PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION
OF VOLUME 3

The third volume of Jeremy Bentham’s Correspondence was originally published in 1971, under the editorship of the late Ian R. Christie and the General Editorship of the late J.H. Burns. The Correspondence volumes represent the ‘backbone’, so to speak, of the authoritative edition of The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham, giving scholars the orientation that enables them to begin to make sense of Bentham’s published works and the vast collection of his unpublished papers, consisting of around 60,000 folios in UCL Library and 12,500 folios in the British Library.

The present volume has been attractively re-keyed in a typeface that is sympathetic to the original design, and crucially the exact pagination of the original volume has been retained, so that referencing remains stable. The opportunity has been taken to incorporate the corrigenda printed at the conclusion of Volume V of the Correspondence and further corrections identified by the Bentham Project. Professor Anne Brunon-Ernst (University of Paris II) has kindly checked the accuracy of the reproduction of the French material according to the conventions currently adopted in the edition as a whole.

The current volume opens as the American War of Independence was coming to a conclusion and closes on the brink of the French Revolution. In early 1781 Bentham, who was living in Lincoln’s Inn, received a visit from the Earl of Shelburne (raised in the peerage to Marquis of Lansdowne in 1785). Shelburne, who was known for his intellectual interests, was also a major politician, becoming leader of the administration from July 1782 to March 1783, with responsibility for negotiating the peace with America. Bentham could not but have been flattered by Shelburne’s attention, and he accepted Shelburne’s invitation to visit his country home Bowood House in Wiltshire, where he stayed for several weeks in the autumn of 1781. Bentham’s detailed letters from Bowood to his friend George Wilson give a fascinating insight into life in one of the country’s major aristocratic houses.

Bentham’s correspondence is, however, dominated by Russia. In March 1780 his younger brother Samuel had arrived at St Petersburg, where he had begun to establish his reputation as an engineer. Having undertaken an expedition to Siberia, Samuel was taken into service by
Prince Potëmkin, a powerful aristocrat with a large estate at Krichëv in the south of Russia, where Samuel took charge of Potëmkin's industrial and military concerns. In August 1785 Bentham left London, travelled through the Mediterranean to Constantinople and then overland via Bucharest, and arrived at Krichëv in February 1786. He stayed for nearly two years, living with his brother in a farmhouse provided by Potëmkin, and spending most of his time writing, but also dealing with various aspects of Samuel's affairs. In late 1787 Bentham set off back to England, travelled overland via Warsaw and Berlin, and arrived home in February 1788.

Bentham had hopes of presenting his penal code to Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, but, remaining in his farmhouse, he failed to seize the opportunity to meet her when she visited Krichëv early in 1787. As was often the case, Bentham had not brought his work to completion, despite composing a large mass of manuscripts (in French, for the benefit of the Empress) under the headings of ‘Projet Forme’ and ‘Projet Matière’. While in Krichëv, Bentham wrote Defence of Usury, which George Wilson, his friend in London, saw through the press, and which was published in late 1787. Bentham's essay was highly influential over a course of years in presenting the case for the abolition of legal limits on rates of interest. It has appeared in the Collected Works, along with other related material from these years, in Writings on Political Economy: Volume I, edited by Michael Quinn, published in 2016.

A further work to emerge from Bentham's visit to Russia was his scheme for a panopticon prison, which was eventually printed in 1791 as ‘Panopticon: or, The Inspection-House’. Samuel had proposed to build a manufactory, arranged around a central point, from where he could continuously inspect the activities of his workforce. Bentham realized that the central-inspection principle might be applied to a whole variety of institutions, including factories, schools, and hospitals. The pressing need in England at the time was for a penitentiary, and so Bentham focused his attention on prison design. He imagined a circular or polygonal building, with the cells on the outside, and an inspection tower in the centre. The attempt to build a panopticon prison in London would come to dominate his life for over a decade following his return to England.

As Christie explains in the ‘Introduction’ below, up to 80 letters sent by Bentham to Samuel between 1781 and 1785 are missing. Christie wondered whether the letters might surface in a Russian archive, but they have not yet done so. He also explains that, while all Samuel's letters to Bentham appear to have survived, he exclud-
ed from the present volume those letters and parts of letters that dealt exclusively with Samuel's affairs. Christie went on to produce a detailed account of Samuel's activities, including his involvement in the Russian defeat of the Turks at Ochakov in 1788, and of Bentham's hazardous and eventful journeys to and from Krichëv in his *The Benthams in Russia, 1780–1791* (Oxford and Providence, RI: Berg, 1993), which may now be supplemented with Roger Morriss's *Science, Utility and Maritime Power: Samuel Bentham in Russia, 1779–91* (London: Routledge, 2015).

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