

## THE NAME ANTHESTERIA.

THE conventional interpretation of the name *Anthesteria* as festival of *flowers*, or of the *wine-bloom*, and the derivation from *ἄνθος*, always insecure and unsatisfactory, will need to be reconsidered in the light of Miss Harrison's paper in the present volume of the *Journal* on the origin and nature of the festival itself. Even from the Dionysiac point of view, it does not appear that either flowers or the *ἄνθος* of wine were connected with the season or the ceremonies in such a way as naturally to give a name to the whole: and still more doubtful is the supposed formation of the word. Nouns in *-τηριο-* are normally formed from verb-stems, through the 'noun of the agent' in *-τηρ*, and take their sense from the action described by the verb, as *σωτήριος*, *λυτήριος*, *βουλευτήριον* etc. The names of festivals ending in *-τηρια* are no exception to this rule. They describe the *action* in which the ceremony consisted, or with which it was chiefly connected. Thus *ἀνακλητήρια* is a feast or ceremony of *ἀνάκλησις*, *ἀνακαλυπτήρια* of *ἀνακάλυψις*, and so on. The name *ἀνθεστήρια*, taken as a derivative from *ἄνθος*, if not unexampled, is certainly irregular. From *ἀνθεσ-* as a noun-stem no *ἀνθεστηρ-* or *ἀνθεστηριο-* could normally be formed: there are no such words as *τειχεστήριος*, *θερεστήριος* or *λαχεστήριος*. On the other hand there is not apparently any verbal stem *ἀνθεσ-*. From *ἀνθεῖν* we might conceivably have *ἀνθητήρια*, as *δηλητήριος* from *δηλέομαι*, but not *ἀνθεστήρια*. It would be rash certainly on this ground to pronounce the formation impossible: it is possible that there was once a verbal stem *ἀνθεσ-*, and such an aorist as *ἀνθέσαι* to *flower*, though even this would not remove the objection altogether: or we might suppose that by false analogy the termination *-τηρια*, taken as appropriate to festivals, was attached to *ἀνθεσ-*, the noun-stem of *ἄνθος*, without regard to etymology and the ordinary law. But there is at all events room for doubt.

And now it appears that the Dionysiac association, the connexion with wine, by which the derivation from *ἄνθος* has been suggested, was not the sole nor probably the primitive character of the festival after all. Miss Harrison, in the paper above cited, seems to show clearly that the stock, upon which the Dionysiac element was grafted, was an antique feast of *all souls*, a feast of the dead. For a certain time the graves were supposed to be open, and the liberated spirits to be entertained, not without precautions, by

the living. The 'opening of the *πίθος*' which gave a name to the first day of the feast, the *πιθουγία*, if it belonged by convention to the *πίθος* or cask of wine, belonged also, and probably much earlier, to the earthen-ware vessels in which, by a primitive practice, the dead were interred. The opening of the *πίθος* was the opening of the grave and the place of spirits; and similarly other terms connected with the ceremonies, though adapted with more or less success to the *Dionysia*, are traceable to the alternative and more ancient association with the recall and entertainment of the souls. It is reasonable therefore to consider upon these lines the dubious derivation of *ἀνθεστήρια*.

Now, as was said, the termination in *-τηριο-* indicates *prima facie* that the stem of this word is verbal. But we need not assume that the verbal stem is *ἀνθεσ-*. Perhaps *ἀνθεσ-* itself needs analysis; and for the first syllable there is an obviously possible origin in the preposition *ἀν-* (*ἀνά*), of which so many examples (*e.g.* *ἀνθεμα* = *ἀνάθεμα*) are preserved in the poets. The verb-stem will then be *θεσ-*, which is in fact a verb-stem and has more than one meaning. The meaning which would perhaps in any case have suggested itself first, and which now seems especially attractive, is that which appears in the archaic verb *θέσσασθαι* or *θέσσασθαι* *to pray* or *pray for*, and in the adjectives *πολύθεστος* and *ἀπόθεστος* (see Liddell and Scott, *s. vv.*). Prayers and invocations addressed to the dead were a regular part of the proceedings by which they were brought back to the world of the living. It is scarcely necessary to cite examples; but we may refer to the prayers of Odysseus (*Od.* 10, 526) and to those which make so large a part of Aeschylus' *Choe-phori*. The compound *ἀναθέσσασθαι* would, after the analogy of *ἀνακαλεῖν* and the like, bear the sense *to raise by prayer* or *to recall by prayer*, literally 'to pray up' or 'pray back'. And *ἀνθεστήρια*, derived from *ἀναθέσσασθαι*, would be the *feast of revocation*, the name, as usual, signifying the action in which the ceremony consisted and which was the object of it. Upon the facts disclosed by Miss Harrison it would seem that no name could be more appropriate.

It might perhaps be asked why, if *ἀνθεστήρια* was equivalent to *ἀναθεστήρια*, the name did not take this latter form, when the 'syncopated' proposition *ἀν-* went out of common use. But the answer is ready, and justified by the facts so far as known, that, before that time, the verb-stem *θεσ-* *to pray* had itself gone out of common use, and consequently the word *ἀνθεστήρια* had ceased to be generally intelligible. In these circumstances, and especially when the feast itself, under the manipulation of anthropomorphism and mysticism, had taken up an association with Dionysus and wine, the very few, who might trouble themselves for an interpretation, would be content, as it would seem that they were, with a vague reference to *ἄνθος*. The scientific difficulties of this connexion were of course not then perceptible.

But for all that, these difficulties are serious, and sufficient at least to prohibit any positive assertion in favour of that connexion. Nor would I

assert positively the derivation here propounded. In regard to terms of this kind, fixed, hieratic, and of dateless antiquity, the etymologist is never in safety. But our derivation is at least conformable to law, and free from any such arbitrary hypotheses as are required by the derivation from *ἄνθος*. It seems therefore good enough to put *ἄνθος* out of court, and to remove any doubts which the name *Anthesteria*, if referred to *ἄνθος*, might seem to cast upon the interesting observations of Miss Harrison.

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