

school selected to illustrate the methods of the More sisters was the one at Cheddar, the first of their schools, established probably in the autumn of 1789. The date for the establishment of the school is corroborated by the evidence of Martha More in her *Mendip Annals*.²⁶ Roberts also appears to accept that the school in Cheddar began in 1789 in his contextual arrangement of letters specifically describing the work of setting up that establishment.²⁷ If the school was indeed founded in 1789, several details within this letter suggest that it must have been written several years later than the date assigned in the *Memoirs*. First, More states that 'at the end of three years, during the winter the more serious of the parents began to attend on a Wednesday night'.²⁸ If the school began in 1789, this must refer to the winter of 1792–3. Second, More goes on to inform Wilberforce that the school at Cheddar was now 'in [its] sixth year'.²⁹ Third, More remarks that the sisters 'had last year the great misfortune to lose our elder mistress',³⁰ referring to the death of Mrs Baber which, as we have seen, Roberts himself accepts (in some places at least) occurred in August 1795. Finally, the letter alludes to the fact that Betsy Baber, the former schoolmistress's daughter, had by this time succeeded her mother as senior teacher: More informs Wilberforce that 'the daughter proceeds in the work with great ability'.³¹

Similar infelicities can be traced elsewhere in Roberts's editing, despite his emendations in the second and third editions of the *Memoirs*. Many of the errors can be corrected from the internal evidence of the material and from a

²⁶ Martha More, *Mendip Annals; or, the Narrative of the Charitable Labours of Hannah and Martha More*, ed. Arthur Roberts (London, 1859), 22.

²⁷ Letter from Hannah More to Wilberforce, 1789, in Roberts, *Memoirs*, II, 206–9; letter from More to Mrs Kennicott, 1789, in Roberts, *Memoirs*, II, 209–12, esp. at 211.

²⁸ Roberts, *Memoirs*, II, 299.

²⁹ Roberts, *Memoirs*, II, 300.

³⁰ Roberts, *Memoirs*, II, 301.

³¹ Roberts, *Memoirs*, II, 301. A *terminus ante quem* for the letter can in fact be established by the 1796 marriage of Betsy Baber. The More sisters strongly disapproved of her marriage and dismissed her from the school: More, *Mendip Annals*, 185–6.

number of resources, both published and manuscript,³² with which Roberts's work can be compared. A completely new edition of More's letters and journals, based on the surviving examples of her original manuscripts and on other reliable sources, would prove an invaluable resource for scholars of More and indeed of the entire period on which this remarkable woman provides a unique window.³³

JULIE E. DAVIDSON

University of Otago

doi:10.1093/notesj/gji327

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³² E.g., Wilberforce's papers held at the Bodleian Library and Duke University Library, Durham, NC; the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, XXXI, ed. W. S. Lewis (London, 1961).

³³ In researching this article I acknowledge the support of a grant awarded by the University of Otago Research Committee.

ROBOT: ANTEDATING THE ENTRY IN *THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY*

OED states the first record of the word *robot*, in the sense of 'A person whose work or activities are entirely mechanical; an automaton' as 1923:

[1923 *Westm. Gaz.* 22 June 7/5]
Mr G. Bernard Shaw defined Robots as persons all of whose activities were imposed on them.¹

The word is etymologized as arising from the Czech *robota*, meaning 'forced labour', as used by Karel Capek (1890–1938) in his play *R.U.R.* 'Rossum's Universal Robots' (1920).

This Czech form of the word appears, however, over a century earlier in an English translation of a work by the French cleric and conspiracy theorist, Augustin Barruel (1741–1820). His *Mémoires* claimed to prove that the French Revolution had

¹ *OED*, *robot*, 1.b.

arisen due to the activities of secret societies such as the *Illuminati*.²

In the English translation, published the same year, Barruel's assessment of the conditions endured by the lowest echelons of French society is interpreted as: 'The peasantry, called *Robota*, were not all in an equal degree of slavery.'³

CHRISTOPHER GOULDING
Newcastle upon Tyne

doi:10.1093/notesj/gji335

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² Augustin Barruel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme*, 4 vols (London: Le Boussonier & Co., 1797).

³ Augustin Barruel, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism: a translation from the French of the Abbé Barruel*, 4 vols, trans. Robert Clifford (London: T. Burton & Co., 1797), II, 252.

Reader's Query

ROBERT TOPLIFF, ORGANIST IN SOUTHWARK. – I am interested in the life of Robert Topliff, a blind organist in Southwark who organized concerts in his native County Durham. When aged about twenty-four he compiled and published *A Selection of the most popular Melodies of the Tyne and the Wear*, with the help of 400 subscribers. Few copies have survived. I have seen copies at Glasgow University and the British Library. The only others known to me are in Durham County Library (formerly in Darlington Library) and two in the USA, in Boston Public Library and Pennsylvania State University. The posters for his concerts which I have seen all include songs from this book, and the book is named, so I suspect that he sold further copies at his concerts. I was supported in this by seeing in Newcastle City Library a photocopy of another original which lacks the words of the songs (unimportant to a blind man) and the list of subscribers, with altered publishing details, and the price of fifteen shillings engraved on the title page altered to twelve shillings and sixpence. There is no record

of the original from which the copy was made, and accessioned on 23 September 1981. Can anyone locate this missing copy, or any other so far unrecorded?

E. C. CAWTE

Lount, Leicestershire

doi:10.1093/notesj/gji328

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Correction

BLAKE AND PARKER. – In Angus Whitehead's note, 'A Reference to William Blake and James Parker, Printsellers, in *Bailey's British Directory* (1785)', ccl (2005), 32–5, there is an error on p. 33, col. 2, line 19: the sentence should read 'According to Keri Davies, James Parker, who completed his apprenticeship under James Basire a year after his business partner, was a bachelor in 1784 and approximately three years Blake's junior' and not 'in 1748' as previously given.

[Eds]

doi:10.1093/notesj/gji329

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Reviews

RICHARD RUTHERFORD, *Classical Literature: A Concise History*. Pp. xvii + 350. (Blackwell Introductions to the Classical World). Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. Hardbound £55.00 (ISBN 0 631 23132 3); paperbound £16.99 (0 631 23133 1).

THE stated aim of this book is to provide a 'short, accurate, and readable guide to the works of Greek and Latin literature which have generally been found most important and interesting' (vii). This is a daunting task, but Richard Rutherford has made a