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AN INITIATION CEREMONY IN THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES.

The candidate and his aged initiator are here shown standing on the brink of a chasm dividing the world of the living from that of the dead and through which stream the shades of the departed. On the farther side of the chasm Hades, the god of the underworld, sits on his golden throne surrounded by the emblems of death and attended by Cerberus, the three-headed dog, guardian of the gates of death. Above the yawning cleft hovers the figure of Ceres, carrying the two torches which light her way through the gloom of the nether world. She pleads for the liberation of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades has abducted and would force to become his queen.

John A. Weiss thus describes the ritual of the Eleusinia: "Soon the thunder rolled, lightning flashed, strange and fearful objects appeared, and the place seemed to shake and be on fire; hideous spectres glided through the building, moaning and sighing; frightful noises and howlings were heard. Mysterious apparitions, representing the messengers of the infernal deities, Anguish, Madness, Famine, Disease, and Death, flew around. As the trembling crowd of novices advanced amid this fearful spectacle, representing the torments of this life and those of Tartarus, they heard the solemn voice of the hierophant explaining them, and exhibiting his symbols of supreme deity, which but added to the horrors of the scene, when suddenly a serene light and objects of bliss appeared, and opened an Elysium to the initiated Eleusinian phalanx, who had, in a short time and space, experienced the miseries of Earth, the tortures of Tartarus, and the happiness of Elysium." (See The Obelisk in Freemasonry.)