

The basin of the Mackenzie comprises three main physical features: On the west is the great series of parallel mountain ranges known as the Rocky Mountain system, into which many of the stronger tributaries of the Mackenzie cut deeply. On the east is the low-lying, rocky, broken Laurentian plateau, which in its northern part is treeless and is known as the Barren Lands. Between these two strongly marked features lies the broad lowland, through which the Mackenzie flows northward to the Arctic. The Mackenzie lowland is the northward extension of our own Great Plains region. It is a country of numerous lakes and of rivers flowing in shallow valleys, and its general level is only broken by occasional low ranges of hills. It corresponds to a certain extent with the region to the south, through which the Mississippi flows southward to the Gulf of Mexico. In contrast to the Mississippi region, however, the Mackenzie lowland is forested northward to its mouth and it embraces also within its limits some of the largest lakes on the continent.

The physical features of the Mackenzie basin then are these: A mountainous highland on the west, a low-lying, rugged, rocky and partly treeless plain on the east, and in the middle a broad, almost level, forested lowland, with the trunk stream, like a great artery, flowing northward to the Arctic sea, fed on the one hand from the melting snows of the mountains and on the other hand from the numberless lakes of the plateau region on the east.

The Mackenzie ranks as one of the eight large rivers of the earth. It is exceeded in length, drainage area and volume by the Mississippi, but has a greater length and drainage area than the St. Lawrence. Its length is reckoned at 2,550 miles to the head of the Peace river and its volume at about half a million cubic feet per second, or nearly ten times as great as the mean volume of the Ottawa river.

It is navigated by river steamers for 1,300 miles without a break, from its mouth up, and above that again on the Peace, Athabasca and other tributaries for a total length of about 1,400 miles in three sections. If we include its great lakes and those tributary streams that have already been explored, it has an estimated length of navigable river and lake shore line of nearly 7,000 miles in length.

HISTORY.

The history of the Mackenzie river district is intimately bound up with that of the fur trade, and particularly with that of the Hudson Bay Company. Organized in 1670, under the name of "The Honourable Company of Merchant Adventurers