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THE ANCIENT PAGAN MYSTERIES AND THEIR CONNECTION WITH FREEMASONRY.

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ADONIS.

Passing from Egypt to Phœnicia, the mysteries of Osiris were made to suit the genius of the people. He there received the name of Adonis or Adonai, and when we come to speak of the legend it will be seen that in every country they were fundamentally the same, and partially altered only by circumstances. The worship of Adonis spread from Phœnicia into Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Sicily, varying of course in each country to suit the people. There are but few particulars now in existence of the details of the reception into the Adonysian rite. Lucian tells us that the initiate sacrificed a sheep, ate a portion of its flesh, and placed its head on his own; that he knelt on a fawn-skin spread in the porch of the temple, and in this attitude supplicated the god; that he drank only cold water, and slept on the bare ground. It is most probable that he represented the god during the ceremony, and figuratively passed through all the circumstances attending the catastrophe which deprived him of life,—Adonis having been slain by a wild boar.

CABIRI.

The worship and mysteries of the Cabiri, which were established in the island of Samothracia, were apparently similar to those of Adonis, and came originally from Phœnicia. Aspirants came from all parts to be initiated in Samothracia; the High Priest, or "Anoctoteles," held out the promise of making the adepts just and holy, and received the confessions of those troubled with remorse of conscience. As a proof that those stained with crime were refused admittance, it is related that Evander, a Persian general, having presented himself for initiation, the Romas represented that he would pollute the sanctuary; he was therefore summoned to appear before the tribunal for judging such homicides as presumed to penetrate the sanctuary. Evander did not insist, and was not initiated.

ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES.

Nearly all the writers of antiquity who have touched on the subject, are agreed that Isis of the Egyptians and Ceres of the Greeks and Romans were identical. The Athenians, among whom the worship of Ceres was first brought to prominent notice, were an Egyptian colony, and at Corinth and other places in Greece, Ceres still bore the name of Isis; and we shall see by and by that the legends of the two much resembled each other. The mysteries of this goddess were established at Eleusis; near Athens, but were not confined to that place, nor to Greece, for they were well known in Sicily, and in Rome, and traces of them have been even found in England. When they flourished in Greece, people were attracted by their renown from all parts of the world, and the concourse every third year was immense. In time of war, the Athenians gave a safe conduct to such as desired to be present at the celebration, either as adepts or spectators. These mysteries were held in the most profound veneration by

both Greeks and barbarians. Xerxes, the declared enemy of the gods of Greece, and the destroyer of their temples, spared that of Eleusis. And Aristio, one of the generals of Mithridates, to induce the Athenians to declare themselves in favor of that monarch, told them that the Romans intended to abolish the mysteries of Eleusis.

These mysteries were of two classes,—the greater and the lesser. The latter were celebrated at Agra, about half a mile from Athens, on the banks of the Illysus. In this river, the preparatory purifications were performed, after which the deJougue, or 2nd minister, caused the candidate to place his left foot on the skin of the animal sacrificed; a dreadful oath of secrecy was then exacted, and after answering certain questions, he was placed on a sort of throne, and the sacred dance was held around him. The same ceremony also took place among the Samothracians. The lesser mysteries were the preparation for the greater, and the candidates were called Mystics, while those of the second class were called Eopts, and there was an interval of five years between the two.

The ceremonies preceding the greater mysteries lasted nine days. The first was called "Agrymos," or the Assembly, from the candidates all assembling together on that day. Next day they went in procession to the sea, crossing in their way two canals of salt water, the boundary between Athens and Eleusis, and wherein they bathed. The third day was devoted to fasting, and in the evening they partook of a light repast of "sesami," (a kind of grain), of biscuits shaped like pyramids, and several other articles contained in the cistus or sacred basket. On the fourth day a sacrifice took place, but the initiates were strictly forbidden to touch the generative organ of the victim. The sacred dance then took place, which was said to have an allusion to the revolution of the planets around the sun. It would thus appear that the knowledge of the sun being the centre of the planetary system was well known to the ancients. On the fifth day the torch procession was held. The initiates marched by twos and carried each a torch. A profound silence reigned during the whole of this ceremony. They entered the enclosure of the temple of Ceres at Eleusis, waving the torches from side to side, the flames from which were supposed to have a purificatory effect. The temple was placed on the summit of a low hill and surrounded with a high wall, within which the candidates were congregated before being admitted into the temple proper, which was fitted up with the utmost splendor. The sixth day was consecrated to the young Iacchus; and an image of this god, crowned with myrtles (a funeral emblem), with a torch in his hand, was carried in state from Ceramicus (a portion of Athens) to Eleusis. After the statue was borne the sacred fan and the calathus or chest, with its contents, including the phallus. The procession left Athens by the sacred gate, and took its way towards Eleusis amid loud and repeated cries of "Iacchus, Iacchus!"

The initiation into the greater mysteries followed, rituals of which were published for the use of the adepts, but of which only a few incomplete fragments have been handed down to us. The most inviolable secrecy surrounded these mysteries. Women, although entitled to be admitted to the Order of Thesmaphorians, were here rigidly excluded. It