

Third Prairie Steppe.—This includes the rest of the prairie up to the foothills of the Rocky mountains. In its northern parts, i.e. north of lat. 52°, the flora is very similar to that of the second prairie steppe, but in the southern parts it is very different.

Except on Wood mountain and Cypress hills no trees occur except along the borders of streams in the valleys, and the ponds, marshes, and lakes are not even fringed with shrubs. The rivers and creeks flow in deep, narrow valleys and the country in general is broken by coulees and low hills. The precipitation is scant and, as a result, the vegetation has a poverty-stricken appearance and is often almost desert-like in character. In fact, a large number of flowering plants occur which approach typical desert plants in being protected, in some way or other, against a too rapid loss of the moisture which they manage to absorb from the soil. Among such plants could be mentioned many species characterized by a dense grayish or white covering of thick, woolly hairs, and others which have no leaves.

Large districts, especially in the Coteau de Missouri belt, are characterized by the absence of drainage valleys, the result being that the water in the lakes and ponds is generally saline and that numerous alkali flats occur. The vegetation in such situations is sparse and largely made up of plants especially fitted for soils rich in salt. Indeed, in these inland ponds and marshes, a number of plants thrive which normally occur in profusion on the shores of the Atlantic ocean.

The Rocky Mountains.—A great number of prairie species reach a considerable altitude in the foothills of the Rocky mountains. On the other hand, a number of sub-alpine forms descend practically to the prairie, the result being that in the foothills, where the two types of vegetation intermingle, the flora is very rich in species. As the foothills and the lower slopes are ascended, the prairie forms gradually disappear and are replaced by mountain species. The vegetation in general becomes more luxuriant in appearance, the herbaceous plants grow taller, shrubs become an important feature in the flora, and finally real forests are reached.

In the well developed forests on the slopes the trees are largely coniferous, the principal ones being lodge-pole pine, whitebark pine, white spruce, balsam fir and, highest up, larch. The shrubs are few in number, except in open and springy places, where bewildering thickets composed of many species of willows are found. The herbaceous vegetation is also rather scant, except along the edges, in open spaces, and along brooks and rivulets. In the dense forest, members of the blue-berry and winter-green families are conspicuous.

On the grassy slopes above the tree line the herbaceous vegetation again becomes very rich in species, exhibiting the richness and brilliancy of colour in the flowers so characteristic of alpine vegetation in general, until, just below the snow line, it takes on an appearance suggestive of arctic vegetation. In fact, many species occur on the higher levels in the Rockies which also have their homes in the