

THE HON. WILLIAM McMASTER.

MR. McMASTER is probably the most widely known among the merchant princes of Western Canada, and has had a remarkably successful commercial career. As is the case with most men who have been the architects of their own fortunes, his success is largely attributable to his personal qualifications. He inherited a sound constitution, an active, enterprising mind, and a strong will. With such advantages he began the battle of life in this country nearly half a century ago. He grew with the country's growth, and by his industry and shrewdness achieved, in course of time, a position which made him thoroughly independent of the world. It has been the fashion to say of him that his mercantile operations were always attended with "good luck;" but those who converse with him on commercial or financial questions for half an hour will draw their own conclusions as to how far "luck" has had to do with the matter. He has been lucky in the same sense that the late Duke of Wellington was lucky; that is to say, he has known how to take advantage of favourable circumstances. Anyone else possessing his keenness of perception and shrewd common sense would in the long run have been equally lucky. He has made good use alike of his wealth and his talents, and the land of his adoption is the better for his presence.

He is by birth and early training an Irish-

man, and was born in the county of Tyrone, on the 24th of December, 1811. His father, the late Mr. William McMaster, was a linen merchant whose resources were not abundant, but who was able to give his son a good education. The latter received his educational training at an excellent private school taught by a Mr. Halcro, who had a high local reputation as a teacher. After leaving school he was for a short time a clerk in a local mercantile house. His prospects in Ireland, however, were not commensurate with his ambition. In 1833, when he was in his twenty-second year, he resigned his situation, and emigrated. Upon reaching New York he was advised by the resident British Consul not to settle in the United States, but to make his way to Canada. He acted upon the advice, and passed on to Toronto—or, as it was then called, Little York.

The conditions of the wholesale trade in Canada in those days were very different from those which now prevail. The pre-eminence of Montreal as a point of distribution for both the Provinces was well established, and the wholesale trade of Little York was comparatively insignificant. There were very few exclusively wholesale establishments in the Upper Canadian capital, but several of the largest firms contrived to combine a wholesale and retail business. Young William McMaster, immediately upon his arrival at Little York, obtained a clerk-