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NOTE ON *ALCESTIS*, 320—322.

CONJECTURAL emendation of the text of ancient classics is permissible, if at all, only where the reading is doubtful or the sense unsatisfactory. Let us apply this canon to Professor Earle's treatment of what he calls the 'crux criticorum' in the *Alcestis* of Euripides:—

δεῖ γὰρ θανεῖν με· καὶ τὸδ' οὐκ ἐς αὔριον
οὐδ' ἐς τρίτην μοι μὴνός ἔρχεται κακόν,
ἀλλ' αὐτίκ' ἐν τοῖς μηκέτ' οὔσι λέξομαι.

where (in the November number of the *Classical Review*) he proposes to read:—

οὐδ' ἐς τρίτην μοι μὴν ἐσέρχεται κακόν.

It is not claimed that the reading here is doubtful. Is the sense then unsatisfactory?

I suppose it will be admitted that it would be a perfectly natural thing for Alcestis, knowing that she was to die on the day on which she was speaking, to say that the evil was not coming upon her on the morrow nor on the next day, but at once; and further that, if she were

speaking on the first of the month, she might put the third day of the month for the day next but one. It remains then to show that she was speaking on the first day of the month, and that the audience are supposed to know it.

The conception of death as a debt owed by mortals is common in all literature. We need not go further than the same play to find it—

βροτοῖς ἅπασι καθανεῖν ὀφείλεται.

Now this idea was evidently present to the mind of Euripides in the prologue, who there invests the King of Terrors with the odious characteristics of a usurer, whose ways are:—

To mortals hateful and by gods abhorred.

Death, inexorable creditor that he is, comes on the first of the month to claim his due.

ST. GEORGE STOCK.

Oxford.

MAGICAL PAPYRI.

1. In Mr. Riess's notes, (*Classical Review*, Dec. 1896 p. 410) citing Par. 213-14. (We. i. 51), occurs ἀμφιέσθην λευκοῖς ἱμάσιν. 'But as nobody can dress in straps, we must read εἴμασιν. Still ἱμάσιν might be explained as meaning the narrow linen strips, in which mummies were wrapped.' May the reference not be to the binding of the 'recipient'? Mr. Myers, (*Classical Essays*, p. 88) cites, for this world-wide magical practice, oracles in Eusebius, *Pr. Ev.* 8: 'The recipient was in some way bound with withes, and enveloped in fine linen, which had to be cut and unwrapped at the end of the ceremony.' I have compared the Australian magical usage, 'the head, body, and limbs wound round with stringy bark cords,' and similar usages among the Red Indians.

2. πλῆκται = knocking or rapping ἥρωες = souls, are, of course, still very common. (Par. 1079).

3. Pap. R(ainer) l. 34 ff. ὑποκλοπήν. Mr. Riess says 'stealthy theft, of what?' and suggests, of babies, changelings being substi-

tuted. Probably the meaning is, theft of portable objects. Many 'cases' will be found in the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, and others may be studied in Nevius's *Demon Possession in China*. The objects in haunted houses vanish, and turn up in unlooked for places. Witch Trials, Glanvil, and other sources provide endless examples. These phenomena are so familiar, in modern experience, (of course the trick is easily played) that ὑποκλοπή hardly needs another explanation. Mr. Riess will find crowds of instances in an American book of 1888, *The Great Amherst Mystery*. A well observed case is recorded from his own experience, by an eminent Catholic missionary in Tonquin. (*circ.* 1730). The πνεύματα in a haunted house were throwing stones about. 'Why don't you throw money?' asked a native Christian, and a handful of copper coins, *all wet*, dropped in the room. On leaving the house, after doing his exorcism, the reverend Father found a water-seller bewailing him-