

A description of the ancient art of embalming, practised by the Egyptians : with an account of the Egyptian mummy, now exhibiting, which is divested of its bandages, &c.; / by Abraham Booth.

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DESCRIPTION

OF THE

**ANCIENT ART OF
EMBALMING,**

PRACTISED BY THE

EGYPTIANS,

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE

Egyptian Mummy,

NOW EXHIBITING,

WHICH IS DIVESTED OF ITS BANDAGES, &c.

By **ABRAHAM BOOTH,**

Professor of Chemistry, &c. &c.

And Printed for the Proprietor of the Egyptian Mummy,
and Sold in the Exhibition Room.



London:

1831.

Robinett, Printer, White St. Borough.

ON EMBALMING.

The Art of Embalming, as practised by the Egyptians, in the time of Jacob and Joseph and the other Hebrew Patriarchs, is one of the most remarkable vestiges of Ancient History of the World. These singular monuments or relics of the earlier ages, called "Mummies" are most interesting to the Christian, the Antiquary, and the Historian, because, although, (but still & silent,) they bring us into contact with some of the earlier inhabitants of the world, at an important period of their history, when the Sciences, and all the Arts of Life, were at the highest degree of perfection.

The Art of Embalming, although practized by the Egyptians, through many consecutive ages, it is well known, was at its greatest perfection shortly after its discovery; and that unlike most other arts it rapidly retrograded. Its origin is well known to be connected with their religious superstitions, of this Ancient Nation; because, although believing in the immortality of the soul, and its future resurrection, they imagined it could never re-inhabit and re-animate the body, unless all its features and functions were kept perfect. It is not too much to suppose, that filial duty had a share in prompting to the discovery, that they might keep the bodies of their relatives, as long as possible, from mingling with their native dust, and then for ages, preserve them from decomposition or the destructive effects of time, to retain their recollection, of the features of their departed; they gave a delineation of them in the outer cases, in which the Embalmed Body was deposited;

these were either placed in Catacombs prepared for their reception, or kept in their houses: the Pyramids were the places of sepulchre in which the bodies of Kings, and persons of high distinction were deposited, enclosed in a Sarcophagus or tomb of stone, ornamented with hieroglyphical embellishments, explanatory of the rank and virtues of the deceased.

The Art of Embalming, was practised only upon those, who after death, were deemed worthy of the honour, and it was a species of enobling, conferred alone upon those, whose merits are deemed by a Jury of their Country-men, to entitle them to this regard.

The most ancient and expensive process of Embalming, & that by which, the Bodies of Kings, Priests, and persons of high distinction were preserved, consisted in removing the Bowels and Brains, the more perishable parts of the Body, and filling them with precious Spices. The Brains were removed through the nose, by means of a crooked wire Instrument, and the Bowels were taken out through the left side, by means of an incision, made with an Ethiopian stone.

The Body was then wrapped in Cere Cloths, or Cloths which had been dipped in a solution of juices. Thus, the internal as well as the external parts of the Body, were preserved from decay; and with what success the present imperishable memorial of the Art displays.

There was also, an inferior and less expensive process of embalming practised, upon persons of inferior rank. This consisted in injecting the bowels through the Arms, with asphaltian or liquid Tar.

Another process was, to cover the Body with Nitre for the space of seventy days, which time, according to the Egyptian Laws, were not allowed to exceed.

When the Body had been prepared in this manner, it was enclosed in three several Cases, the first was made of papyrus, being stitched in the form of a Bag, and the Mummy being enveloped in its Baudages, was introduced with its feet downwards. This Case was deposited in another, made of a common kind of wood, and this latter again, in one made of Sycamore wood. So durable are these latter, that although a period of more than Three Thousand Years have elapsed since they were made, yet, appear as Fresh as if recently turned out from the Carpenter's Shop; few ever been worm-eaten. In the Case with the Mummy, there was frequently deposited Jewels and household Gods.

The Egyptian Mummy now Exhibiting, has been universally acknowledged, the finest specimen of the ancient Art of Embalming, that has ever been brought over to this Country, and a most remarkable vestige of that Art, and its power of preserving the human Body from Putrifaction and Decay. The Body is evidently that of a Person of high distinction, from the remnants of Gold in different parts of the Body, as regal Corps, or those of Royal lineage, were formerly covered with this Metal before the application of the Baudages. These last were so ingeniously adapted, that according to DR. GRANVILLE, who has assisted in divesting several Mummies of their Baudages: the Egyptians must have made great progress as well in Surgical, as in Mechanical and Auo-

tomical Science. A remnant of the Bandage remains on the left knee, and the impression, that of Cloth, of a coarse fibre and texture may be seen on the right Knee, and in various other parts of the Body. One Thousand yards of this bandage were taken off when this was uncovered.

The Hair remains upon the head, the colour unchanged—the Teeth and Ears are as perfect as those of a living person, a portion of the Beard still remains.—the vestiges of ancient Grandeur, with which he was ornamented, may be seen over each of his eyes; the Gums, Chest, and on the Back of the Head and Wrists; the countenance is evidently that of an Egyptian: the Short flattened nose satisfactorily indicate that, it is neither Grecian or Roman origin; whilst the prominent Cheek bone, is that of the Natives of Egypt, and of Northern Africa. The Foot is much smaller than in those of the Southern parts of this continent,

The muscular parts of the Body, are as perfect as those of a living human subject. From the flesh over the Chest, Ribs and Thighs, he bears the appearance of being when living, a powerful and muscular man. His height is Five Feet Five Inches, whilst from the contraction of cartilaginous vertebra after death, it is probable that his Statute was about Five Feet Eight Inches when living; about the medium statute of natives of Europe; this point satisfactorily answers one Hypothesis of modern science, that at the early date of History, at which he was Embalmed, the human stature was not above that of the present time. Several of the Fingers, Toes, & Toe Nails are perfect. Under the Thumb Nail of the left hand, is the appearance

of extravasated blood, the result of a contusion on the thumb before death.

The value of the present curiosity, is considerably enhanced, when it is considered, that this is the only Mummy that has been found perfect, after being divested of its Bandages. It is well known, that the majority of Mummies brought over to this country, will not bear stripping, or that they fall to pieces as soon as they are exposed to Air, and this particularly, with those which have been preserved according to the later practice of the Art. It is worthy of remark, that the British Museum does not contain a Single Mummy divested of its bandages, and therefore affords no opportunity to witness the remarkable power of that art, in preserving the human Body from putrefaction and decay. The attempt was made upon one of those contained in this National Exhibition, which would not however bear stripping off, as the whole of the flesh had undergone decomposition.

In the present specimen, the whole of the muscular part, is converted into a substance, as hard as Tanned Sole Leather, and is equally flexible.

The figure presents nothing indelicate to the senses, and whilst it is interesting to the man of science, as an instance of the perfection of the anatomical and Chemical Skill of the Egyptians; it must inspire the reflecting mind, with proper feelings upon the sad delusions of opinions, and the nothingness of our human fragile and transitory nature. Nor can the Christian, when he contemplates the curiosity, as a matter of their religious zeal, fail to appreciate the superior excellence of that glorious dispensation, under which

it is his happiness to live.

A Learned Divine, in speaking of the Egyptians says, their Souls were too elevated to submit to the common destiny of other mortals; and the sublimity of their courage, inspired them, with the noble and Glorious resolution, of making themselves immortal inspite of death.

The following is the testimonial of T. J. Pettigrew Esq. Surgeon to his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex; the original may be seen in the room :—

“ I am happy to bear testimony, as to the reality and curiosity of the Egyptian Mummy, seen yesterday by Dr. Granville and myself; it is an exceedingly fine specimen of the wonderful art of the Ancients, in the preservation of the human body, from putrefaction and decay ”.

The following are testimonials from different parts of the Metropolitan Press :—

“ The power of Preservation, which the process of Embalming possesses upon the human body, may be seen to great advantage in this specimen ”

Times, December 28, 1831.

“ This is without doubt, the most perfect specimen of Embalming, ever brought to this country ”

Nottingham Review, Oct. 2, 1830.

“ We think this might be added to one of our permanent public exhibitions with much interest, the British Museum, even does not contain a Mummy divested of its Cere Cloth ”

Scientific Gazette, Jany. 8, 1831.

“ An Egyptian Mummy is exhibiting in London, well worthy the attention of the curious ”

Morning Herald, Dec. 30, 1831,

“The object most worthy of inspection is the Egyptian Mummy”

Morning Advertiser.

Besides critical remarks of nearly every provincial Paper in England.

The following copy of verses, was written upon this Mummy, & appeared in the Nottingham Review.

“What art thou wondrous thing of other years,
Portion of Man, the lesser, grosser part;
Whose form within mortality appears,
Has't shaken hands with death; and as heedless
of the dart.

As heedless of times mouldering powers,
Deathless yet dead; thing without being,
Mockery of life,
Whose spirit that bore thee through this worlds
strife.

How happily once thy temples wore a crown,
In that right hand, a golden scepter held;
Or grasped a falchion in the tented field,
But now how calmly dost thou lay thee down.

How calmly wilt thou lay till earths closing hour,
Bids every spirit join its clay once more.

✂ The great Belzonies Fame, in Searching Egyptian Ground,
His labour now is lost, since this great wonder
is found”.

Robinett, Printer, White Street, Borough.