

basins occupied by Great Slave and Great Bear lakes, reaching the Arctic ocean east of the Mackenzie River delta. In detail, the surface features of the Canadian Shield are irregular; but, viewed broadly, it has the conformation of a great plain, depressed toward the centre and in the north and slightly elevated along the eastern and southern borders, where it presents a somewhat steep outward slope. The general elevation in the eastern portion is under 2,000 feet, and over the larger part of the plain is about 1,000 feet. The highest portion is along the northeastern margin where it presents a steep face to the sea, rising to a maximum altitude of about 6,000 feet.

Appalachian Region.—The continuation of the Green mountains of Vermont into Canada may be traced in the Notre Dame mountains, which approach the St. Lawrence below Quebec and, continuing with more easterly trend, form the highland of the Gaspé peninsula. Over a large part of the region, these hills hardly attain the dignity of mountains, but peaks rising 3,500 feet above the nearby coast are found in the Gaspé peninsula. The continuation of the White mountains of New Hampshire is found in the highlands of Maine and New Brunswick, the continuity being shown quite plainly by the rock-folding and other evidences of the great earth movements which caused the topography. An additional ridge apparently forms the present province of Nova Scotia, and although the highlands of that province in few places rise to elevations greater than 1,500 feet, the rock structure indicates that it was a mountainous country at no very remote geological period.

St. Lawrence Lowlands.—The southern interior of the continent consists of a plain of low relief, bordered on the east by the Appalachian mountains, on the west by the Cordilleran mountain systems, and on the north by the Laurentian plateau. This plain, in its Canadian portion, is known as the St. Lawrence lowlands, and extends from a short distance below Quebec city to lake Huron, with a length of 600 miles and an area of 35,000 square miles. To the northeast it becomes reduced in width, and in the vicinity of Quebec is represented by a narrow plateau or shelf on each side of the St. Lawrence river. The triangular area beyond, in which is the island of Anticosti, is structurally related to the central lowlands. The St. Lawrence lowlands may be divided into three sections:—(1) the St. Lawrence river plain, separated from (2) the Eastern Ontario basin, by a point of crystalline rocks, and (3) the Ontario peninsula, a slightly more elevated plain whose eastern border is a steep escarpment, the eastern outcrop of a heavy limestone bed which underlies the western peninsula.

Great Plains.—A great area, including many diverse features, lies to the east of the Cordilleras. The portion that is included under the term Great Plains extends from the southwestern edge of the ancient surface, forming the Canadian Shield, to the eastern edge of the mountainous region of the Cordilleras. In the belt traversed by the railway lines a three-fold division into prairie steppes, rising one above the other, is clearly recognizable, though the divisions are not distinguishable in the region farther north to which the term prairie is not applicable. For the purpose of description, these three divisions are adopted and a fourth is added for the broken hilly country of the foot-hills. The first or eastern division comprises the plain lying between the Canadian Shield and the plateau formed of Cretaceous sediments; the second extends from the edge of this plateau westward to the erosion remnants of former Tertiary deposits; and the third stretches from this line westward to the foot-hills. North of the prairie country these distinctions are less noticeable, and divisions two and three become merged into one.