

of shale form low vales and the belts of limestone stand up as prominent scarps, the most famous of which is the Niagara Escarpment. The whole region was greatly modified by ice and, as the ice melted, depressions became lakes. The glacial lakes were much larger than those of today. Glacial Lake Algonquin covered the three upper Great Lakes together with Lakes Nipigon and Nipissing and flowed out to sea by the Mattawa-Ottawa and the Trent river valleys. When it receded it left behind important plains at Port Arthur, Nipigon and North Bay. Lake Erie developed from a succession of glacial lakes at different levels and consequently is surrounded by a number of sandy deltaic deposits, beach ridges and lacustrine flats, each of which has its own role in diversifying agriculture. Lake Ontario is the successor to Lake Iroquois and is surrounded by the old Iroquois beach which stands out everywhere and provides sites for roads and settlements. Farther east, the lower Ottawa and St. Lawrence valleys were invaded first by glacial Lake Champlain and then by the Champlain Sea. Here also, deltaic sands, beach gravels and lake-bottom clays play a pronounced part in agriculture and in the distribution of settlement. The ice left large terminal or inter-lobate moraines, the most significant of which are the Horseshoe moraine in southwest Ontario and the Oak Ridge moraine in central Ontario. These provide catchment basins for many small rivers.

The Lowlands may be divided into four sub-regions: Southwest Ontario, west of the Niagara Escarpment; Central Ontario, between the Escarpment and the Rideau Hills [these are a spur of the Shield (the Frontenac axis) between the Algonquins and the Adirondacks]; Eastern Ontario and the Montreal Plain; and the estuarine plains of Quebec and Anticosti Island.

The Lowlands are poorly endowed with fuel and other mineral resources, except for the natural gas fields and the salt deposits of southwest Ontario. However, the area is the most southerly part of Canada, has a very favourable climate and good grey-brown soils, and is therefore very productive. The immense water power potential of the Niagara and St. Lawrence Rivers and of the rivers plunging down from the Shield and the Appalachians is a major asset. Although the Lowlands comprise Canada's smallest region, they support nearly two-thirds of the country's population.

**The Western Interior (Prairies and Mackenzie) Lowlands.**—The largest plains in Canada, the Western Interior Lowlands occupy a truly continental depression between the Shield and the Rocky Mountains, long the site of shallow seas that expanded and contracted from Palaeozoic to Cenozoic times. Sedimentary rocks laid down by rivers and by these seas in almost horizontal strata dominate the scene. They have since been attacked by differential erosion, the softer beds being worked down into basins and the harder beds standing up as intervening scarps.

The prairies have thus come to occupy three levels or steps. The lowest consists of the Manitoba plain, of Palaeozoic rocks, dipping gently away from the Shield. This step is at an elevation of from 600 to 900 feet. Much of it is floored by fertile glacial clays and beach ridges left by glacial Lake Agassiz that once filled the Red and Assiniboine Rivers and the flats around Lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba and Winnipegosis. It gives way, westward, to the great Cretaceous escarpment known as the Manitoba Scarp. This scarp has been cut into deeply by the Assiniboine, Swan and Saskatchewan Rivers and really exists as a series of uplands of from 1,600 to 2,600 feet high called the Turtle, Riding, Duck, Porcupine and Pasquia Mountains.

The second prairie step stretches westward from this scarp at a mean altitude of 2,000 feet. It too was glaciated. When the ice retreated large glacial lakes were left, known as Lakes Souris, Regina and Saskatoon. Lake-bed deposits today form some of the flattest and most fertile areas. Elsewhere the ground is rather hummocky with innumerable sloughs. Another great scarp occurs west of Weyburn and Moose Jaw; it is a continuation of the Missouri Coteau, a well-marked feature in the United States, and is divided by great re-entrants into individual sectors, the most important of which are Wood and Bear Mountains.