

## XXXI.—THE MOTHER GODDESSES.

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(Read on the 23rd December, 1891.)

## I.—INTRODUCTION.

IT has often been remarked that the history of the Roman empire is based on two kinds of authorities which are strangely different. The records of most ages confirm or correct one another; the literature and the inscriptions of the empire rarely touch. Facts, even names, mentioned in the one seldom appear in the other, and an inscription like that recently unearthed at Rome, which speaks of Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, is all but unique.<sup>1</sup> But the difference is nowhere more striking than in religious matters. Our literary sources suggest that under the early empire scepticism triumphed and religion was dead. Our inscriptions tell us of whole cults which no writer discusses and few even mention. The cause is not far to seek. The literature of the early empire was written for and read by the upper classes, and these were sceptical, or philosophic, or indifferently orthodox. Eastern cults like those of Isis or Mithras, which became fashionable, were mentioned in books; the beliefs of the masses in the provinces were as little noticed as their languages. Even Christian writers tell us little. Casually Lactantius alludes to Esus and Teutates whom the Gauls appease with human blood, but he took the allusion from Lucan. Casually Tertullian observes that each tribe had its own gods: the Syrians, Atergatis; the Noricans, Belenus; the Mauretanians, Regulus. But these writers, and still more the other early apologists, like Minucius Felix and Arnobius, reserve argument and invective for the 'established' Greek and Roman mythologies, even for the lesser gods of Rome, Nodotis, Mater Matuta, Perfica, or for the fashionable cults known in reading circles.

In the following paragraphs I desire to briefly treat one of these popular worships, about which literature is silent, and I hope, in due course, to deal afterwards with other such cults, so far as they

<sup>1</sup> So forgers have noticed and have tried to fill the gap. Of the dozen forged inscriptions which pretend to be Romano-British, seven allude to men like Agricola, Caratacus, Suetonius, or to facts like the authorship of Hadrian's Wall.

are represented in Roman Britain. The result will be a series of notes on the whole Romano-British Pantheon, which may be useful in more ways than one. They may even throw light on Romano-British civilization, and on the relative importance of the military, commercial, and native elements. The religious inscriptions of Aquitaine and of Narbonese Gaul reveal to us the survival of an Iberian element in the south-west of France and show that even the 'Province' was not thoroughly Romanized, and a survey may end in equally interesting conclusions for our own country. My reason for commencing with the 'Mother Goddesses' is, that this cult is both the easiest and the most notable subject. It is familiar to every archaeologist, and the material has been collected and admirably treated by a German scholar, from whose work I have largely borrowed.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.—DISTRIBUTION.

Our knowledge of this cult is derived wholly from inscriptions and sculptures. There is no passage in ancient literature which can, with any probability, be referred to it. But from the distribution of the stone records we may infer that it belonged exclusively to western Europe, and, indeed, to certain parts of western Europe. It was popular in Cisalpine and Narbonese Gaul, in Lower Germany, and in some districts of Britain. Its memorials occur at Rome, in Gallia Lugudunensis, and in Upper Germany. Faint and often doubtful traces can be detected in other parts of the west, in Italy outside of Rome, in the north and south-west of Gaul, in Spain, Africa, and the five Illyrican provinces south of the Danube. These traces are such as to show that the cult is completely foreign to most of the districts in question. Spain can produce only three dedications; Africa, Aquitaine, Illyricum, and Italy none at all, unless we suppose that the *Mothers* appear under other names.<sup>3</sup> We have, indeed, at Lyons a dedication to *Matres Pannoniorum et Delmatarum* and *Matres Italae* and *Africanæ* appear on altars found at Winchester and

<sup>2</sup> Max Ihm in *Jahrbücher des Vereins von Altertumsfreunden in Rheinlande* (*Bonner Jahrbücher*), lxxxiii. (Bonn, 1887) pp. 1-200. See also M. Siebourg, *de Sulevis Campestribus Fatis*; K. Friederich's *Matronarum monumenta* (Bonn Dissertations, 1886); F. Haug in *Bursian's Jahresbericht*, lii. pp. 116-121; O. Hirschfeld, *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift*, viii. (1889) p. 135; and Vallentin, *Revue Celtique*, iv. (1880) p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> See the annexed map, also schedule, p. 337.

York. But this only denotes that Italians, Africans, Pannonians, and Dalmatians adopted in the west the common cult.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, we must go further and conclude that the cult is also strange to Rome and Britain. The inscriptions in which it is mentioned at Rome belong to a set of sixteen dedications found near the *via Tasso*: they are all very similar in date and character, and were put up by the *equites singulares* or imperial body-guard in the first half of the second century A.D. These *equites* were largely, though not exclusively, recruited on the Rhine.<sup>5</sup> Some of these particular inscriptions actually give German birthplaces on the stones, and we may assume that the presence of the cult in Rome is due to soldiers who had perhaps brought it from the Rhine. It is interesting to reflect that we are dealing with a cult which was barely represented in the great centre of the Roman world.

Similarly with Britain. The British monuments to the 'Mothers' are found mainly in military centres. Their dedicators, so far as they state their profession, are mainly soldiers. Local epithets, such as denote a native worship, are absent, and the goddesses are styled *patriae*, 'of my fatherland'; *transmarinae*, 'belonging to a land over the sea'; *domesticae*, 'belonging to my birthplace';<sup>6</sup> epithets



which no sober enquirer will refer to the pre-historic epoch when the Kelts crossed into Britain. It is, no doubt, possible that the Keltic inhabitants of our island worshipped a native triad of goddesses, but there is only one instance where we have reason to suspect the mention of any such thing on a Roman altar. Mr. Whitley Stokes has conjectured that the Benwell dedication *Lamias tribus* refers to British reflexes of the three *Morigna* or sisters who are known in Irish legends as Anand, Baddb, and Machae.<sup>7</sup> But this instance is unique, and

<sup>4</sup> For the Lyons inscription, see Mommsen, *Ephem.* v. p. 202; for the Winchester one, *Hermes*, xix. 19 n. It follows that in explaining epithets of the 'Mothers,' we must conform to the geographical limits. The *Matres Ollototae*, for instance, must not be referred to a place in Spain.

<sup>5</sup> Mommsen, *Ephem.* v. p. 233.

<sup>6</sup> So *domus* is regularly used in inscriptions.

<sup>7</sup> *Revue Celtique*, xii. 128. An early glossary gives *lamia* as the Latin for

the presumably native deities who most commonly appear on our inscriptions are, except the *Di Veteres*, singular in number.

It must be remembered that religions spread with extraordinary ease under the Roman empire. Freedom of movement and intercourse was then in some ways greater than it is even now,<sup>8</sup> travelling for business or for pleasure was common in all ranks, and often meant the moving of a household of slaves. The needs of the army must also have caused a perpetual ebb and flow, as troops were shifted from province to province, or drafts of veterans and recruits went to and fro. Hence the diffusion of oriental cults like those of Mithras or Dolichenus, and of Christianity itself. Hence, too, we can understand how the worship of the western 'Mothers' spread beyond its original home. The only remarkable fact is that it did come from the west, while all, or nearly all, the religions which spread through the early empire came from the east, from Greece and still more from Asia, the lands of ancient and established civilizations. This will account for the little notice which the 'Mothers' received in Rome, and for the comparatively small area over which they extended their sway.

### 3.—ORIGINAL SEAT OF THE WORSHIP.

It is not easy to say what the original seat of the cult was. Clearly it was not Roman or Italian. It had nothing to do with the Roman *Parcae*, still less with certain *θεαι μητέρες*, who, as Diodorus casually tells us, were worshipped in Sicily.<sup>9</sup> Geography confines us to a German or Keltic origin. Lower Germany has strong claims to be an original home—not necessarily the only one—of the 'Mothers.' Its somewhat limited area supplies the largest number of dedications found in any one province, its sculptures are the most characteristic, and Mommsen has incidentally observed that the worship may here be indigenous.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the *morigain* (singular of *morigna*). Mr. Roach Smith (*Coll. Ant.* i. 137) held these *Lamiae* to be the 'Mothers' re-named. In any case, no connection with the *Lamia* of classical mythology is possible.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall's *Principles of Economics*, i. 20; Friedländer's *Sittengeschichte Roms*, ii. 56. I doubt if the statement can be extended to include trade, though even that was easier under the empire than before.

<sup>9</sup> Diod. iv. 79, foll. This is the only reference to these deities, and some scholars hold that Diodorus has made a mistake.

<sup>10</sup> *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift*, 1886, p. 124. It may be added that the fruit baskets of the 'Mothers' also appear with the Batavian goddess Nehalennia, and in Teutonic mythology (*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, xlii. 301).

German monuments, being mostly due to soldiers, may belong to an imported cult, while those of Cisalpine Gaul and Narbonensis are the work of civilians, and less open to such suspicion. The earliest datable dedication, too, hails from lake Maggiore; there are several Keltic details observable about the cult, and Ihm finds the home of the 'Mothers' in the Gallic districts mentioned. He adds that an extension northwards is in this case more likely than the reverse, but this is entirely *a priori* arguing, and the difference of dedicators also goes for little here. Germany was garrisoned by a large army; Cisalpine and Narbonese Gaul were bare of troops,<sup>11</sup> so that variety in the dedicators corresponds simply to variety in the populations. The question is complicated by the presence of Keltic tribes in Roman times near the west bank of the Rhine, and we do not know the details of the race division well enough to use them in this problem. Mythology, to which Dr. Röscher has bid us go, favours either a German or a Keltic origin; both races worshipped triads of goddesses. Indeed, it is conceivable that the worship of the 'Mothers' was indigenous in both Gallic and Rhenish districts, that is, that there were two distinct but similar cults which were amalgamated, as cults in antiquity so often were, but which retained, in certain differences of titulature and other detail, vestiges of original difference.

#### 4.—DATE AND WORSHIPPERS.

The main outlines of the cult are very much the same in all places. It flourished in the first three centuries, the first monument datable with certainty<sup>12</sup> belonging to Caligula's reign (A.D. 37-41), the last, one found at Benwell, to Gordian's (A.D. 238-244), while many can be fixed to intermediate dates. At the end of the third century Christianity or the barbarian invasions weakened the cult, as they did other native cults; for instance, that of Hercules Deu-soniensis, the Gallic god who survived the earlier Imperial rule to figure in the third century on the coins of the short-lived Gallo-

<sup>11</sup> Hirschfeld, *C.I.L.* xii. p. xii. Cisalpine Gaul is, of course, now part of Italy, though, for convenience, I have distinguished the two areas.

<sup>12</sup> At Pallanza, on lake Maggiore. Prof. Hübner has dated another monument found in Cisalpine Gaul to the reign of Tiberius, but his conclusion depends on the style of lettering, and this cannot be called certain.

Roman empire. There is, however, some curious evidence to show that the worship of the 'Mothers,' like other superstitions, lingered on into the middle ages. Thus, to quote one of many examples, a German book of questions to be asked from penitents, dating from the eleventh century, contains the following:—'Hast thou done, as do some women at certain seasons, preparing a table in thy house and meat and drink thereon, that the three Sisters or *Parcae* may come and be refreshed therewith?' Towards the end of the next century Saxo Grammaticus tells us how a certain Fridlaf consulted the Sisters, and his description agrees with the monuments of the 'Mothers.' Even to-day three sisters, Einbede, Willibede, and Warbede, are honoured in western Germany.<sup>13</sup>

The belief was, indeed, one likely to survive. Christianity, as we are daily coming to see more clearly, spread first and most rapidly in the centres of civilization; the unconverted were truly *pàgani*; and the cult of the 'Mothers' was essentially a poor man's creed; its worshippers came from the lower ranks. Soldiers form the majority everywhere, except in the ungarrisoned regions of Cisalpine and Narbonese Gaul, and of the soldiers only two or three hold even moderately high rank. We have a *tribunus militum* of a legion at Lyons, at Benwell a *praefectus alae*, but this almost exhausts the list. Civil magistrates are as rare; many dedicators are clearly slaves, freedmen, *peregrini*. Women, again, as Ihm has noted, take a rather larger share in this cult than is usual, at least, in the Gallic and German districts, and this seems to suggest again a popular and indigenous character. In Britain the immigrant cult has, at the most, only one female worshipper.<sup>14</sup>

#### 5.—TITULATURE.

In other details there are natural differences in different provinces. The empire was, as Mommsen has said, a sort of confederation, and such variations are inevitable, though, be it added, we do not explain them merely by saying this. In the first place, the dominant title 'Mothers' has three Latin forms. *Matres* is used exclusively in

<sup>13</sup> Ihm refers to Panzer's *Beiträge zur Deutschen Mythologie*, i. pp. 1-200. Similar details in Wright's *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon*, p. 282.

<sup>14</sup> There is a possible one at Carlisle (*Lap. Sept.* 491, *C.I.L.* vii. 927), but it seems to stand alone.

Britain and at Rome, and incidentally in a good many other places; *Matronae* rules in Lower Germany and Cisalpine Gaul; and a by-form *Matrae* occurs in Narbonese Gaul and in some contiguous districts. It is not quite clear whether any difference in meaning is to be drawn between these forms. Apart from the geographical distribution, certain minor differences of usage may be noted between *Matres* and *Matronae*. Thus, the native local epithets so common in Germany are usually confined to one or other form: it is the exception to find, as we do once near Bonn, the epithet *Vacalinea* used with both *Matronae* and *Matres*. Again, the strictly local epithets are more commonly used with *Matronae*; *Matres* takes those of wider sense, *Germanae*, *Gallae*, *domesticae*, and has thus the look of a different, at first sight, of a less exact, less technical term. Geography emphasizes this difference: *Matres* has travelled into Britain, Spain, and elsewhere; *Matronae* does not occur in any land where the cult has been demonstrably imported.<sup>15</sup> It would seem, then, that Mommsen had some reason for drawing a distinction between the *Matres* and the *Matronae*, but it is doubtful whether this distinction was always felt by the worshippers. The character of the inscriptions and sculptures is very similar, except on the points noted, and we may perhaps explain the variations by supposing (as before) an amalgamation. The use of the third term *Matrae* seems, as Mommsen long ago suggested, to be a Kelticism.

Somewhat similar variations are observable in the epithets which are often attached to the title 'Mothers.' It has been indicated in the course of the last paragraph that these epithets may be divided into two classes, those with a more or less general significance, and those which are clearly native and probably local, and it has been pointed out that the first are commoner with the title *Matres*, the latter with *Matronae*. This, however, is not all. Statistics show that in Narbonese and Cisalpine Gaul, and in Britain, epithets of any sort are comparatively rare with any of the three forms, *Matres*, *Matrae*, *Matronae*; where epithets occur we have general terms, like *suus*,

<sup>15</sup> Compare the *Matronae Aufaniae* which occur here and there in Germany and Gaul with the *Matres Aufaniae* on one Spanish inscription. But the dedication found near Bonn, *Matribus sive Matronis Aufaniabus*, shows that the distinction was not always kept, and so the *Vacalinea* quoted above is another example; there are not many.

*domesticus, transmarinus*, and if we may call it an epithet, *deus*.<sup>16</sup> In Lower Germany, on the other hand, we meet a multitude of epithets, obviously native and apparently derived from proper names of places for the most part, which can even stand alone with no perceptible difference in meaning. Such are the *Mahlnehæ* (Malines), *Nersihenæ* (Neersen), *Albiahenæ* (Elvenich), and many more. Some of these epithets seem to be Keltic, like *Octocannæ*, *Mediotautehæ*, but whether always with the sense of place is doubtful. In Britain only two such epithets occur, *Ollototæ* at Binchester, and *Alatervæ* at Cramond, near Edinburgh. The first probably denotes 'of another land,' the second is quite obscure. It appears to resemble the name of a Rhenish deity, *Alateivia*, and possibly the first elements, *Alat*, may be identical. It may also be the same as an imperfectly preserved name found at Nantes, and presumably Keltic.<sup>17</sup>

It may be added that the Lower German and, to some extent, the Gallic inscriptions often form the dative plural in *-abus*, *Matrabus*, *Matronabus*, and in the epithets, *Octocannabus*, *Gavadiabus*, and many more. This is perhaps due to the analogy of *deabus*, the ending *-abus* being sometimes used to define gender in law papers, and especially in late Latin.<sup>18</sup> Once, indeed, at Nîmes in the south of France, we have a curious inscription written with Greek letters in Keltic dialect, which contains the unmistakably Keltic dative MATPEBO (*matrebo*), and this analogy has possibly also aided the employment of *Matrabus* for *Matris*.<sup>19</sup> An even stranger form, not Keltic but Teutonic, appears on three Rhenish dedications, where *Vatvims* and *Aflims* preserve the old German dative plural, of which we have no other direct evidence, though we could infer it from the terminations in kindred languages. It is needless to say that we have nothing of

<sup>16</sup> The title *Deæ Matres*, often used in England, is unfortunate. *Matres* alone is commoner by far than *deæ Matres*. *Deæ Matronæ* is all but unknown (once *Matronis dis*, once *divis*).

<sup>17</sup> *Alatervos*, *Bullétin Epigraphique*, 1886, p. 264. Holder in his *Sprachschatz* does not mention this name. The attempt of the Dutch professor, Kern, to find German derivations for this and other epithets (*Revue Celtique*, ii. 157) does not seem successful.

<sup>18</sup> So *filiabus*, *libertabus*, *natabus*, etc. The Latin grammarians regularly mention the use, but limit the instances; see, e.g., Keil's *Gram. Lat.* v. pp. 189, 582.

<sup>19</sup> The Keltic and Italian languages, alone in the Indo-European family, retained the ending in *-bus* for the dative and ablative plural; Brugman, *Grundriss*, §§ 367, 382. Traces survive in surviving Keltic dialects, e.g., in Gaelic *bard* (poet), dat. plur. *bhairdaibh*.



this sort in Britain; the cult was not sufficiently established in our island, and the worshippers, mostly soldiers, clearly all knew the Staatssprache.<sup>20</sup>

#### 6.—SCULPTURES.

The sculptured representations of the 'Mothers' to which we now come show somewhat similar variations. The forty or fifty known agree, indeed, in showing neither more nor less than three goddesses, the *matres tres* as a British inscription calls them. The mystic number does not vary, though a fourth figure, perhaps a priest or the dedicator, is occasionally added to the group.<sup>21</sup> But the forms vary. The commonest type and the best defined is that which prevails on the Rhine. Three draped figures sit beneath an arch or canopy with fruit baskets on their knees, and with a curious head-dress, not unlike a *nimbus*, but probably the head-dress of the land, on the head of the two outer figures. The type varies sometimes in detail. Either the fruits are shown loose, or the head-dresses are absent, or the middle figure has a horn of plenty, and, including these sub-species, the type claims more than half the known reliefs. Less common and less defined is the second type, where the goddesses stand with long robes, but often without distinguishable attributes, a type which seems confined to Gaul and Britain. In two or three other cases the types are mixed, part sitting, part standing, and in three German reliefs we have only busts. The first type may thus claim to be the most characteristic.

In Britain the reliefs are few, poorly executed, and worse preserved. Some, like the well-known example found in London,<sup>22</sup> show the first or German type with fruit baskets, but the heads are in nearly all cases lost. One fragment from Carlisle<sup>23</sup> shows two of the

<sup>20</sup> The absence of native idioms on the inscriptions of Britain, as compared with, e.g., those of Gaul, suggests that the British read and wrote in Latin. Traces of Keltic are visible in the sheep-scoring numerals of the Westmorland and Yorkshire dales (Mommson's allusion to which met with much innocent ridicule, *Röm. Geschichte*, v. 177), but these are probably the results of the Strathclyde and Cumbrian kingdoms.

<sup>21</sup> Pretty certainly so in a piece from Carlisle (*Lap. Sept.* 491) where the sacrificing figure has an altar; possibly on certain German reliefs, though Ihm calls all four figures worshippers. The quintets found once or twice in Cisalpine Gaul (see, e.g., *Archæologia*, Lond. xlv. 171) do not seem to be the 'Mothers.' See woodcut, p. 325.

<sup>22</sup> Roach Smith, *Coll. Ant.* i. 136, and *Roman London*, 33, with woodcuts. Other examples at Bakewell in Derbyshire, and on the Wall.

<sup>23</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc.* iii. 137. See illustration, p. 335.

goddesses (the third is broken off) sitting under a niche with fruit baskets, but without head-dress. Another, complete were it not



HOUSESTEADS.

headless, from Housesteads, shows a somewhat different form of basket, and another, only the end of a relief, from Bewcastle, shows the fruits instead of a fruit basket. On a fragment from Netherby only the middle figure has anything on its knees, while five separate seated figures from Housesteads have no attributes, and are of somewhat doubtful interpretation.<sup>24</sup> Reliefs with standing figures are hardly represented in Britain, one in London, perhaps two in the north. One instance, with the inscription *matribus trimarinis patris*, shows the three draped goddesses either



BEWCASTLE.

sitting or standing in three niches without attribute of any sort,<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Lap. Sept.* 230, 231-3, 784, 785. 785 is said to have been found at Netherby; but this note is in an album belonging to the Soc. Antiq. Lond. Drawing of a stone recently found at Bewcastle and removed to Netherby 1765.—*Trans. C. and W. Antiq. Soc.* VIII. 322.

<sup>25</sup> *Lap. Sept.* 12. Ihm includes this among the sitting varieties.

and a similar piece with a fourth sacrificing figure and an altar has



NETHERBY.

been found at Carlisle.<sup>26</sup> Of other reliefs the attribution is less easy. Thus a somewhat vague but possible representation occurs at High Rochester,<sup>27</sup> but the same place has produced an undoubted relief of the nymphs, and the other may be a fellow to it, *longo intervallo* in style, but part of the same worship. It is always diffi-

cult to fix the meanings of these rough sculptures, and still more so when, as here, they lie rather outside the cycle of classical myths.



CARLISLE (?)

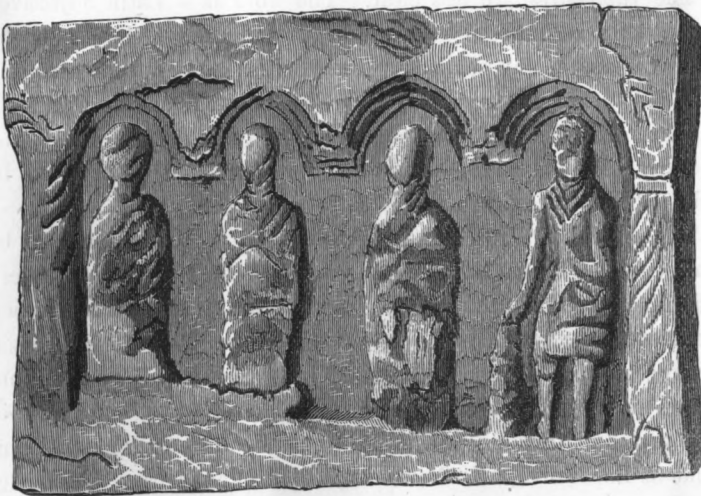
#### 7.—KINDRED DEITIES.

We have now discussed the distribution, origin, worshippers, and representations of the 'Mothers,' and it remains to consider their character and powers as divinities. Before, however, doing this, it is desirable to consider certain other deities which either are 'Mothers' or closely resemble them. Such are the *Suleviae*, *Junones*, *Campestres*, *Parcae*, *Biviae*, and others. All of these, or almost all, are found

<sup>26</sup> *Lap. Sept.* 491. See representation of it on the next page.

<sup>27</sup> *Lap. Sept.* 583. See woodcut of it, p. 337.

now and again with the title 'Mothers'; all tend to be used without it; most of them vary somewhat in their geographical distribution from the genuine 'Mothers.' The *Suleviae* stand nearest, perhaps, to the 'Mothers.' If we exclude two Dacian inscriptions, they are found worshipped in much the same regions as the 'Mothers'; they bear the name *Matres* a fair number of times, at Rome eleven times, and once at Colchester; their worshippers are similar and their reliefs are said to be identical; and, lastly, their own name might easily be one of the native epithets which, as we have seen, abound in Lower Germany.<sup>28</sup> But the constant use of the name without



CARLISLE.

*Matres* separates it from the ordinary epithet, and reduces us to suppose that either the *Suleviae* were first distinct from, then confused with, the 'Mothers', or first identical and subsequently distinguished. The first view seems preferable.

The *Junones* of Cisalpine Gaul occupy a different position. The title is Latin; the deities are Keltic; they have nothing to do with the *Juno* or female genius of classical Latin. They may be the Cisalpine *Matronae* under another title. It was not unusual in the

<sup>28</sup> Mommsen and others connect the name with the Bath goddess *Sul*, but this seems incapable of proof, and, even if true, does not help us much. The etymology of both words is, so far, mere guesswork.

early empire to apply the name of a Roman god to a dissimilar native deity. Mars and Silvanus in Narbonese Gaul denoted Keltic deities who were very unlike the Roman Mars and Silvanus; Mars again is used on two Housesteads altars of the Teutonic god Thingus, who appears to be a protective, not a military deity.<sup>29</sup> Curiously enough an inscription found outside the home of the *Junones*, near Calais in North France, is dedicated *Sulevis Junonibus*. If this does not mean *Sulevis et Junonibus*, it shows how easily on occasion a worshipper could amalgamate similar deities. The *Junones* have not as yet been discovered in Britain.

The *campestres* are less clear. The word is a Latin adjective; its derivation connects it with the army, and the worshippers of the *campestres* are mostly soldiers. Two British worshippers certainly identified them with the *Matres*, one at Benwell, one at Cramond, but this identification does not occur in any district where the 'Mothers' were not regularly worshipped, and is perhaps to be explained like the *Suleviae Junones* of the last paragraph.

The *Biviae*, *Triviae*, *Quadriviae* seem, on the other hand, to be local deities who must have closely resembled the 'Lares compitales' so familiar to us in Italy. Gods of crossways are common in heathen countries all the world over, where roads exist. There is no reason to connect them with the *Matres*, and it is perhaps a pity that Ihm and others have done so. In England we have only a few traces of these gods and they are due probably to misinterpretation. A ring found at Backworth, near Newcastle,<sup>30</sup> and an altar from Chester-le-Street have been supposed to commemorate certain *Matres viales*,<sup>31</sup> but the readings are uncertain, and the epithet is unique. A fragment from Chesters is completed by Ihm *Laribus compitalibus*, but it is almost certainly *Matribus communibus*.<sup>32</sup>

Lastly, come certain dim *Parcae*, to whom some twenty inscriptions exist. Most of these, including two British ones at Lincoln and Carlisle, call them *Parcae* simply, but two, one at Carlisle, one of

<sup>29</sup> See *Arch. Ael.* vol. x. p. 148-172, where there are woodcuts of these two altars. Apollo Maponus seems similarly to have been represented as a child. *Comptes Rendus . . . des inscr. et belles lettres*, IV. xix. 17.

<sup>30</sup> See representation of it at p. 331.

<sup>31</sup> *Lap. Sep.* 542.

<sup>32</sup> See woodcut at p. 332.

less certain reading at Skinburness, add the title *Matres*.<sup>33</sup> We may suppose that this is but another case of confusion, and note that both instances occur in the midst of dedications to the 'Mothers.'



CARLISLE.

What then are these *Parcae*? They may be the Roman Fates; they may be, as Ihm holds, the German Norns; they may, if the geographical distribution of twenty monuments can prove anything, be Keltic, Cisalpine or Narbonese deities under Latin names.<sup>34</sup>

## 8.—GENERAL CHARACTER.

We need not further discuss such goddess, the *Proxumae* of Narbonensis, the *Fatae*, the *Silvanae*. We have said enough to make the character of the 'Mothers' fairly clear. Their worship has some elements of a composite, amalgamated cult, and its outlines are a little hazy; sometimes one, sometimes another set of divinities is labelled with its name and added to its list. It was a western worship, popular, not fashionable, ignored by the upper classes. And it is a pleasant worship; the attributes of the divinities are the fruits of the field and the horn of plenty. The comparative mythologist may trace us some far off connection between these Sisters and Triads in other lands, perhaps even between them and the Roman Fates.

<sup>33</sup> *Lap. Sept.* 490, 904. See cut of latter at p. 330.

<sup>34</sup> Ihm makes a point of the fact that the German penitent books (alluded to above) call the goddesses *Parcae* (*quae a vulgo Parcae nominantur*, etc.). But this proves nothing. The people certainly did not call them *Parcae*; the word is a Latin translation of some native term. Similar translations are not uncommon in such cases.

But the Fates are terrible goddesses; there is nothing terrible about the 'Mothers.' Their monuments suggest only fertility and reproduction. If Goethe took from them the idea of the mysterious 'Mothers,' down to whom Faust goes in search of Helen, he has altered their character. Perhaps, when disgusted with the excesses of Isis, or wearied with the curious symbolism of Mithras and Dolichenus, we may turn with something of a melancholy pleasure to these kindly deities of our own western world.

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LIST OF MONUMENTS OF THE 'MOTHERS' AND KINDRED  
DEITIES IN BRITAIN.

I.—MATRES.

[The following list is a little more complete than that given by Ihm, and includes all the inscriptions and sculptures known to me. Round brackets denote expansions of abbreviations; square brackets supplements of lost letters. An asterisk implies doubt whether the item has any proper place in the list. I have purposely included some very uncertain reliefs of draped figures.]

1. Found at Winchester; published *C.I.L.* vii. 5; *Ephem.* vii. 814.—*Matrib(us) Ital[i]s Germanis Gal(lis) Brit(annis) Antonius [Lu]cretianus [b(ene)] f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) rest(ituit)*.

As Mommsen has pointed out (*Hermes*, xix. 19n), this refers to the country's gods of the legionaries. Tacitus in the *Agricola* (32) makes Calgacus say that Gauls, Germans, and Britons served in the Roman legions, as in the time of Domitian they no doubt did. The *Matres Italae* may represent the officers, being Italians.

2. London; *C.I.L.* vii. 20, broken.—*Matr[ibus . . . .] vicinia de suo res[tituit . . . .]*.

Erected by the whole neighbourhood. The stone, now in the Guildhall museum, is rather unlike ordinary Romano-British inscriptions.

- 3-4. London.

Reliefs of seated 'Mothers' with fruit baskets (Roach Smith, *Coll. Ant.* i. 136, etc.) and of standing 'Mothers' (*Roman London*, p. 45, pl. vi.).

- 5.\*Daglingworth (Gloucestershire); *C.I.L.* vii. 72b.—. . . . *mat[rib]us et ge]nio l[oci] . . . .*

6. Colchester; *Ephem.* vii. 844.—*Matribus Sulevis Similis Atti f. ci(ri)s Cant(ius) v.l.s.*

- 6a.\*Nixon (MS. Rawl. D. 1,068 in the Bodleian Libr.) asserts that a figure 17 in. high, found at Castledykes (Northants), represents one of the *Matres*. His rude drawing appended makes this idea most improbable.

7. Chester; *C.I.L.* vii. 168a; *Ephem.* iii. p. 120, iv. p. 198.—*Deabus Matribus v. m.*

I have examined the stone and think this reading probable; the letters are badly cut. *V. m.* may mean *votum merito*.

8. Bakewell (Derbyshire); Thos. Bateman's *Catalogue of Antiquities* (Bakewell, 1855), p. 262.—'Piece of sandstone sculptured with the lower parts of three figures with drapery; found during the alterations of Bakewell church in 1842. Exceedingly like the figures of *Matres* engraved in C. R. Smith's *Coll. Ant.* i. p. 136.'

Bateman's collection went to Sheffield museum, but I could not find this piece there.

9. Doncaster; *C.I.L.* vii. 198.—*Matribus M. Nantonius Orbital(us) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

The dedicator's names are Keltic, the cognomen belonging to a large class ending in *-talus*.

10. Ribchester; *C.I.L.* vii. 221; *Lap. Sept.* p. 16.—*Deis Matribus M. Ingenius Asiaticus dec(urio) al(ae) Ast(urum), s(usceptum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito)*.

Camden alone succeeded in reading the first two words.

11. York; *C.I.L.* vii. 238.—*Mat(ribus) Af(ricanis) Ita(lis) Ga(llis) M. Minu(cius) Mude(nus?) mil(es) leg(ionis) VI. vic(tricis) guber(nator?) leg(ionis) VI. v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito)*.

The epithets are used as in No. 1. M. Mowat's suggestion (*Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc.* v. 130) *Aftiabus* seems to me improbable and unnecessary.

12. York; *C.I.L.* vii. 1342.—*[M]atribus suis Marcus Rustius v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) Massa l(aetus) m(erito)*.

*I.e.*, dedicated by M. Rustius Massa.

13. Aldborough; *C.I.L.* vii. 260.—*I(ovi) o[ptimo] m(aximo) et Matrib(us) . . .*

14. Lowther; *C.I.L.* vii. 303; *Lap. Sept.* 811.—*Deabus Matribus tramari(nis) vex(illatio) Germa(niae?) u(triusque), R(aetiae), D(almatiae) pro salute . . .*

The reading is uncertain after *Germa*. After *pro salute* the commander's name seems to have followed.

15. Plumpton Wall (Old Penrith); *C.I.L.* vii. 319; *Lap. Sept.* 797.—*Deabus Matribus tamarinis et n(umini) imp(eratoris) Alewaxndri Aug(usti) et Iul(iae) Mammaeae matr(is) Aug(usti) n(ostris) et castrorum toti[que] domui divin[ae] . . . vexill[atio] mr . . .*

Between A.D. 222 and A.D. 235.

16. Old Carlisle; *C.I.L.* vii. 348; *Lap. Sept.* 830.—*[Dea]bus Ma[tribus] . . . pro s[alute] M[ . . . ] (a few unintelligible letters below). (See woodcut at p. 338.)*



17. Skinburness; *C.I.L.* vii. 418; *Lap. Sept.* 904.—

*Matribu[s] par vi ti vaciu . . .*

Possibly *Matribus parvis*.

18. Binchester; *C.I.L.* vii. 426; *Lap. Sept.* 717.—

*Mat(ribus) sac(rum) Gemellus v. s. l. m.*

19. Binchester; discovered 1891.—*I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(aximo) et Matribus ollototis sive transmarinis Pomponius Donatus b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) pro salute sua et suorum v. s. l. a. (or m.)*

*Ollototae* is explained by Mr. Whitley Stokes

as meaning 'of another land.' See further pp. 225-7 of this volume, where there is also a representation of the altar.

20. Binchester; *C.I.L.* vii. 424; *Lap. Sept.* 716; see also *Proc.* v. p. 38.—

*Deab(us) Matrib(us) Q Lot. Tib. Cl(audius) Quintianus b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) v. s. l. m.*

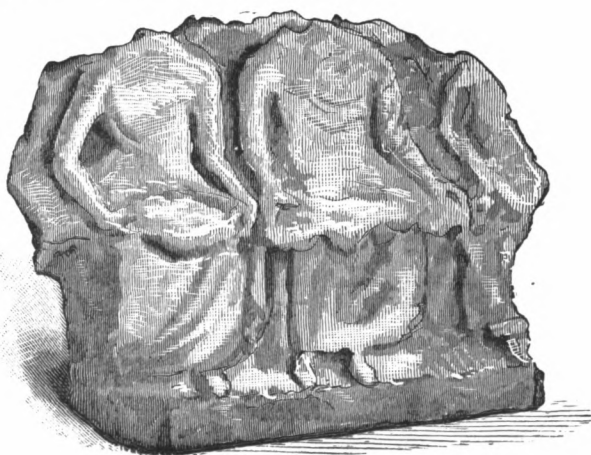
For Q Lot. Tib. as others read, Dr. Hooppell conjectures *Ollototis*. Dr. Hübner's leaf stop for Q seems based on a misreading of Gale.

21. Binchester; *C.I.L.* vii. 425; *Lap. Sept.* 718.

Uncertain. Sibbald read . trib . oi . . t | cart \* oval | marti vetto | genio loci | lit. ixt. For the first line Dr. Hooppell conjectures *Matribus ollototis*. *Matribus* was conjectured before by Dr. Hübner, and is fairly certain. Mr. Watkin's idea of Lisbon 'Mothers' (*Arch. Journ.*) is impossible.

- 21a. South Shields; *Arch. Ael.* x. 249.

Relief of two headless figures sitting with baskets on their laps; a third figure has been knocked off.



22. Binchester; *Ephem.* vii. 980; see *Arch. Ael.* vol. ix. p. 170, where there is also a woodcut.

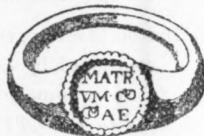
Uncertain. Dr. Hooppell read *Matr(ibus) | tramar(inis) | equit(es) al(ae) | Vett(onum) c(ivium) r(omanorum) | v. s. l. m.* On the squeezes sent me I could only decipher *mat. | r . . | e.*

23. Newcastle (probably not the original *provenance*, for which Dr. Bruce suggests Carlisle); *C.I.L.* vii. 499; *Lap. Sept.* 12. Above it is a relief of the three 'Mothers' sitting.—*Dea[bus] Matribus tramarinis patri(i)s Aurelius Iuvenalis* (see woodcut of it, p. 324).

24. Backworth (near Newcastle); gold ring, found with the preceding, and now with it in the British Museum. *C.I.L.* vii. 1299; *Lap. Sept.* 536.

The reading is disputed. Dr. Hübner, who has seen it, gives *Matr(ibus) | via(libus) C. | C(orne- lius) Ae(lianus) |*. The English antiquaries read *MATR | VM · CO | CO · AE*, as on the annexed cut.

Mr. A. H. Smith, M.A., who has been good enough to examine the ring for me, assures me that *Matrum* is quite certain, and, so far as I can see from the casts he has sent me, there seems to me to be little doubt about it. The following letters also appear to be *CO | CO · AE*.



25. Backworth; handle of a silver *patera* in which No. 23 was found. *C.I.L.* vii. 1285; *Lap. Sept.* 84.—*Matr(ibus) Fab(ius) Dubit(atus)*. (See woodcut at p. 162 of this volume.)



47/102 S.

BENWELL. (See next page.)

- 26 Benwell; *C.I.L.* vii. 510; *Lap. Sept.* 22.—*Matr(ibus) tribus campe(stribus) et genio alae pri(mae) Hispanorum Asturum* [about seventeen erased letters] *Gordianae T. Agrippa prae(fectus) templum a solo [res]tituit.*

The seventeen erased letters are probably *Pupienae Balbinae*, erased not by order of Gordian, but by mistake of distant and ill-informed men. (Mommson, *Ephem.* v. p. 37.) This is the latest known monument of the *Matres*, and dates about A.D. 240. (See woodcut on preceding page.)



1.—HALTON CHESTERS.

27. Halton Chesters; the sculpture above mentioned by Dr. Hübner, seems a mere ornament, not a relief. *C.I.L.* vii. 559; *Lap. Sept.* 84.—*Deabus [M]atribu[s]* . . . . (See woodcut 1.)

28. Chesters; *Ephem.* vii. 1017.—[*Mat*]-*ribus com[munibus? p]ro salute de[curiae? A]ur(elii) Severi* . . . See No. 29. (See woodcut 2.)



2.—CHESTERS.

29. Carrawburgh; *Ephem.* iv. 680, vii. 1032.—*Matribus com[munibus]*.



The correct reading of this altar is certainly *Matribus com*, not *co* . . and this throws light on No. 28. The conjectures of Ihm, *Laribus compitalibus* and *Matribus cohors* . . are thus needless. The simplest supplement of *com* . . would seem to be that given above, suggested by Dr. Bruce.

30. Carrawburgh: silver ring; *Ephem.* iii. p. 146; *Arch. Ael.* xiii. 360.—*Matres.*

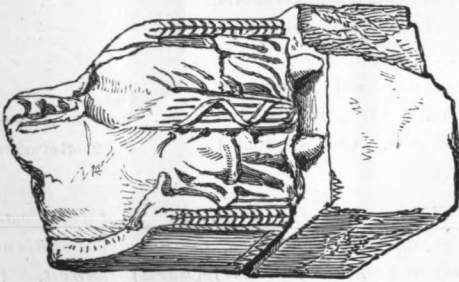
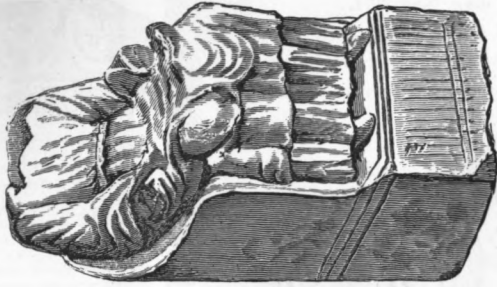


- 31.\*Housesteads; *C.I.L.* vii. 652; *Lap. Sept.* 186.—*Ma[tribus?]* . . *gi* . . *M. Senec[ia]nius v* . . The supplements are uncertain. (See woodcut 2 on p. 334.)

32. Housesteads; *C.I.L.* vii. 653.—*Matribus coh(ors) I. Tungr[or]u[m]* . .

33. Housesteads; *Lap. Sept.* 230. (See woodcut, p. 323.)

Relief of three 'Mothers,' headless, with baskets on their laps; the heads were originally fastened on, as often, with iron.



HOUSESTEADS. (See next page.)

34-35.\*Housesteads; *Lap. Sept.* 231-3.

Five separate sitting figures, headless; no attributes to guide a decision. Dr. Bruce suggests the 'Mothers.' (See representations of three of the figures on the preceding page.)

36.\*Housesteads; *Lap. Sept.* 234.

Relief of three half-draped standing figures. Horsley thought them to be 'Mothers;' they are probably Nymphs.



1.—HOUSESTEADS.

37. Caerboran: above figure of a woman sacrificing; *C.I.L.* vii. 756; *Ephem.* vii. 1054; *Lap. Sept.* 305; *Arch. Ael.* xii. 286; *Bulletin Epigr.* vi. 146.—*Matrib(us) . . . ntius.*

Found long ago and figured by Horsley; refound 1886, and at first described as if new. (See woodcut 1 on next page.)

38. Castlesteads; *C.I.L.* vii. 887; *Lap. Sept.* 441.—*M[at]ribus omnium gentium templum olim vetustate conlabsum G. Iul(ius) Cupitianus, (centurio) p(rimi)p(ilus) or (centuria) p(rimi)p(ilaris) restituit.* (See woodcut, *Proc.* v. p. 129.)39. Waltonhouse (Castlesteads); *Ephem.* vii. 1081.—*Matribus t[ra]ma[rinis].*40. Stanwix (?); *C.I.L.* vii. 915; *Lap. Sept.* 479.—*Matribus [d]omesticis Vis(c)lii?) Messo[r] signifer v. s. l. l.*

2.—HOUSESTEADS.

41. Carlisle; *C.I.L.* vii. 927; *Lap. Sept.* 490.—*Matribus Pare(is) pro salut(e) Sanctiae Geminae.* (See woodcut, p. 327.)
42. Carlisle; *Lap. Sept.* 491. (See woodcut, p. 325.)  
Relief of three standing figures, with a fourth sacrificing at an altar.



1.—CAERVORAN.



2.—CARLISLE.

43. Carlisle; *Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc.* vol. iii. p. 307.

Fragmentary relief, two sitting figures under an arch; a third is no doubt broken off.

Another relief has been found at Carlisle of very uncertain interpretation. See no. 47.



3.—DYKESFIELD.



4.—BOWNESS.

44. Dykesfield; *C.I.L.* vii. 939; *Lap. Sept.* 515.—*Matri(bus) dom(esticis) vex(illatio) [L]eg(ionis) VI. [vic(tricis)] p(iae) f(idelis).* (See woodcut 3.)
45. Bowness; *C.I.L.* vii. 950; *Lap. Sept.* 521.—*Matribus suis m . . .* (See woodcut 4.)



1.—RISINGHAM.



2.—GLASTER HILL.



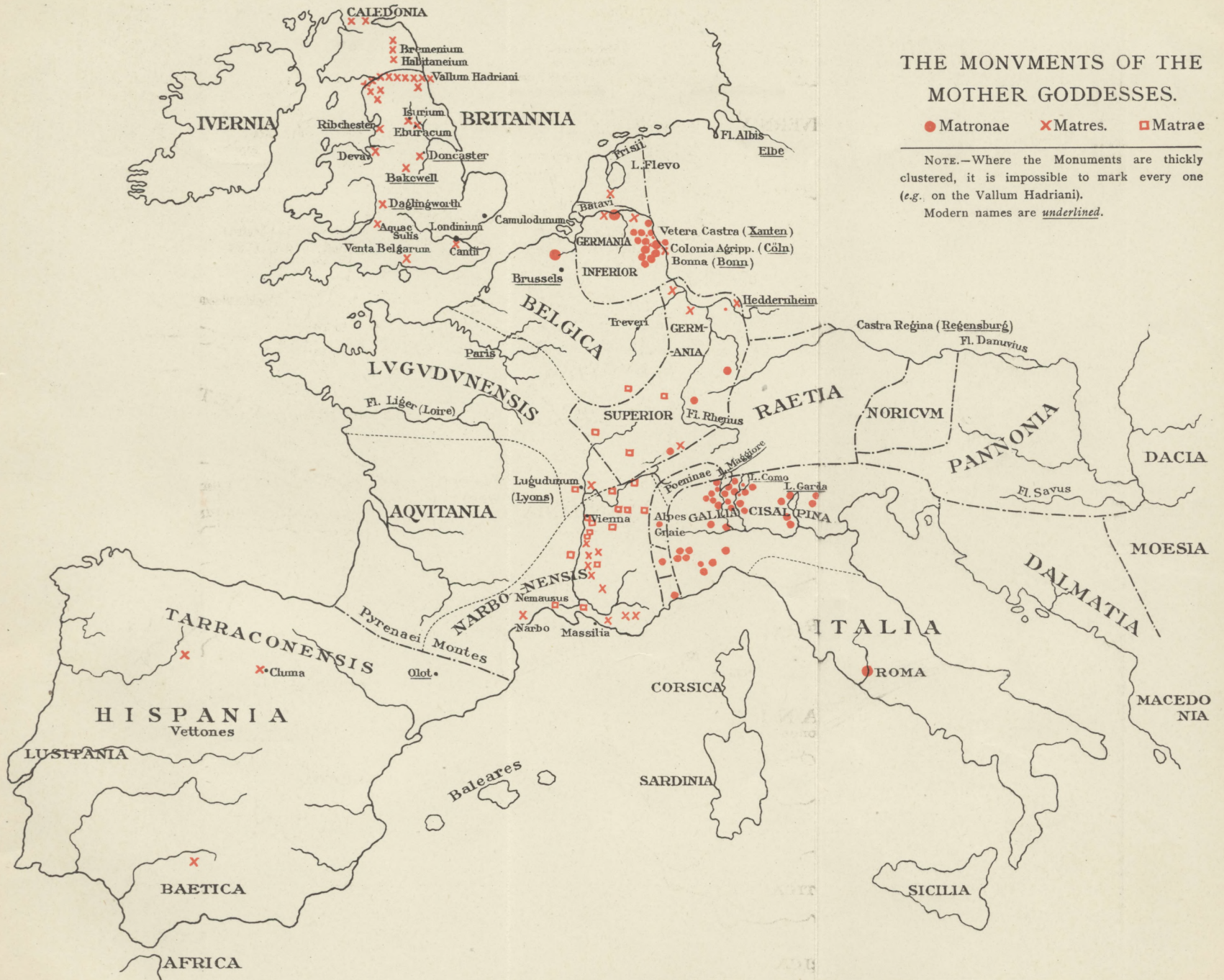
3.—CARLISLE.

# THE MONUMENTS OF THE MOTHER GODDESSES.

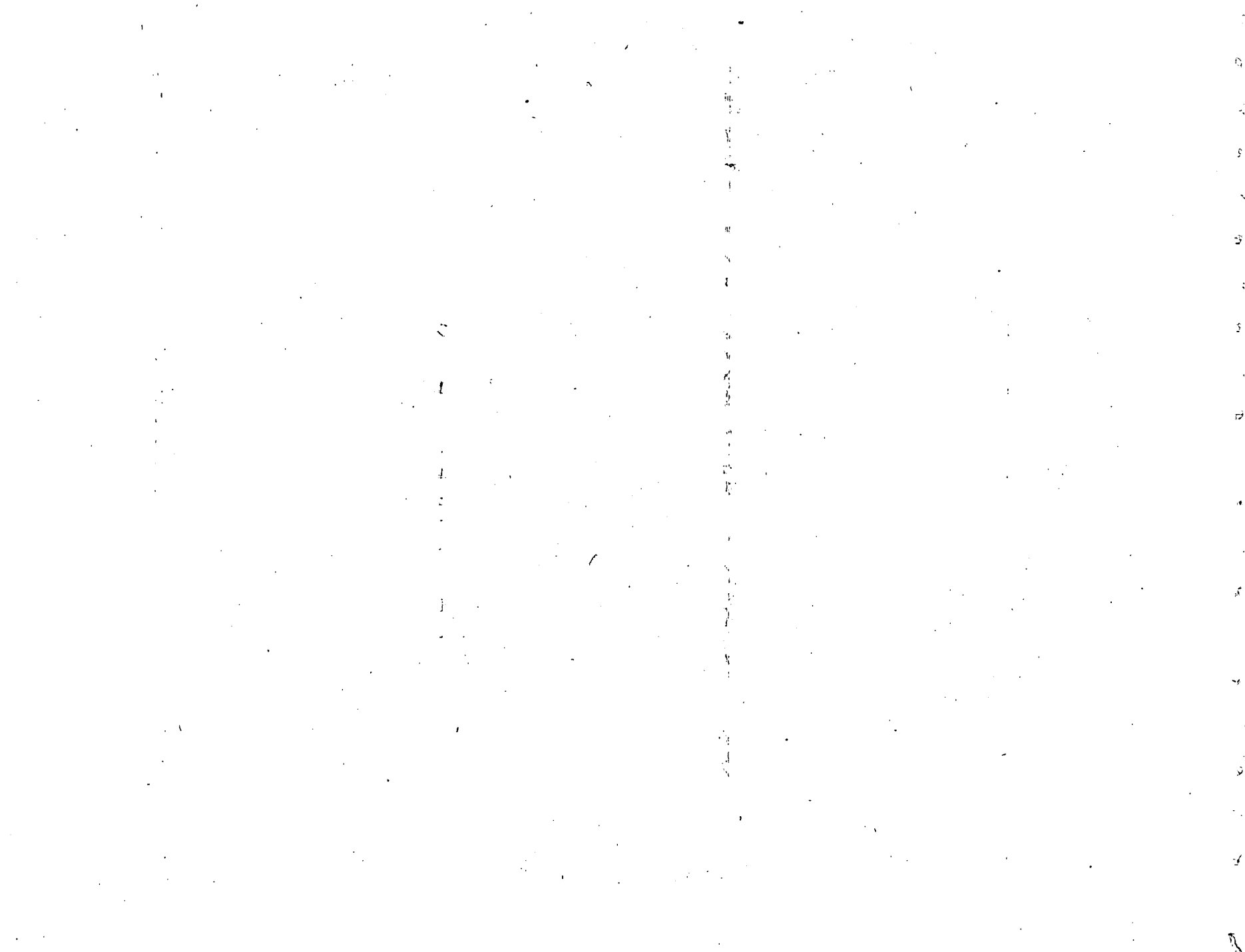
● Matronae    ✕ Matres.    ◻ Matrae

NOTE.—Where the Monuments are thickly clustered, it is impossible to mark every one (e.g. on the Vallum Hadriani).

Modern names are *underlined*.







46. Netherby; *Lap. Sept.* 784. (See woodcut, p. 324.)

Relief of three 'Mothers,' broken; the middle one has fruits in her lap.

- 47.\*Netherby; *Lap. Sept.* 786. (See woodcut 1 below.)

Three standing figures, hooded, much like the stone from Carlisle shown in the annexed woodcut.

(See also *Lap. Sept.* 492.)

48. Bewcastle; *Lap. Sept.* 785. (See woodcut, p. 323.)

Figure of one 'Mother' seated with fruits; the other two, on her right, are broken off.



49. Risingham; *C.I.L.* vii. 994; *Jap. Sept.* 606.—*Matribus*

*tramarinis Iul(ius) Victor v. s. l. m.* (See woodcut 1 on opposite page.)

The dedicator is probably the *tribunus cohortis I. Vangionum* who dedicated altars at the same place to other gods.

- 50.\*High Rochester; *Lap. Sept.* 583.

Relief of three standing figures, possibly 'Mothers,' more probably Nymphs (cp. *Lap. Sept.* 584; see woodcut 2).



1.—NETHERBY.



2.—HIGH ROCHESTER.

- 51.\*Birrens; *Ephem.* vii. 1079.—*Ma[tribus? . .] sa[crum? . .]* Obviously conjectural.

52. Cramond; *C.I.L.* vii. 1084.—*Matrib(us) Alatervis et Matrib(us) campes-trib(us) coh(ors) I(I) Tungr(orum) ins(tante) Ulp(io) scarm? . . . [(centurio)] leg(ionis) XX. V. V.*

53. Castlecary (Antonine's Wall); *C.I.L.* vii. 1094.

Uncertain reading; *Matribus* is certain, and the whole may be *Matribus milites vexill[at]ionis leg(ionis) XX. V. [V.] Britton(es?) v. s. l. l. m.* so Ihm. Dr. Hübner reads *leg(ionum) XX. (et) I.* The twentieth legion does not otherwise appear on this part of the *Vallum*.

## II.—SULEVIAE, CAMPESTRES, &amp;C., WITHOUT THE TITLE MATRES.

54. Bath; *C.I.L.* vii. 37.—*Sulevis Sulinus scultor Bruceti f(i)lius sacrum f(ecit) U(ibens) m(erito)*.
55. Lincoln; *Ephem.* vii. 916.—*Parcis deabus et numinibus aug(ustorum) C. Antistius Frontinus curator ter, ar(am) d(e) s(uo) d(edicavit)*.  
Probably of the age of Severus (*circ. A.D.* 200).
- 56.\*Binchester; *C.I.L.* vii. 1344b; *Lap. Sept.* 719.—*Sulp Vic Vett Cann v. s. l. m.*  
Dr. Bruce conjectures *sul[e]vi[s]*; it is impossible to be certain about the text.
- 57.\*Chester-le-Street; *C.I.L.* vii. 454; *Lap. Sept.* 542.—*Deabs | vitbus | vias | vadri*.  
Dr. Hübner suggests for 3 and 4 *viales et quadriuae*, but this is unlikely and does not fit the size of the stone. The whole lettering is dubious.
58. Carlisle; *C.I.L.* vii. 928; *Lap. Sept.* 489.—*Parcis Probo Donatalis pater v. s. l. m.* (See woodcut 3 on page 336.)
59. Gloster Hill (Warkworth); *C.I.L.* vii. 1029; *Lap. Sept.* 534.—*[Ca]mpestrib[us] coh(ors) I [Vardullorum . . .]* (See woodcut 2 on page 336).
60. Newstead (Roxburghshire); *C.I.L.* vii. 1080.—*Campestr(ibus) sacrum Ael(ius) Marcus dec(urio) alae Aug(ustae) Vocontio[r(um)] v. s. l. l. m.*
61. Auchindavy (Antonine's Wall); *C.I.L.* vii. 1114.—*Marti Minervae Campestribus Herc(u)l(i) Eponae Victoriae M. Coccei(us) Firmus (centurio) leg. II. Aug(ustae)*.
62. Castle Hill (Antonine's Wall); *C.I.L.* vii. 1129.—*Campestribus et Britanni(ae) Q. Pisentius Iustus pr(a)ef(ectus) coh(ortis) IV. Gal(lorum) v. s. l. l. m.*



OLD CARLISLE (see p. 329).

CONSPECTUS OF EPIGRAPHIC MENTIONS OF THE MOTHER  
GODDESSES AND KINDRED DEITIES.

The following table is compiled from Dr. Ihm's lists. I have added a few instances discovered since he wrote—one *Matrae* in Narbonese Gaul (Lejay *Inscriptions de la Côte d'Or* 275 bis), one *Campestris* in Dalmatia (*C.I.L.* iii. Suppl. 7904), four *Matronae* in Lower Germany (*Westdeutsches Korrespondenzblatt*, 1889-90), and one or two in Britain. Probably others have been since discovered which I have overlooked; but the statistics appear to be tolerably sufficient for the purpose of discussion.

*Matronae* (or *Matres*) *Junones*, *Suleviae*, *Campestris* are counted twice—first in the column of *Matronae* or *Matres*, and then separately. Similarly, where two deities are mentioned on one inscription, they are counted separately. Thus the sixteen 'Roman' inscriptions all mention the *Campestris*, eleven add the *Mâtres Suleviae*, two *Suleviae* alone. It must not be supposed that there are forty instead of sixteen inscriptions.

	Rome.	The rest of Italy.	Cisalpine Gaul.	Narbonese Gaul.	Upper Germany.	Lower Germany.	Britain.	Gallia Belgica.	Lugdunensis. <sup>5</sup>	Aquitania.	Africa.	Spain.	Illyricum.
<i>Matronae</i> ...	...	...	60	1 <sup>1</sup>	3	89 <sup>2</sup>	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
<i>Matres</i> ...	11	...	...	13	4	18 <sup>2</sup>	37	...	1	...	...	3	...
<i>Matrae</i> ...	...	...	...	22	5	...	...	1	7	...	...	...	...
Epithets used alone (chiefly of <i>Matronae</i> ) ...	...	...	...	...	...	25	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
<i>Suleviae</i> (alone) ...	2	...	...	2	2	1	2	1 <sup>4</sup>	...	...	...	...	3
— M ...	11	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
<i>Junones</i> (alone) ...	...	1	29	2	1	4 <sup>3</sup>	...	2 <sup>4</sup>	...	1	...	...	2
— M ...	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
<i>Campestris</i> (alone) ...	16	...	...	...	2	...	4	...	...	...	2	...	5
— M ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...
<i>Parcae</i> (alone) ...	...	...	6	4	1	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	1
— M ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
<i>Quadriviae</i> , etc. ...	...	...	1	...	17	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	7
Uncertain... ..	...	...	...	...	1	5	3	...	1	...	...	...	...

<sup>1</sup> In the separate administration of the *Alpes Graiae*.

<sup>2</sup> One inscription is *Matres sive Matronae*.

<sup>3</sup> One is *Junonibus Gabiabus*. The epithet is usually applied to the *Matronae*.

<sup>4</sup> One is *Sulevis Junonibus*.

<sup>5</sup> All at Lyons.