

✂ OLD YORK. ✂

By H. L. MACHELL.

PART I.



WHEN Max O'Rell toured the Colonies, he was asked what he should do when he got back to Europe. "I shall go and look at some old wall with a bit of ivy on it," he replied.

This is how one feels on returning to York after years spent

in New Zealand; there is a delightful sense of repose in these old-world towns; they have had their day—and a stormy one it has been;—now they slumber!

York is old—very old—York was old when Severus, Emperor of Rome held his court here A.D. 200, and the Roman galleys anchored in the river; nay! it seems to have been old when Agricola, the Roman General, completed the subjugation of North Britain in '85, after bloody battles with the tribe of Brigantes who then held the place.

It was Eburacum in those days, and a very important place commercially as well as politically; the largest vessels afloat could then sail right up to the Port.

The "Conquering Sixth" Legion from Germany, and the "Spanish Ninth" had their head-quarters here—the former for three hundred years; only a short time ago their cemetery was opened and all the tiled coffins and massive stone sarcophagi unearthed; the former stamped "LEG. VI. VIC.," or "LEG. IX. HISP.," as the case might be.

The letters "D.M." on many of

the coffins and tombstones are a tribute to the goddess Mothers (Dea Matres), who were Romanised German deities, and presided over all that was homely and beautiful in life; this votive inscription shows how the hearts of the soldiers turned homewards to the "Vaterland" whence they had been torn.

In one of the sarcophagi was found a lead coffin containing the remains of a Roman lady embedded in gypsum, her auburn hair in excellent preservation, and pinned up with ornaments of Whitby jet; a pillow had evidently kept the head apart from the gypsum; this hair has been carefully combed out, recoiled as found, and now may be seen in the Museum.

In another, the skeleton's mouth contained a small coin, presumably for charon's fare across the Styx—so the gloomy boatman is still waiting for his money!

The bones of two young girls reposed in another of the stone coffins, at the head of which lay two food-vessels of coarse pottery and two drinking-vessels, intended no doubt to symbolise care and thought for the departed. The so-called lachrymatories often found with the remains did not contain the mourners' tears, but unguents.

A quantity of beautiful Samian ware from the Roman potteries in Gaul and Germany has also been found; this is of a dark red colour, highly glazed, and either plain or ornamental with embossed and incised figures. Some rough imitations appear to have been produced