

remains before them they placed his good and evil actions in the balance, and by a solemn judgment attached either approbation or condemnation to his memory. They were divided into three classes according to their attainments, and each was entrusted with an habitual occupation or profession, some cultivated astronomy, others medicine, some composed the sacred chants, others planned buildings, &c.

They had two sets of religious doctrines, the exoteric, which were taught to the multitude, and the esoteric only communicated to the few selected with care from among the other castes, or from the illustrious strangers who came among them, who thus found themselves associated with the priesthood. There were however but a small number to whom the direct revelations of their sacred doctrines were made, and even then they were only learned by means of difficult allegories offered for their penetration during the course of sacred instruction; so that which the priests taught their initiates was essentially a moral fiction, intended to make the people happier and better.

Memphis, near the great pyramid, was the principal centre of the Egyptian initiation. The most profound secrecy surrounded the ceremonial, and the initiates kept on this subject a silence so much the more rigorous, as their lives were at stake if they were imprudent enough to lift the veil which covered the sanctuary. This rule was also general in Greece, and a price was put on the head of Diagoras for having revealed the Eleusinian mysteries. Androcles and Alcibiades accused of the same crime, were cited before the tribunal at Athens, which was feared all the more, as ignorant and credulous people were the judges. Eschylus the poet, when accused of writing on these forbidden subjects, was only absolved on proving that he had never been initiated. Aristotle was branded as infamous, for having sacrificed to the manes of his wife, according to the rites prescribed in the Eleusinian mysteries, and was forced to take refuge in Chalcis.

The Egyptian mysteries were divided into greater and lesser; the lesser were those of Isis and were celebrated at the vernal equinox; the greater comprised those of Serapis and Osiris, the former taking place at the summer solstice, and the latter at the autumnal equinox.

The privilege of initiation was accorded to those only whose lives were without stain, and was strictly interdicted to murderers. It was the same with the Greeks, Nero who solicited initiation at Eleusis, paused at the threshold when he heard the Ceryce or sacred herald, in the proclamation which preceded the celebration of the mysteries, pronounce excommunication against all impious and wicked persons; and two and a half centuries later the Emperor Constantine demanding admission was refused on the ground of being a despiser of the Gods.

When the Aspirant for the Egyptian initiation was properly prepared by fasting and ablution he presented himself at midnight at the great Pyramid accompanied by a guide and furnished with a lamp, he mounted seven steps and entered by a door or opening of about forty inches square, and traversed a long, low and winding gallery, he then arrived at a pit or well to which he could see no bottom, into which however he must venture, and his guide at

last shewed him an iron ladder to aid his descent, down which he led the way, at the sixtieth step was an opening which led to a passage cut in the rock, with a winding descent of about one hundred and fifty feet, and at the extremity of this passage was a brazen door which opened without effort or noise, but shut behind them with a noise like thunder. This signal announced to the priests that a candidate was commencing his trials, and the zacons or ministers of the lower order made preparation to receive him. Beyond the brazen gate was a grating, through the bars of which was seen an immense gallery, with a long line of arcades on each side, brilliantly lighted by torches and lamps, while the priests and priestesses of Isis were heard chanting funeral hymns, to a melodious accompaniment of sweet toned instruments, rendered still more imposing and mournful by the vaulted echoes, fixing the attention of the neophyte and throwing him into a soothing revery, which his guide allowed him to enjoy for a little space, and then attracting his attention caused him to seat himself on a stone bench, asking whether he had fully made up his mind to proceed, if he answered in the affirmative they entered an arched gallery about seven feet wide; over the arch and directly in front was a slab of white marble with the following inscription, "The mortal who travels this road alone, and without looking back will be purified by fire, by water, and by air, and if he surmount the fear of death, will rise from earthly things and see the light, and after due preparation will be made to understand the mysteries of the great goddess Isis." His guide tells him he can go no further with him, that great dangers are before him, that in order to triumph over them he must display indomitable courage, and unalterable presence of mind, but that if he had any fears of his strength failing him, he had better return at once while he had the power for in another minute it would be too late. The candidate continuing resolute, he exhorts him to fortify himself against fear, embraces him with tenderness, and takes his leave, he however follows him unseen to render him assistance, should he be overpowered by the dangers he may meet; in such an event he conducts him out of the subterranean labyrinth, and commands him in the name of the goddess Isis, to preserve the strictest silence on what he has heard and seen, and never to dare to present himself for initiation at any of the twelve temples of Egypt.

The aspirant then proceeds about five hundred feet along the gallery, noting on each side niches in which were placed on cubic blocks, colossal statues of basalt and granite looking like mummies waiting the resurrection. His lamp sheds but a feeble light, and spectres appear at each step which on his approach vanish into air. He at length arrives at an iron gate guarded by three men armed with swords and having fantastic helmets on their heads, one of whom thus addresses him, "We are not placed here to stop your advance, if you have the courage to proceed, continue your route, but remember that after passing this gate you *must* go forward to the end, and if you do turn back you will find us at our post to oppose your retreat, and you will never be allowed to depart from these subterranean recesses," which in fact was the case, for if fear got the better of him after passing the gate he was seized by the guards, conducted to the lower apartments of the temple and shut up for the rest of