

II.—PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CANADA. GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES.

General Formation.—On the eastern coast of the North American continent the Appalachian range of mountains gives shape to the eastern coast of the United States and, extending into Canada, forms the Gaspé peninsula and the Maritime provinces. Around Hudson Bay is a V-shaped plateau constituting the Laurentian highland and extending from Labrador down to the St. Lawrence river and thence northward to the Arctic ocean. In the west are the Cordillera ranges of the Pacific coast, extending into British Columbia and the Yukon territory. They occupy a large area in Canada, and comprise several parallel ranges. In British Columbia they are over 400 miles in width, and consist of the Coast range along the coast; the Rocky mountains, properly so called, and, between them, the Selkirk, Gold, Cariboo, Cassiar and other ranges. To the north of British Columbia lies the Yukon territory, including a great mountain area drained by the Yukon river and the Klondike valley, famous for its gold. West of the Canadian Yukon lies the United States territory of Alaska. Canada may further be conveniently divided into five sections: (1) the peninsula which in Canada includes the Gaspé and the three Maritime provinces; (2) the lowlands of southern Ontario and southern Quebec, with the Great Lakes and the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers draining the interior into the Atlantic ocean; (3) the Central plain; (4) the Laurentian highland; (5) the western Cordillera.

Mountains.—In the western Cordillera are found the highest mountain ranges and peaks of Canada. In the Yukon territory and forming part of the St. Elias range, is mount Logan, 19,539 feet, the highest known point in Canada. In the Rocky mountains are many peaks rising to heights of 11,000 or 12,000 feet, and Mount Robson, 13,700 feet, in the Yellowhead pass is the highest of that range. The Selkirk range contains heights of from 9,000 feet to over 11,000 feet.

Waterways.—The waterways of Canada constitute one of the most remarkable of its geographical features. East of the Rocky mountains the southern part of the Dominion slopes northeastward towards the Laurentian highland; and the rivers in the south flow eastward. Thus the Saskatchewan river, with its northern and southern branches, flows eastward into lake Winnipeg and thence northward by the Nelson river into Hudson Bay. On the north the Great Plain has a northerly slope, and the Mackenzie river, with its tributaries, the Slave, Liard, Athabaska and Peace rivers, flows into the Arctic ocean. The Mackenzie, exclusive of its tributaries, but including the Slave, Peace and Finlay rivers of which it is the continuation, has a total length of 2,525 miles. The Yukon river in the Yukon territory also flows northward, passing through Alaska into Behring strait after a course of 2,300 miles. In British Columbia, the Fraser, Columbia, Skeena and Stikine rivers flow into the Pacific ocean.

Drainage Basins.—The large drainage basins of Canada are the Atlantic (554,000 square miles), the Hudson Bay (1,486,000 square miles), the Arctic (1,290,000 square miles), the Pacific (387,300 square miles), and the gulf of Mexico (12,365 square miles). Table 1 gives a list of the river drainage basins and Table 2 gives the lengths of the principal rivers with their tributaries and sub-tributaries.