

## CHAPTER II

### THE MERCHANTS' POLITICAL PROGRAMME

#### I

THE enduring strength of the northern commercial system which had been developed by the French, was revealed in the very nature of the British occupation. There were two occupations of Canada at the conquest, the military and the commercial; and this commercial occupation shows as well as anything could possibly do, the real meaning which the St. Lawrence had for the West-Europeans and Americans of the eighteenth century. For them the conquest was the capture of a giant river system and the transference of commercial power. The first immigration of English-speaking civilians to Canada, which lasted from the invasion of the British armies in 1759 until the coming of the Loyalists a quarter-century later, was an immigration, not of farmers and frontiersmen, but of commercial brains and capital and energy. Over in London, they apparently expected that the new province of Quebec would attract agricultural settlers and develop into healthy normality. But Canada was not a typical American colony: it was different; and its distinction lay as much in the nature of its economy as in the race and religion of its population. To the men of eighteenth-century America, the St. Lawrence was not a farmland but a commercial system; and its natural appeal was altered, in the first place, only by the violent political disturbances of the American Revolution. The first British Canadians were merchants drawn northward by the promises of the river; and they came with the single, simple objective of making money by trade.

The immigration began with what was in the eighteenth century a normal commercial adventure. There were no commissariat services for the armies of those days, and British merchants followed the red-coats around the world to profit by their necessities. As sutlers, a group of merchants entered Quebec with Murray himself. Many of them were the representatives of English exporting and army contracting firms.<sup>1</sup> But there were also