bold and adventurous'. See *Autobiographical Recollections of Sir John Bowring*, ed. Lewin B. Bowring, London, 1877, p. 339. Bowring was a Unitarian, and as such he could not probably permit Bentham's attacks on religion to be included in the collected edition. One of the writings in Bentham's last years, *Auto-Icon, or Further Uses of the Dead to the Living*, was also excluded from *The Works*. According to Muirhead, 'about thirty copies' of the *Auto-Icon* were 'printed and distributed about 1842 by John Hill Burton'. See Arnold Muirhead, 'A Jeremy Bentham Collection', *The Library: A Quarterly Review*, Series 5, vol. 1 (1946), p. 24. For an analysis of the *Auto-Icon*, see C.F.A. Marmoy, 'The "Auto-Icon" of Jeremy Bentham at University College London', (London, reprint from *Medical History*, vol. ii, no. 2, 1958), and for Bentham's religious thought in general, see James E. Crimmins, *Secular Utilitarianism, Social Science and the Critique of Religion in the Thought of Jeremy Bentham*, Oxford, 1990.


4 William Empson, 'Memoirs of Jeremy Bentham. Including Autobiographical Conversations and Correspondence. By John Bowring. ... Edinburgh: 1842-3', *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxxvii (Oct. 1843), p. 516. This article seems to have been the first to point out that Bowring's *Memoirs* failed to convey the true image of Bentham.


8 The will is dated on 30 May 1832, but according to Bartle, it was settled a few days earlier. George F. Bartle, 'Jeremy Bentham and John Bowring: a study of the relationship between Bentham and the editor of his *Collected Works*, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* (University of London), vol. xxxvi (1963), p. 33n.

9 Bowring to Chadwick, 9 March 1832, University College London Library (hereafter UCL), Bentham MSS. Box CLV, fo. 66.

10 See the will, and also *Annual Biography and Obituary*, vol. xvii (1833), pp. 384–385. The will is in Somerset House. A draft copy, probably in Richard Doane's handwriting and with corrections in Bowring's hand, is preserved in UCL, Bentham MSS. CLV, 23–35.

11 Bowring to Chadwick, 7 Sept. 1832. UCL, Bentham MSS. CLV, 78.

12 Bowring to Chadwick, 29 Oct. 1832. UCL, Bentham MSS. CLV, 79.

17 *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, vol. iv, p. 475.
18 The ring with Bentham’s effigy was one of his most valued possessions. See Graham Wallas, *The Life of Francis Place 1771-1854*, London, 1898, revised ed., London, 1918, p. 85n.
19 Bowring to Tait, 11 June 1836, Black-Tait MSS., National Library of Scotland, Add. MSS. 3713, ff. 76-78.
21 For these, see Bowring’s letters to Burton, John Hill Burton Papers, National Library of Scotland, Add. MSS. 9404, fo. 6 et seq.
22 Shelf-mark, 12274. d. 1.
24 Shelf-mark, C. 61. c. 15.
27 More than twenty reprints of the works were included in the collected edition. They had been printed or published in English in Bentham’s life time, but many of them had been edited by Bentham’s friends or disciples, not by himself. We can also derive the information about the original editors of these works from Bentham’s correspondence and other various sources. For these, see e.g., *A Bibliographical Catalogue of the Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed S. Ikeda, M. Otonashi and T. Shigemori, Tokyo, 1989.
30 See *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, vol. iv, p. 486 et seq.
31 *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. vii (1840), nos. Ixxiii (Jan.), Ixxv (March), Ixxxvi (April), Ixxviii (June), Ixxix (July), Lxxxi (Sept.), Lxxxi (Nov.); vol. viii (1841), nos. Ixxxv (Jan.), Lxxxvii (March), Lxxxix (May), Xcv (Nov.); vol. ix (1842), no. ciii (July).
33 *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (1843), vol. xi, p. [172.]

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