

XXVI.—AN ALTAR TO THE *MATRES OLLOTOTAE*,
DISCOVERED AT BINCHESTER.¹

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I AM indebted to Dr. Hooppell for photographs, and to Mr. Blair for an excellent squeeze of this inscription. The reading is, I think, beyond dispute:—

I(OVI) O(PTIMO) M(AXIMO) | ET MATRIB | VS OLLOTO | TIS
SIVE TRA | NSMARINIS | POMPONIVS DONATVS | B(ENE)F(ICI-
ARIVS) CO(N)S(VLARIS) PRO | SALVTE SVA | ET SVORVM |
V(OTVM) S(OLVIT) L(IBENTE) A(NIMO).

Or, Englishing it roughly, 'To Jupiter and the Matres ollototae or transmarine, erected by Pomponius Donatus, beneficiarius of the governor, for the safety of himself and his family.'

On one side of the altar are a *prefericulum* and a *patera*, on the other a *cultur* and a *secespita*.

The *beneficiarius* is a military official often mentioned on inscriptions. *Beneficiarii* were nominated, as their title suggests, by the highest officers, *legati*, procurators, tribunes, *praefecti*, etc., and employed by them on special services of various kinds. In this case, Pomponius Donatus was attached to a governor of the province, who was of consular rank. It is possible that he was employed, like other *beneficiarii consularium* elsewhere, as commander of the small garrison at Binchester; but this is conjecture. (See further, *Ephemeris Epigr.* iv. pp. 379, 529; *Archaeol. Journal*, xlvii. p. 241.)

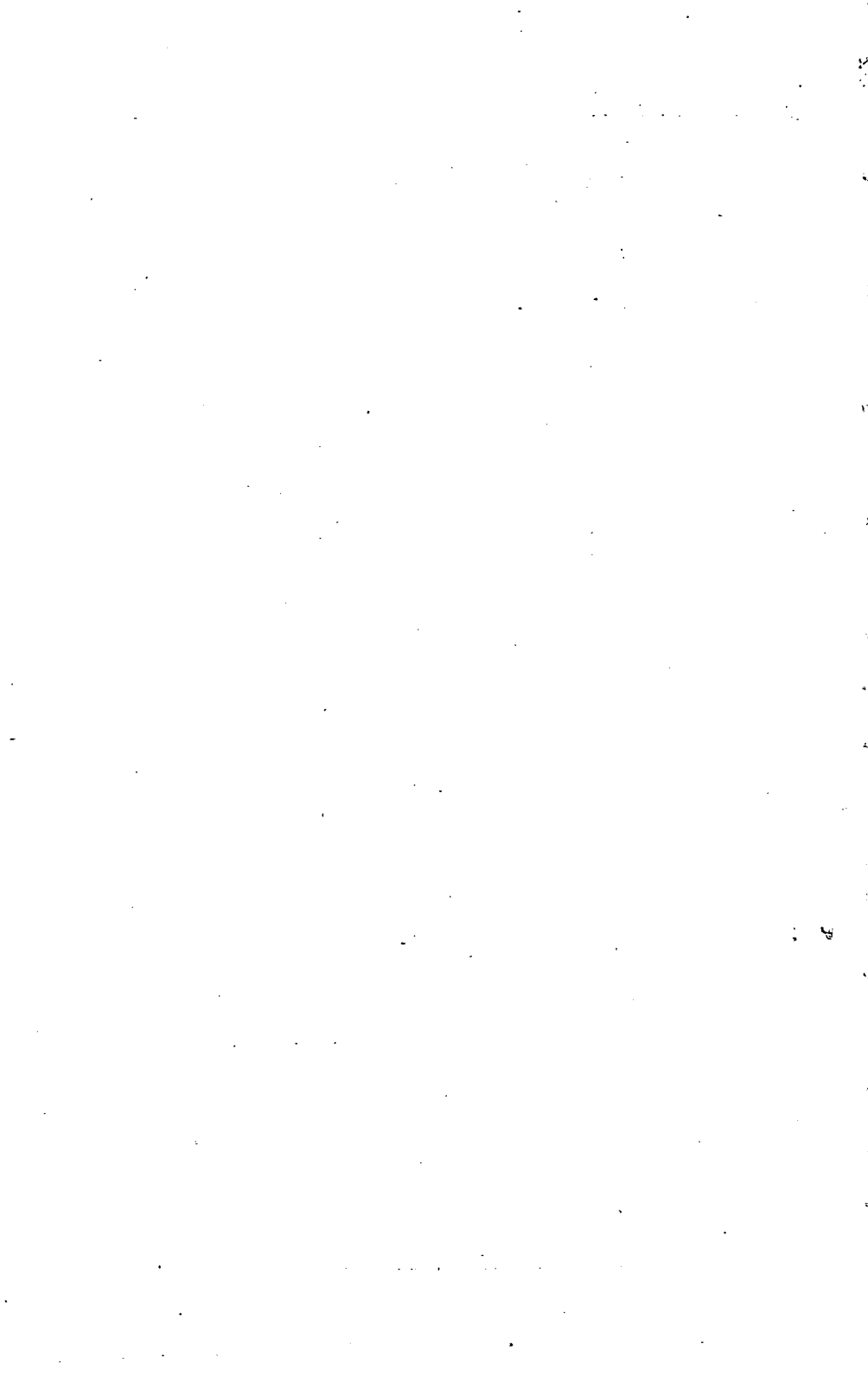
The exact significance of *ollototae* appears to be doubtful. The *deae matres* were three goddesses, worshipped, as it seems, originally in Gaul or Germany, whence soldiers carried the cult to other provinces, notably to Britain. Dr. Max Ihm has collected a long list of native names attached in various inscriptions to the bare Latin *deae matres*, and these names appear to a great extent to be derived from places. Dr. Hooppell (*Times*, May 22, 1891²) suggests, rather doubtfully, a similar origin for the name *ollototae*, of which no other instance

¹ See also *Proc.* V. pp. 36-39.² *Ibid.* p. 36.

appears to be known. He points out that an *ala Vettonum* apparently garrisoned Binchester, that the Vettones lived in Spain, near Salamanca, and that there is a small village now called Olot in North-East Spain. He has since informed me that Professor Rhÿs accepts this view; but I cannot help thinking that I prefer Dr. Hooppell's doubts. Olot, as he himself says, is nowhere near the district of the Vettones; it is, indeed, more than 400 miles from it. The name, further, is modern; we do not even know if the place existed in Roman days, still less what name it bore. Again, though it is not improbable—I cannot regard it as proved—that an *ala Vettonum*, or part of one, was permanently in garrison at Binchester, it does not in the least follow that there were any Spaniards in its ranks. The auxiliary *alae* and *cohortes* which bear territorial names were not regularly filled up by territorial recruiting (*Hermes*, xix. p. 210), and, though the epigraphical material is not yet sufficient to throw complete light on the matter, it is necessary to be careful about arguments based upon the territorial names of auxiliary troops. In any case, the *beneficarii* were selected from the legions, not from the auxiliaries, so that every man in the *ala* might have been a Spaniard, and yet no conclusion could be drawn as to the dedicator here. There is, however, a further reason which seems to me quite decisive against any territorial etymology for *olltotae*. The inscription reads *matres olltotae sive transmarinae*, and it is clear that *olltotae* must be regarded as the equivalent of 'transmarine': one is the barbarian, the other the Latin name for the same idea or two similar ideas. It follows that *olltotae* must be a Keltic or Teutonic—by preference a Keltic—word denoting something like 'over-sea,' and Mr. Whitley Stokes, one of the first of living Keltic scholars, has supplied me with an etymology which I think his authority will suffice to render tolerably certain. The word is, he thinks, connected with the modern Welsh *alltud*, 'belonging to another (*all*) country (*tud*),' which in early Keltic would have been *allo-tôto-s*. The appearance of *o* for *a* in the first syllable of *olltotae* may be explained as in *Adnomatos* (C.I.L. iii. 3819) for *Adnamatus*, and in other instances quoted by Holder (*Alt-keltischer Sprachschatz*, columns 3, 44). Another derivation has since been given by Grienberger (*Westdeutsches Korrespondenzblatt*, 1891, col. 204). He derives the first half of the word from a Keltic stem, meaning 'all,'



ROMAN ALTAR, BINCHESTER.



and the second from the same stem as Mr. Whitley Stokes. I am not able to discuss the phonetic aspect of this derivation, but it does not seem to give the required sense. In either case the dedication is due to soldier immigrants, and is not a 'reminiscence of a time when the Brigantes left their homes across the sea.'³

Dr. Hooppell has also most ingeniously conjectured that, in two other Binchester inscriptions, both now known only from imperfect copies, we should read *matribus ollototis*. In one of the two, the conjecture is open to the objection that it does not fit in well with the best readings we have, as they are given by Professor Hübner⁴ (*C.I.L.* vii. 424, *Lapid. Sept.* No. 716):

1.—The best reading of the second line gives not Q LO, but ϵ LQ. Now a Q is often found in old copies of inscriptions for a leaf-stop, and one can easily understand that some authorities should give Q, some ϵ , when ϵ alone was right. But if the original letter were O, I do not see how it could be misread into ϵ , though it might easily into Q.

2.—In the third line the first three letters seem to have been tied up together; TIS, in any shape is out of the question, whether tied or not, unless you suppose a gross misreading. Moreover, TIB gives an excellent sense, and, though not absolutely required, is quite in place, as TIB(*erius*).

I do not say these two points are fatal to Dr. Hooppell's conjecture, but they seem to require consideration.

With respect to the other inscription (*C.I.L.* vii. 425; *Lapid. Sept.* No. 718), it is obvious that the only difficulty is the badness of the existing texts, which would equally admit of this and several other emendations. However, the conjectures are so attractive that I cannot help hoping both may be right.

³ Dr. Hooppell in the *Reliquary* last July mentions a derivation from the original forms of the modern Welsh *alloedd-othau*. This, I understand, is phonetically out of the question.

⁴ In a letter to Dr. Hooppell of the 24th May, 1891, Professor Hübner has written:—'I fully agree with your opinion that the same 'Matres Ollototae' as on the recent altar, were named on the two other Binchester altars.'—*Journal of the Brit. Arch. Assocn.* vol. xlvi. p. 271 n.