

part of the country had a general southerly movement. The result of the glaciation was that great stretches of country were denuded of soil, and other areas received accessions of a great quantity of transported material. Towards the close of the glacial period the outlets of many depressions were closed by lobes of the retreating glaciers and became filled with water. These lakes formed areas for the deposition of fine sediments, such as clay and silt, and on the final melting of the glaciers large stretches of level fertile land remained.

Laurentian Plateau.—The most extensive physiographic unit of Canada is the subdued Laurentian plateau. This is a gently sloping plateau of rather even surface, comparatively low and seldom rising 2,000 feet above the sea. The hills breaking the even surface rise but a few hundred feet at most above the general level.

It is a great U-shaped area surrounding Hudson bay and extends from the Atlantic ocean, on the Labrador coast, west to a line running northwest through lake Winnipeg, lake Athabaska, Great Slave lake and Great Bear lake. It extends south to lake Huron and lake Superior, and occupies nearly all the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, except the area southwest of a line running from Kingston to Georgian bay, that part of eastern Ontario forming the angle between the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers, and that part of Quebec south of St. Lawrence river.

This plateau is underlain by hardened sediments and igneous rocks. The latter are much more widespread than the former, and granitic types predominate. The rocks of this region are among the oldest rocks of which geologists have any knowledge. They are very resistant, and although they have been exposed to weathering since very early in the earth's history the inequalities in the surface features have not been wholly reduced. These inequalities have been augmented by glacial action. A further effect of glaciation was the denuding of much of this region of its soil. Generally speaking, therefore, the physiographic and soil conditions are not favourable to agricultural pursuits. Over a great part of the area, however, sufficient soil has been retained to support a forest growth, although insufficient for agriculture, and it is to be regretted that large stretches of such land have been depleted of their forests and have become dreary, barren wastes.

Within the plateau there are valleys where areas of softer rock have afforded a greater abundance of soil that has not been removed by glaciation, and beautiful cultivated fields lend a pleasing contrast to the surrounding forest. In places the sediments deposited in the basins of glacial lakes have reduced the inequalities of the surface and produced large level areas of arable land. Interesting examples of these are furnished by the Clay Belt of northern Ontario and Quebec, traversed by the Grand Trunk Pacific railway, and by the flat section of country along the main line of the Canadian Pacific railway a few miles north of Sudbury.