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Diamond-Latticed Shell With Aquamarine 'Lake' Brings $18,500 at Sale

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CAIRO, March 10—The $18,500 Easter egg of an empress, last owned by a king, was sold today to a New York art dealer.

The transaction was the most spectacular of the opening of an eight-day sale at auction of the glittering collection of art objects in precious stones and metal amassed by Egypt's deposed King Farouk and his royal ancestors.

According to the estimate of the famous English firm of Sotheby & Co., which is handling the auction for the republican Government of Egypt, "no sale in modern times can rival the variety, the number or the quality of the small works of art in precious materials."

Dealers and private collectors from the United States, France, Britain, Lebanon, Italy and Egypt assembled in the high-ceilinged cream and gold foyer of Koubbeh Palace as the first of 1,261 lots went under the hammer of M. G. Lee, veteran multilingual Cairo auctioneer.

With bids ranging up to three and four times the last known sale price , today's realization amounted to £46,000 ($133,000).

A famous gold and diamond packed Easter egg designed by Carl Fabergé, Russian court jeweler for presentation in 1906 by Czar Nicholas II to Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, alone accounted for one-eighth of the total.

New Yorker Buys Egg

Alexander S. Schaffer, president of A La Vielle Russie, 785 Fifth Avenue, New York, made the successful bid, $18,500. A 5 per cent surcharge brought the total price to $19,400.

The egg's outer shell, about four inches high, of pale mauve matt enamel is laticed with diamond ribbons with a large brilliant cut diamond at the apex. Inside rests a large aquamarine block "lake" with water lilies in gold and a white gold swan with a delicately articulated neck.

Following the Bolshevik revolution, the egg turned up in London where it was bought by Charles Parsons of New York. In 1940, Victor Hammer, a New York dealer, who is a bidder at the present sale, came here at Farouk's invitation and sold the imperial Easter gift as Mr. Parson's agent for $25,000.

Another Fabergé egg, only slightly less elaborate and without an imperial pedigree, brought the day's second highest price, $14,500, also from Mr. Schaffer.

The decline in the price of the Easter egg was the exception to the rule. Veteran buyers were amazed at the high prices paid for most items. Mr. Hammer, for example, paid $7,250 for a Fabergé writing table set in gold and Siberian jade that had been sold to Farouk five years ago for $1,750.

Egypt's former King had the wealth of a Croesus and a wide-ranging and sometimes bizarre taste for possessions. The 270-page catalogue lists and depicts items ranging from a collection of 448 tie pins to the baton of German Field Marshal Von Brauchitsch.

If Farouk had a specialty it was timepieces. There are 414 of them for sale, of every conceivable shape and combination with other objects.

With the previous auctions of Farouk's stamp and coin collections, the total sales approached the $1,000,000-mark today. The stamps brought $390,000 and the coins $462,000.

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