

## THE HON. WILLIAM HAMILTON MERRITT.

AT the time of the breaking out of the American Revolutionary War, there resided on a farm in Westchester County, in what is now the State of New York, a gentleman named Thomas Merritt. He was descended from a Puritan family which had settled in New England a century before, and had through many vicissitudes preserved its loyalty to the British Crown. When the struggle broke out which finally terminated in the emancipation of the American colonies from the control of the mother country, Thomas Merritt joined the regiment of Queen's Rangers—a regiment which had for its Colonel a distinguished English officer named Simcoe, who subsequently became the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. While attached to this famous corps, young Merritt wooed and won Miss Mary Hamilton, a lady belonging to a South Carolina family. He fought all through the war, and doubtless did good service in the cause of King George. At the close of hostilities the Queen's Rangers were disbanded, and soon afterwards Mr. Merritt and his wife removed to New Brunswick. The climate there proving uncongenial, he returned, after a brief sojourn, to the neighbourhood of the old family homestead in Westchester County, where the subject of this sketch was born on the 3rd of July, 1793. The State of New York, however, did not prove a comfortable place of abode for a man who had fought on the royal side

in the great struggle. Thomas Merritt and his family were subjected, first to numerous petty exactions, and afterwards to downright persecution. His old Colonel, Simcoe, had meanwhile been appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, and had taken up his residence at Navy Hall, Newark, near the mouth of the Niagara River. The favourable terms offered by Governor Simcoe to persons settling in the Province attracted a great many of the loyalists from the State of New York. Among those so attracted was Mr. Thomas Merritt, who came over with his family to Niagara, and in 1796 settled on Lot No. 13, in the fourth concession of the township of Grantham. He shortly afterwards removed to Lot No. 20, in the same concession, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the present city of St. Catharines, which was then covered by a dense growth of oak, pine, and walnut trees. He applied himself diligently to the clearing and cultivation of his farm, and went through the usual trials and privations incidental to pioneer life. He rose to a position of influence in the community, and became Sheriff of the Niagara District. The greater part of the site of St. Catharines was then owned by the Hon. Robert Hamilton, of Queenston, who had already built a storehouse there for the purpose of furnishing supplies to the settlers in the neighbouring townships; but there was no actual settlement there until the summer of the