SOME JEWELLED "TOYS" OF GEORGIAN LONDON

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The charming and costly conceits which went under the name of toys in eighteenth-century London are frequently mentioned on the elaborate trade cards of the goldsmiths who sold them: "Thomas Clark ... selleth ... all Sorts of Toys in Gold, Silver, & other Metals, Agate, Amber, Tortoise-Shell kc.;" "Tho' Harrache, Jeweller, Goldsmith & Toyman, at the Golden Ball & Pearl, in Pall-Mall ... Makes & Sells ... in the Neatest Manner ... all sorts of Rich Gold Toys. . . ."

Six distinguished examples of the work of such London toymen have recently been presented to the Museum by Admiral F. R. Harris in memory of his wife, Dena Sperry Harris. They are especially welcome, for the Museum’s collection was almost wholly lacking in eighteenth-century English goldsmiths’ work. Beautifully executed in repoussé gold and striated agate, sometimes backed with rose-colored foil, they are further enriched with rubies, diamonds, and varicolored paste jewels. All of them date from the third quarter of the century. Although they bear no hallmarks, they were probably made in the establishments of the men whose names appear on the little clocks with which five of them are mounted.

The best known among these makers is James Cox (see opposite page), a clever mechanician, goldsmith, and watchmaker, who, from 1757 to 1777, had a shop in Shoe Lane, Fleet Street. He also had a shop in Canton and was as celebrated in the Far East as in Europe. Indeed, many of his expensive toys were designed to satisfy the extravagant taste of the Orient, and often found their way to the court of the Emperor of China. The extraordinary elaboration of some of his pieces, frequently made in pairs, is described in the catalogue of an exhibition which he held in 1772 at Spring Gardens, Charing Cross.

John Barbot (see pp. 166 and 167), recorded in 1751 as "Goldsmith, The Golden Lion, Great St. Andrew’s Street, Seven Dials," is also among those whose work found favor with Ch’ien Lung. Four of his clocks, as well as almost a score by Cox, still exist in Peking in what remains of the emperor’s famous collection.

Of Joseph Martineau, Sr. (see p. 168), only his address in St. Martin’s Court, from 1750 to 1770, is known, and no mention has been found of Orpion (see above). This is not surprising, as little has been written on English eighteenth-century goldsmiths’ work. It is to be hoped that some day we shall know more about the makers of these enchanting toys, which have already delighted so many visitors to the Museum.
Miniature secretary by James Cox with clock and musical mechanism playing four Chinese tunes. Inside are drawers and compartments, probably for toilet fittings. H 12\(\frac{1}{8}\) in. Formerly in the Youssoupooff collection. The objects illustrated in this article are shown in Gallery F 19.
One of a pair of miniature cabinets. H. 9 5/8 in. The clock is signed by John Barbot of London. Drawers and compartments inside contain the scent bottles, patch boxes, and toilet and sewing implements shown above. A fine enamel portrait of George IV done by Charles Muss in 1823 after a painting by Lawrence takes the place of fittings in the back of the companion cabinet, which is also a gift to the Museum from Admiral Harris. Muss (1779-1824) was enamel painter in ordinary to the king, and the cabinet may very well have been a royal gift. Both cabinets once belonged to Baron Alfred de Rothschild and then to Almina, Countess of Carnarvon. The one with the portrait was still earlier in the collection of Anne Elizabeth, Countess of Chesterfield.
ABOVE: Jewel casket with figures of birds, animals, and musicians. H. 3 in. Ex. coll. Rothschild and Carnarvon. BELOW: Box fitted with toilet, sewing, and writing implements. The watch is signed by Joseph Martineau, Sr., of London. H. 3⅛ in. Formerly in the J. P. Morgan collection.