

The Interior Plains.—The Interior Plains are underlain by undisturbed or gently flexed or tilted sedimentary strata, which overlap the western border of the Canadian Shield and merge with the eastern foothills of the Cordilleran region. The Shield slopes at a rate of 15 feet per mile under the Great Plains, in the western part of which the overlying strata reach a thickness of 10,000 feet. The older overlying beds have been bevelled by erosion along the border of the Shield, exposing in central Manitoba marine beds of limestone, sandstone and shale of Ordovician, Silurian and Devonian ages. Farther north the exposed Palæozoic strata are mainly Devonian. The Palæozoic formations are overlain by early Mesozoic strata of marine origin and these by both marine and freshwater Cretaceous formations, which are the uppermost strata in much of Saskatchewan and Alberta. In places, however, as at Turtle Mountain in Manitoba and the Cypress Hills in Saskatchewan, these are overlain by remnants of early Tertiary formations.

St. Lawrence and Hudson Bay Lowlands.—The St. Lawrence Lowlands are underlain by marine beds deposited during much of Palæozoic time. Rather similar late Ordovician to Devonian beds are exposed in the Hudson Bay Lowlands. Small areas of Palæozoic beds are preserved at various localities on the Canadian Shield between these two Lowlands and suggest that arms or shallow straits of Palæozoic seas may have connected the present Hudson Bay and the St. Lawrence Lowland areas. The St. Lawrence Lowlands from Quebec City to Windsor are occupied by about one half of the population of Canada, supported by much arable land and major industrial concentrations. These Lowlands are divided by an exposed southeast-trending prong of the Canadian Shield called the Frontenac Axis, which extends into the United States northeast of Lake Ontario. Southwest of the Frontenac Axis, marine sedimentary rocks of Cambrian to Mississippian age rest on buried Precambrian rocks. Known formations there have an aggregate thickness of almost 6,000 feet. Rocks are mainly limestones, shales and sandstones deposited in generally shallow seas.

Surficial Deposits

The continental glaciation of most of Canada has removed weathered bedrock and residual soils and has almost certainly removed some types of ores such as pre-Pleistocene placer gold deposits, laterites, and upper portions of metallic and manganiferous ore deposits, which had formerly been enriched under stable near-surface conditions. Material deposited includes dominantly clastic detritus such as tills, esker gravels, outwash gravels and sands, or rock flour deposited in lakes or shallow seas in the form of multiple layers of varved clay or massive clay beds. Maps showing the surface distribution of these materials, published by federal agencies, reflect some physiographic features and present and potential land use.

Section 2.—Physical Geography

Canada occupies the northern half of the North American Continent with the exception of Alaska and Greenland, extending in longitude from Cape Spear, Newfoundland, at 52° 37' W, to Mount St. Elias, Yukon Territory, at 141° W, a distance of 88° 23' or 3,223 miles. In latitude it stretches from Middle Island in Lake Erie, at 41° 41' N, to the North Pole. The northernmost point of land is Cape Columbia on Ellesmere Island, at 83° 07' N, and the straight-line distance from Middle Island to Cape Columbia is 2,875 miles.

In shape, Canada resembles a distorted parallelogram with its four corners making important salients. In the north the salient formed by the Arctic Archipelago, which penetrates deep into the Arctic basin, guards the northern approaches to the Continent from Europe and Asia and makes Canada neighbour to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In the south the salient of peninsular Ontario thrusts far into the heart of the United States. In the east the salient of Labrador and the Island of Newfoundland commands the shortest crossings of the North Atlantic Ocean and links Canada geographi-