

30,000 Years Old.

MUMMY OF PREHISTORIC MAN AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

The oldest subject in the world has been found.

He is now on view at the British Museum, and if he could tell his story he would unfold the strangest tale which ever fell on the ears of living mortal.

The subject is a mummy, but it is no ordinary mummy.

It is a mummy which was old when Greece and Rome were young, whose story would go away back into the mists of a hoary antiquity of unrecorded time.

The mummified remains have been removed from a shallow sandstone grave in the west bank of the Nile, in Upper Egypt, to the publicity of a glass case in the British Museum.

Not even science can tell us within a margin of 20,000 years when this dead body had its life and being. What it does say is that this prehistoric man probably lived some time between 30,000 B.C. and 50,000 B.C.

This means that a period of at least 30,000 years has elapsed since the body was embalmed and wrapped in the grave clothes from which it has now just emerged.

To help the imagination to realise this age it may be recalled that at this very remote period, and indeed until thousands of years later, history had no existence; that the Egyptians we term "ancient" were not then a people and did not until years afterwards conquer the predecessors of this mummy and settle in Egypt; and that man was in the neolithic, or second, period of the stone age.

PERFECT HUMAN FORM.

During the thousands of years which have since elapsed this body has been so preserved in its grave by a preparation of bitumen that it presents a human form perfect in every detail; in fact, the only flaw visible to the unscientific observer is that the index finger of the left hand is missing.

This dead body of petrified flesh and bone, human in its shape and proportions, ghastly in its lifelessness, presents a spectacle of wondrous, awesome interest.

It lies within the shallow interior of a sandstone grave, roughly modelled from the original, and partly covered by slabs of unworked stone.

The posture in which it was found and which is retained, is a curious one. It is turned on the left side, with the hands before the face, and the knees drawn up nearly on a level with the chin.

Its state of preservation is remarkable.

As a matter of fact it presents the appearance of a body from which the skin has been burned, but which has been rescued before the flesh was consumed or the bones charred.

On the head there are still a few tufts of hair. The face also has retained its distinctive features.

Beside the body in the grave are a number of vases partly filled with the remains and dust of funeral offerings. Several are large. The others in size and shape are very much like small window pots for plants. A few flint instruments complete the contents of this prehistoric coffin.

What has science to say about this mummy?

The reply is speculative and to the effect that this body is that of a man who belonged to a fair skinned, light haired race, which may be regarded as one of the aboriginal stocks of Egypt.

The style of the flint implements indicates that the man lived in the later neolithic period of Egypt.

His life was of the rudest possible character, but not without its religion, for the mummy as it lay in its grave had its face turned towards the East.

He and his fellows probably wore skins held loosely over the shoulders by thongs, hunted animals for food, and in turn were hunted by them, suffered much from cold and other hardships, and died violent deaths.

"Well, Jim couldn't pass the civil service business on geography an' 'rithmetic."

"Too bad! What's he goin' to do now?"

"Dunno, but I reckon he'll go back to teachin' school!"



Mrs. (Dr.) Marshall's Exhibit of Fancy Butter, Wanganui Show, 1900.



BLACK HAMBURG VINES, grown in the open air by Mr. Beere, of Birkdale, Auckland.