

At the inception of English rule it was laid down as a principle that the Canadians had no right whatever to the use of their own laws. Such was the starting-point; and when we contrast their unhappy position at that time with that of to-day, we are tempted to conclude that there coursed through the veins of those who secured all the rights of British subjects, for themselves and their posterity, the blood of those Norman barons who, on the field of Runnymede, wrested from the hands of King John the great charter of English liberty.

XI

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS IN THE
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

IMEDIATELY after the cession of Canada the French-Canadian farmers once more settled on their farms, free from the numerous vexations and exactions of the old régime. Thanks to their thrift and economy, prosperity returned to every part of Lower Canada. A complete transformation of the country took place, and for the peasants who had survived the calamities of the Seven Years' War dawned an era of peace and happiness. At the beginning and throughout almost the whole course of the nineteenth century no people had better reason to be satisfied with their lot than the habitants on the shores of the St Lawrence and the Richelieu. That time is still referred to as 'the good old time'; the *bon vieux temps* is remembered as the days when the good things of this world were abundant in Lower Canada. Among a people easily contented, endowed with the pleasant manners and the politeness of Old France, and blessed with a most gentle temper, contentment reigned supreme.

If, then, the voice of the French Canadians had no weight in the state council, if political liberty made no progress, at least the course of everyday life offered the most perfect happiness. What peasant in any other country could compare