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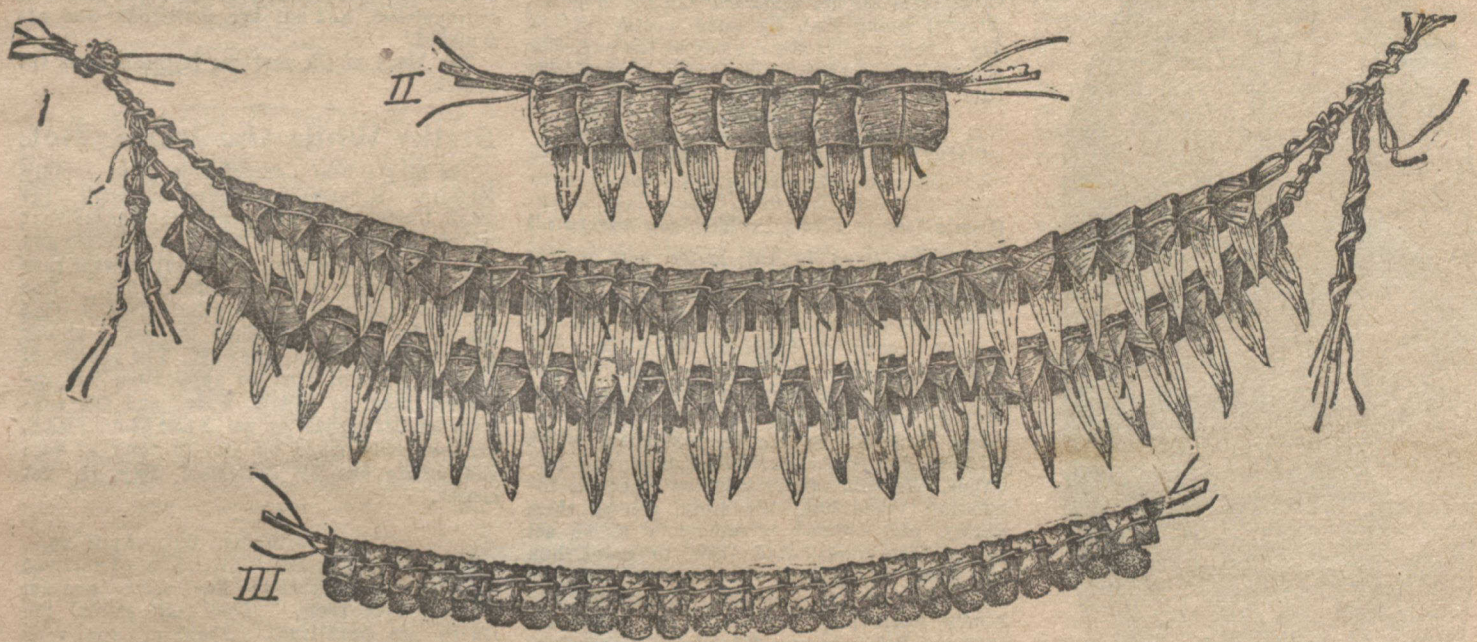


FIG. I.—GARLAND FROM THE MUMMY OF RAMESES II., MADE OF MIMOSA LEAVES AND THE FLOWER-PETALS OF THE BLUE LOTUS.—FIG. II.—(ONE-HALF NATURAL SIZE). FIG. III.—GARLAND FROM THE MUMMY OF AMENHOTEP I. WOVEN OF WILLOW LEAVES AND NILE WATER FLOWERS.

Egyptian Mummy Flowers.

The reverence for the dead and sympathy with the living which show themselves in our modern time, by offerings of flowers, have an older origin than some of us may imagine.

Many centuries before the Christian era, in old Egypt, where traces of wonderful civilization, skill, art, and knowledge are continually coming to light, we find also the beautiful custom of associating flowers with those whom death had called away.

But these ancients were not content, as we are, that the blooms and foliage they brought in honor of their dead should decay into dust, and be as though they had never been.

The same feeling that made them go through a tedious and expensive process to embalm their dead of rank and station, induced them also to contrive a way so as to prepare the flowers and foliage that they would last through the centuries, even as the bodies which they adorned.

But flowers were not the only things that the ancient Egyptians dedicated to the grave. Many fruits were buried too: dates, figs, pomegranates, grapes, pine-cones, and the products of various palms. Remains of other sorts of food have been found also—barley bread, and certain kinds of beans and lentils, as well as a species of farinaceous paste.

All these things were enclosed in dishes, basins, or baskets, and were carefully packed with what we should now call antiseptics—consisting of coloring matters or dyes, resin, balms, and apothecaries' drugs.

And in company with these, there were often to be found specimens of the arts and the handicrafts of the age, such as materials and implements for weaving and for knitting, sculptured figures, carved wooden orna-

ments of symbolic design, musical instruments, gems of ancient pottery ware, and old weapons.

But an especial interest attaches, as we have seen, to the simple offerings of flowers and foliage, with which we like to think loving hands, all those thousands of years ago, adorned the bodies of their beloved dead, even as ours do to this day.

And, however strange it may seem that other things, still in a good state of preservation, should be found in the mummy cases, surely the finding of flowers, that even yet can be recognized and called by their names, is far stranger still.

In the making of the garlands, the thicker kinds of leaves are used, or perhaps, rather those of the toughest texture, and plastic enough while fresh not to break when bent and woven. Those of the Egyptian willow, mimosa, and water-melon, were favorites, and the weaving was a long and intricate process, the leaves being arranged not singly or in sprays, as in our wreaths, but several together, those of the same size being fitted to lie neatly packed in little bundles. These little bundles, firmly bound together with long narrow strips of the date palm leaf, or vegetable fibre, formed the foundation of the garland, and into this, at regular intervals, were woven some whole flowers, such as the smaller lotus, the cornflower, and the convolvulus—or the petals of larger ones. Graceful pendant leaves, or portions of leaves, were sometimes mingled with the flowers, and of this kind of wreath we have a beautiful illustration in Fig. I.

Long festoons of this wreathing covered the upper portion of the mummy, swathing, and almost hiding, the narrow framework enclosing the embalmed remains; while single lotus blooms were stuck here and there into

that portion of the frame that surrounded the limbs, as in Fig. IV., which shows us the mummy, with all its floral decorations complete.

The old Egyptians evidently thought that the real flowers were only to be used for personages of the highest rank, notably those of the blood-royal. For it is said that, up to the present time, these garlands have only been found in the tombs of those accounted the greatest in the land. The lotus flowers especially, and the leaves used for the wreathing, appear to have been, with this ancient people, regarded, when associated with funeral rites, as symbols of greatness.

On the cases or coffins of people of the middle classes, paintings of flowers have sometimes been found, still retaining form and color; but the real natural blooms were apparently not destined for such as these, and had no place among the honors paid to their memory.

The way in which the dried and shrivelled leaves and blossoms are expanded, so as to show their form and species, is by dropping them into water. As they soak they soften, and take their original shape, so that the botanist can classify them.

It seems wonderful indeed, when we consider what destruction to such frail things as dried leaves and flowers must be caused by the moving of the mummy cases, and their transportation to our continent, that any portion of them remains sufficiently whole to be identified. But quite as marvellous as this is the fact that several kinds of flowers and leaves actually retain something of their original color. This is especially noticeable in blossoms of a reddish purple, and in those of the oriental cornflower. The green of the water-melon leaf is said also to keep a measure of its rich hue. Specimens of these in-