To the south, soil and climate improve, and the southwestern peninsula of Ontario, the north shore of lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence valley are all essentially agricultural land. The rock here is of sedimentary origin, mostly of the Palæozoic age.

The Maritime Provinces, with a general slope towards the Atlantic, are varied in topography and geology. The climate resembles that of southern Ontario, being modified by the presence of the ocean. Precipitation is above 35 inches annually. This region supports a type of forest similar to that of the southern portion of the Archæan Shield.

Section 2.—Main Types of Forest Growth.

Physiographic, climatic and soil conditions in Canada seem to favour the coniferous type of forest. While the more fertile portions of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces supported a heavy virgin growth of hardwoods, the greater part of Canada's forest area is covered with spruce, pine, balsam, Douglas fir and other coniferous softwoods. Three main groups of forest growth in Canada follow the main physiographic divisions already mentioned. These groups are the Cordilleran, the Great Plains and the Eastern forests.

The Cordilleran Forest.—The Cordilleran forest, which covers the greater part of the Pacific slope, may be subdivided into the Coast belt, the Interior Dry belt, the Interior Wet belt and the Rocky Mountain belt. The Coast belt includes several distinct forest types, their character being determined by variations in climatic and topographic conditions, among which altitude and precipitation have had the greatest effect on forest growth. Douglas fir and red cedar are the principal species in the southern portion of the belt at altitudes up to 2,000 or 2,500 feet. With these are associated hemlock, white pine, amabilis and lowland fir. Toward the north and at higher altitudes, Douglas fir disappears and red cedar and hemlock are the important trees, with amabilis fir and yellow cypress as subsidiaries. In the Queen Charlotte islands and along the northern part of the coast, Sitka spruce and western hemlock form a lowland type.

In the Interior Dry belt western yellow or "bull" pine predominates at low altitudes, bordering on the grass lands. Douglas fir gradually increases in importance until it predominates at elevations up to 3,500 and 4,500 feet. Western larch covers a limited area usually between the true yellow pine and Douglas fir types. At the northern latitudinal and upper altitudinal limits of the Douglas fir type, an Engelmann spruce type develops, which merges into a spruce-alpine fir type at still higher altitudes. Lodgepole pine has taken the place of Douglas fir, Engelmann spruce, and, in some cases, yellow pine on burned-over areas, and has become to a considerable extent established as a distinct type.

Forest types similar to those of the coast have developed in the Interior Wet belt. In the southern portion of this belt, red cedar predominates in the wetter situations, mixed with Douglas fir, Engelmann spruce, white pine, hemlock, western larch, alpine fir, lowland fir and cottonwood. On the benches and lower valley slopes, hemlock and cedar are the important species. Engelmann spruce replaces hemlock at higher elevations, cedar gradually disappears and the spruce-alpine fir type stretches up to timber line. To the north, Engelmann spruce and alpine fir are more prominent and the other species are gradually eliminated.