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Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham, vol. 4*  
[1843]

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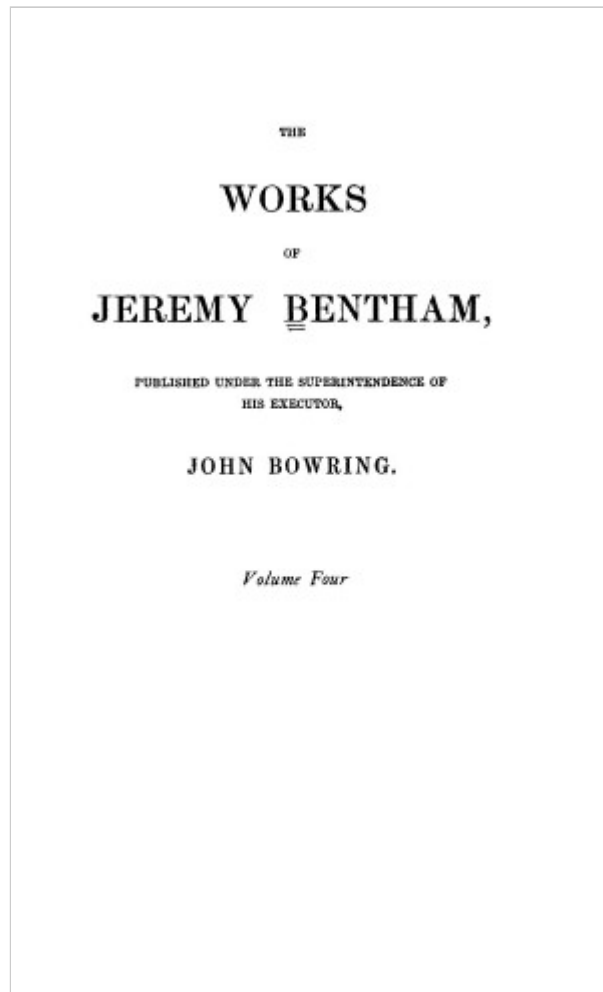
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## Edition Used:

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Author: [Jeremy Bentham](#)

Editor: [John Bowring](#)

## About This Title:

An 11 volume collection of the works of Jeremy Bentham edited by the philosophic radical and political reformer John Bowring. Vol. 4 contains Bentham's writings on prisons, including the Panopticon design, and various constitutional proposals prompted by the French Revolution.

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PANOPTICON; OR, THE INSPECTION-HOUSE:

CONTAINING THE IDEA OF A NEW PRINCIPLE OF CONSTRUCTION APPLICABLE TO ANY SORT OF ESTABLISHMENT, IN WHICH PERSONS OF ANY DESCRIPTION ARE TO BE KEPT UNDER INSPECTION; AND IN PARTICULAR TO PENITENTIARY-HOUSES,

PRISONS, POOR-HOUSES, LAZARETTOS,  
HOUSES OF INDUSTRY, MANUFACTORIES, HOSPITALS,  
WORK-HOUSES, MAD-HOUSES, AND SCHOOLS:

with A PLAN OF MANAGEMENT adapted to the principle:

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS, written in the year 1787, from crecheff in white russia, to a friend in england.

BY JEREMY BENTHAM, OF LINCOLN'S INN, ESQUIRE.

BUILDING AND FURNITURE FOR AN INDUSTRY-HOUSE ESTABLISHMENT, FOR 2000 PERSONS, OF ALL AGES, ON THE PANOPTICON OR CENTRAL-INSPECTION PRINCIPLE.

? For the Explanation of the several Figures of this Plate, see "Outline of a Work, entitled Pauper Management improved;" Bentham's Works, vol. viii., p. 369 to p. 439.

The Ranges of Bed-Stages and Cribs are respectively supposed to run from End to End of the *radial* Walls, as exhibited in the Ground Plan: they are here represented as cut through by a Line parallel to the Side of the Polygon: in the Bed-Stages, what is represented as *one* in the Draught, is proposed to be in *two* in the Description.



Fig. I.—Elevation.

Samuel Bentham, Knight of the Order of St George of Russia, Brigadier-General in the Russian Service, and Inspector-General of his Majesty's Naval Works, *inrenit*.

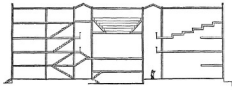


Fig. II.—Section.

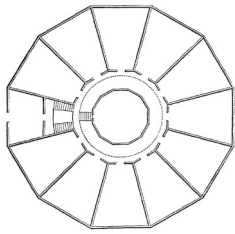


Fig. III.—Ground Plan.

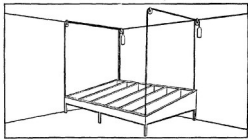


Fig. IV.—Bed-Stages for Single Persons.

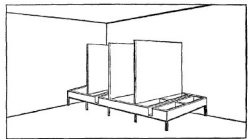


Fig. V.—Bed-Stages for Married Couples; alternating with sets of Cribs for Children, four in a set.

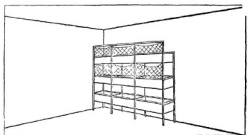


Fig. VI.—Cribs for Infants.

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## LETTER I.

### IDEA OF THE INSPECTION PRINCIPLE.

*Crecheff in White Russia,*  
-----1787.

Dear \* \* \* \*,—I observed t'other day in one of your English papers, an advertisement relative to a House of Correction therein spoken of, as intended for \* \* \* \* \* . It occurred to me, that the plan of a building, lately contrived by my brother, for purposes in some respects similar, and which, under the name of the *Inspection House*, or the *Elaboratory*, he is about erecting here, might afford some hints for the above establishment.\* I have accordingly obtained some drawings relative to it, which I here inclose. Indeed I look upon it as capable of applications of the most extensive nature; and that for reasons which you will soon perceive.

To say all in one word, it will be found applicable, I think, without exception, to all establishments whatsoever, in which, within a space not too large to be covered or commanded by buildings, a number of persons are meant to be kept under inspection. No matter how different, or even opposite the purpose: whether it be that of *punishing the incorrigible, guarding the insane, reforming the vicious, confining the suspected, employing the idle, maintaining the helpless, curring the sick, instructing the willing* in any branch of industry, or *training the rising race* in the path of *education*: in a word, whether it be applied to the purposes of *perpetual prisons* in the room of death, or *prisons for confinement* before trial, or *penitentiary-houses*, or *houses of correction*, or *work-houses*, or *manufactories*, or *mad-houses*, or *hospitals*, or *schools*.

It is obvious that, in all these instances, the more constantly the persons to be inspected are under the eyes of the persons who should inspect them, the more perfectly will the purpose of the establishment have been attained. Ideal perfection, if that were the object, would require that each person should actually be in that predicament, during every instant of time. This being impossible, the next thing to be wished for is, that, at every instant, seeing reason to believe as much, and not being able to satisfy himself to the contrary, he should *conceive* himself to be so. This point, you will immediately see, is most completely secured by my brother's plan; and, I think, it will appear equally manifest, that it cannot be compassed by any other, or to speak more properly, that if it be compassed by any other, it can only be in proportion as such other may approach to this.

To cut the matter as short as possible, I will consider it at once in its application to such purposes as, being most complicated, will serve to exemplify the greatest force and variety of precautionary contrivance. Such are those which have suggested the idea of *penitentiary-houses*: in which the objects of *safe custody, confinement, solitude, forced labour*, and *instruction*, were all of them to be kept in view. If all

these objects can be accomplished together, of course with at least equal certainty and facility may any lesser number of them.

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## LETTER II.

### PLAN FOR A PENITENTIARY INSPECTION-HOUSE.

Before you look at the plan, take in words the general idea of it.

The building is circular.

The apartments of the prisoners occupy the circumference. You may call them, if you please, the *cells*.

These *cells* are divided from one another, and the prisoners by that means secluded from all communication with each other, by *partitions* in the form of *radii* issuing from the circumference towards the centre, and extending as many feet as shall be thought necessary to form the largest dimension of the cell.

The apartment of the inspector occupies the centre; you may call it if you please the *inspector's lodge*.

It will be convenient in most, if not in all cases, to have a vacant space or *area* all round, between such centre and such circumference. You may call it if you please the *intermediate* or *annular area*.

About the width of a cell may be sufficient for a *passage* from the outside of the building to the lodge.

Each cell has in the outward circumference, a *window*, large enough, not only to light the cell, but, through the cell, to afford light enough to the correspondent part of the lodge.

The inner circumference of the cell is formed by an iron *grating*, so light as not to screen any part of the cell from the inspector's view.

Of this grating, a part sufficiently large opens, in form of a *door*, to admit the prisoner at his first entrance; and to give admission at any time to the inspector or any of his attendants.

To cut off from each prisoner the view of every other, the partitions are carried on a few feet beyond the grating into the intermediate area. such projecting parts I call the *protracted partitions*.

It is conceived, that the light, coming in in this manner through the cells, and so across the intermediate area, will be sufficient for the inspector's lodge. But, for this purpose, both the windows in the cells, and those corresponding to them in the lodge, should be as large as the strength of the building, and what shall be deemed a necessary attention to economy, will permit.

To the windows of the lodge there are *blinds*, as high up as the eyes of the prisoners in their cells can, by any means they can employ, be made to reach.

To prevent *thorough light*, whereby, notwithstanding the blinds, the prisoners would see from the cells whether or no any person was in the lodge, that apartment is divided into quarters, by *partitions* formed by two diameters to the circle, crossing each other at right angles. For these partitions the thinnest materials might serve; and they might be made removeable at pleasure; their height, sufficient to prevent the prisoners seeing over them from the cells. Doors to these partitions, if left open at any time, might produce the thorough light. To prevent this, divide each partition into two, at any part required, setting down the one-half at such distance from the other as shall be equal to the apperture of a door.

These windows of the inspector's lodge open into the intermediate area, in the form of *doors*, in as many places as shall be deemed necessary to admit of his communicating readily with any of the cells.

Small *lamps*, in the outside of each window of the lodge, backed by a reflector, to throw the light into the corresponding cells, would extend to the night the security of the day.

To save the troublesome exertion of voice that might otherwise be necessary, and to prevent one prisoner from knowing that the inspector was occupied by another prisoner at a distance, a small *tin tube* might reach from each cell to the inspector's lodge, passing across the area, and so in at the side of the correspondent window of the lodge. By means of this implement, the slightest whisper of the one might be heard by the other, especially if he had proper notice to apply his ear to the tube.

With regard to *instruction*, in cases where it cannot be duly given without the instructor's being close to the work, or without setting his hand to it by way of example before the learner's face, the instructor must indeed here as elsewhere, shift his station as often as there is occasion to visit different workmen; unless he calls the workmen to him, which in some of the instances to which this sort of building is applicable, such as that of imprisoned felons, could not so well be. But in all cases where directions, given verbally and at a distance, are sufficient, these tubes will be found of use. They will save, on the one hand, the exertion of voice it would require, on the part of the instructor, to communicate instruction to the workmen without quitting his central station in the lodge; and, on the other, the confusion which would ensue if different instructors or persons in the lodge were calling to the cells at the same time. And, in the case of hospitals, the quiet that may be insured by this little contrivance, trifling as it may seem at first sight, affords an additional advantage.

A *bell*, appropriated exclusively to the purposes of *alarm*, hangs in a *belfry* with which the building is crowned, communicating by a rope with the inspector's lodge.

The most economical, and perhaps the most convenient, way of *warming* the cells and area, would be by flues surrounding it, upon the principle of those in hot-houses. A total want of every means of producing artificial heat might, in such weather as we

sometimes have in England, be fatal to the lives of the prisoners; at any rate, it would often times be altogether incompatible with their working at any sedentary employment. The flues, however, and the fire-places belonging to them, instead of being on the outside, as in hot-houses, should be in the inside. By this means, there would be less waste of heat, and the current of air that would rush in on all sides through the cells, to supply the draught made by the fires, would answer so far the purpose of ventilation. But of this more under the head of Hospitals.\*