

THE FABULOUS FABERCÉ GOLDEN EASTER EGGS,

And how they are connected to Finland, Santa, and Hollywood, and me?

Yes, this is again an Extraordinary story, it started in Finland, long time ago. It happened that one man, Gustav, originally from France, came first to Estonia, and from there to St. Petersburg, in Russia, at about 1840 or so, taking there the name Fabercé, and he got there a son Carl. There he started making small gifts from gold and silver for the rich, and eventually established several famous workshops to make more plush and expensive gifts also for the Emperors families. At 1880,s he had hired several goldsmiths, 14 out of 24, from Ekenäs, in Finland, to work as Masters in his shop.

One of these Finnish master goldsmiths, Erik Kollin, got the idea of making the first Easter Egg for the Emperor Alexander III, to be given to Empress, at Easter 1885. It was made of gold, covered with white enamel, and when you opened it, there was the golden yolk of egg, and when you opened that, there was a golden hen, and, finally, when you opened that, there was a small Crown made of ruby. Kollin knew the Easter fertility ceremonies practiced in Sibbo, 30 km. east of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, thousands of years ago already, but what practice was finished at 1050, when the Vatican mercenary army invaded this part of Finland, killing, burning and destroying everything they got their hands to, and forbidding living here for 200 years. Still those olden times were kept in memory, as some people were able to escape, like Bock family, to Lapland, from which time we have the Santa, or Yule Bock stories also.

He also made the second Easter egg at the next year, but that has been lost, during the Russian revolution at 1917, from Anitskov palace. Anyway, emperors continued to order those fabulous Easter Eggs, every year, made of gold, silver, diamonds and other valuables to the Empresses of Alexander III and Nikolai II, up till 1916, when the First WW closed their shop and the Russian Revolution started next year, but fifty of them had been made altogether, to be given to their wives or mothers. Now they cost hundreds of millions of dollars, if any of them come to be auctioned.

But how the Hollywood comes into this picture? First of all, the Santa has been pictured with a cane made of this Holly Wood. Also in one mask bought from India there are three leaves and three berries from that tree, at it's temple. It is rather a bush only, with uneatable red berries on it, and they grow all around Los Angeles, at heights, from where the film town got it's name too, I think. It grew in Finland also but thousands of years ago, with a warmer weather. South of Sweden is the most northern area where it grows now.

But that Holly wood is very tough wood, we have a name Iron Oak for it. That was from where the goldsmiths of Fabergé used to make the boxes for those very expensive Easter Eggs, by cutting it into small pieces and building the box from them, as it is a bush only, with not so thick branches. Anyway, those Easter Eggs made the name Fabercé famous, and as they had to close the

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workshops at 1917, that were also in Moscow and Odessa, it was the end of their story too.

Not quite, I have a personal connection to the last of the Fabercé family, very slight though but still. As the Russian Revolution had their workshops closed, most goldsmiths escaped from Russia, as well as the rich people. Nikolai II was murdered with his family. Carl Fabercé with his family stayed there, hoping that the revolution would bolt and the previous life could continue, but no, it didn't. He stayed in Leningrad, as the new name of that city was then, but at 1927 he managed to escape with the three year old boy, Oleg, in wintery night, with horse and sleigh, across the icy Golf of Finland, and settled in Helsinki, Kulosaari, where they bought a house. I happened to live there too, close by, and knowing the sons of the caretaker of the Fabercé family, I was often playing in the big yard with them, sometimes with Oleg too, who was seven years senior for me. But the Fabercé family was soon forced to move away from their Kulosaari villa, at 1940, when somebody in England stole their valuable diamonds and stamp collections, where they were left for sale.

We had many things to play with, we invented and built all things that we used. On

one occasion we made a two storey snow castle, sprinkling it with water to make it solid ice, and at summer time we made boats from wood (not Holly Wood though!) and as there was a big pool we put sails on them and had mini sailing boat races across it. A projector we made too, from a shoe box, to show still pictures on a white sheet. Also mini ski jump with mini skis we had in the yard. Only imagination was curbing what to do and play then and there. Oleg spoke little Finnish or Root but children soon find a way to play together and understand each other. Later in his life he took part in Olympic horse shows and sailing, Philately was his hobby too.

Only few days ago I went to see and bow at the grave of the last members of the famous Fabercé family, Agathon, Maria and Oleg, at the Greek Orthodox cemetery, here in Helsinki. On top of their gravestone is a stony Easter Egg, to remind us of the fame of that family, for which also I have a small personal tie. From the net one can follow their history and see the pictures of some of the most famous Golden Easter Eggs.

Leo Nygren