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## HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

### No. 57—THE ARCH-DIOCESE OF YORK.

**A**NCIENT Britain, under Roman rule, seems to have been divided into three parts, of which York, London and Caerleon-on-Usk were the respective centres. York, or as it was then called Eboracum, was a large and flourishing town, a greater commercial centre even than London.

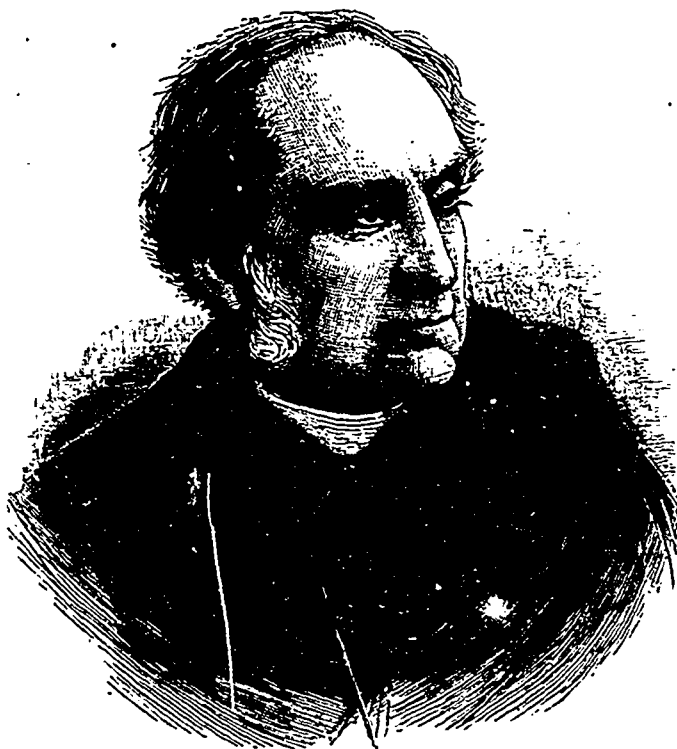
Here lived Constantius, one of the four Cæsars appointed by Diocletian to rule the Roman Empire. He married Helena (known in history as St. Helen), a British lady who had embraced the Christian faith. To them was born, probably in York, a son, who was called Constantine. Thus Britain gave to the world the man destined to be the first Christian Emperor of Rome. He succeeded his father in the year 306, and soon afterwards became sole Emperor. It was a day of great triumph for the struggling Church of Christ, when it secured the powerful arm of the Emperor of the world. One of his first acts was to summon a

Council of the Christian Church, and this was held at Arles, in France. At this council British bishops are mentioned, the Bishop of York, and London and a third bishop, probably that of Caerleon-on-Usk, being specially named. Thus in A.D. 314 there was a bishop over each grand division of Britain, as it existed under Rome rule.

By this it will be seen that the diocese of

York is a very ancient one and that the town of that name is connected with almost the earliest days of the Christian faith. It is therefore much to be deplored that the records of the Christianity of this early period in Britain are almost entirely lost. No consecutive history of this diocese can be attempted till after the conquest of Britain by the Saxons and their conversion to Christianity under the "Italian Mission," headed by St. Augustine about the year 605. The division of England embraced by the diocese of York was then called Northumbria, the king of which (whose name was Edwin) was converted through an active Italian named Paulinus. He built within the walls of York a very humble wooden church, and in it King Edwin was baptized. This, and a larger church subsequently built encasing it, was the precursor of the present mighty minster which lifts its majestic head above the towers and dusky buildings of the metropolis of the north. After Paulinus we find the names of Wilfrid, Chad, Bosa, John of Beverley and Wilfrid II, bringing us down to the year 718. The former Wilfrid restored and beautified the church (or basilica)

which had fallen into great disrepair, and built other churches in different places as well. Troubles arose which caused Wilfrid to appeal to Rome, the first English bishop to take such a step, but it was totally disregarded by the witan or parliament of Northumbria,—a presage of a greater resistance to take place in the future. The successor of Wilfrid II was a man of great eminence, Egbert the son of Eata, and a



THE LATE RT. HON. W. THOMPSON, D.D.

*Archbishop of York.*

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