



WILL OF JEREMY BENTHAM¹

24 August 1769 (Aet 21)

I Jeremy Bentham of Lincoln's Inn² Student of the Law do make this my last Will and Testament. I give unto my Mother-in-Law all my Jewels save as hereafter excepted—unto John Farr Abbot eldest Son of my said Mother-in-Law, five Pounds in money—unto the Revd. Thomas Gwatkin, twenty Pounds to be paid him within one Month after my decease—unto Richard Clark now of the Old South-Sea House, all such Books relating in the

84a. ¹ B.M. Add. Ms. 36652: 9. Autograph.

This will, made by Bentham about six months after he came of age, was apparently sent by him, some two months before his death, to Southwood Smith, who quotes briefly from it in a footnote to the printed text of the lecture he delivered over Bentham's remains on 9 June 1832. At the top the 84-year-old Bentham has written the following note: '5th April 1832. Of the persons in this Will named no one being now alive my decease will suffice to deprive it of all effect, without need of cancelling.'

The inclusion here of a document not forming part of the correspondence seems warranted in view of the singular dearth of letters illustrating a crucial phase in Bentham's development. For the ten years from 1764 (when Bentham was sixteen) to 1773 we have fewer Bentham letters than for the three years he spent as an undergraduate at Oxford. For 1769 itself only one letter survives. Yet, Bentham himself told Bowring, '1769 was to me a most interesting year... Montesquieu, Barrington, Beccaria, and Helvetius, but most of all Helvetius, set me on the principle of utility. When I had sketched a few vague notions on the subject, I looked delighted at my work. I remember asking myself—Would I take £500 for that sheet of paper? Poor as I was, I answered myself—No! that I would not' (Bowring, x, 54).

The will does throw some light, not only on Bentham's friendships at this period, but also on his interests and on the movement of some of his ideas. Notes have already been given on most of the persons mentioned.

² Bentham had removed from the Temple to Lincoln's Inn some time after his twenty-first birthday on 15 February. Bowring, in a manuscript note on page 68

whole or the greatest part thereof to the Laws and Antiquities of Great Britain and Ireland whereof he shall not be possessed of a Copy either in the same or any other Edition or Language at the time of my decease—I further give him all such other Books as either have no date, or are of a date prior to the year one thousand six hundred whether bound separately or together with other Treatises; in which last case I will that he have the whole Volume. I give unto Charles Abbot youngest son of my Mother-in-Law such of my Books of Law and Antiquities as Richard Clark shall have duplicates of in manner abovementioned. Of the rest of my Books printed or Engraved Maps Tables and Charts, I give unto the Revd. Thomas Gwatkin sixty Volumes at the choice of the said Thomas Gwatkin: the remainder I give to my Brother Samuel Bentham.³ I further give unto my said Brother all my Music Books and Musical Instruments—also my Gold Watch with its appendages. I further give to the said Thomas Gwatkin all such Instruments and apparatus belonging to the Mathematics or any branch of Natural Philosophy or Natural History, as, if any, I shall be possessed of at my decease. I give unto William Browne now of Lamb's Conduit Street Holborn Attorney at Law two Table Spoons marked with my name at length, as also the Engravings of illustrious Englishmen published by Virtue and Houbraken⁴—and unto Jane, Wife of the said William Browne my yellow Diamond ring or else the Diamond Head-pin formerly the property of my deceased Aunt Deborah Grove,⁵ at the discretion of my Mother-in-Law—I give unto George Woodward Grove my Uncle, John Mulford my Cousin, the Revd. Samuel Ray of Kenton and the Revd. William Ray of Mickfield both in the County of Suffolk my Cousins, a Gold Ring each in Token of remembrance. The rest of my personal Estate of whatsoever kind it be I suffer to return and do hereby give to my Father from whose bounty I received it the real estate which I likewise

of volume x of his own copy of the *Memoirs*, now in the British Museum, says: 'On his coming of age a small property fell into his hands which had been bequeathed to him by his Grandmother Grove and which his father applied to the purchase of the Chambers set up two pairs of stairs and for which he paid the sum of £402 six shillings'. (In the preceding sentence Bowring mistakenly dates the move to Lincoln's Inn to the year 1771.) Bentham retained these chambers until he went to Russia in 1785.

³ Samuel was then twelve and a half.

⁴ *The Heads of illustrious persons of Great Britain engraven by Mr. Houbraken and Mr. Virtue...*—i.e. Jacobus Houbraken (1698–1780) and George Virtue (1684–1756)—was published in 1747, and a second edition in 1756.

⁵ Deborah Grove had died at the beginning of the year, or perhaps at the end of 1768, her will being proved on 21 January 1769. In addition to her watch and jewels she left Bentham £50 and the reversion of £100 in the event of the death of her brother George Woodward Grove without issue.

possess by his favour being by the terms of donation to return to him of course—as to my body my will is that it be buried by the rites of the Church of England, or the rites of any other Church, or no rites at all at the discretion of my Executor, so that the funeral expenses do not in any wise exceed forty shillings. but it is my Will and special request to my Executor that if I should chance to die of any such disease as that in the judgment of my said Exor the art of Surgery or science of Physic should be likely to be in any wise advanced by observations to be made on the opening of my body, that he my said Executor do cause my said body as soon after my decease as may be to be delivered unto George Fordyce⁶ now of Henrietta Street Covent Garden Dr. of Physic; or if he should decline to accept the same, then to any other Dr. of Physic or Surgeon so to be dealt with and to be kept by such Dr. of Physic or Surgeon for such time as such Dr. of Physic or Surgeon shall think proper. and this my Will and special request I make not out of affectation of singularity, but to the intent and with the desire that Mankind may reap some small benefit in and by my decease, having hitherto had small opportunities to contribute thereto while living.⁷ Lastly of this my first and, to this time, only and last Will and Testament dated the 24th day of August 1769 I do make the abovementioned Richard Clark sole Executor. This Will being all of my handwriting is written upon this one and no other Sheet of Paper—
Jeremy Bentham