

CHAPTER II.

PHYSIOGRAPHY.

LAURENTIAN PLATEAU.

The district included in Timiskaming county forms a part of the great physiographic province which occupies the greater part of north-eastern North America—the Laurentian plateau. This great area over 2,000,000 square miles in extent is characterized by a remarkable uniformity of elevation and similarity of topography and, in all its essential features, must be regarded as physiographically a unit.

It is bounded on the north by the Arctic ocean, on the east by the Atlantic, and on the south and west by the overlapping southward dipping Palæozoic sediments, the successive numbers of which outcrop along its border in alternating lowland belts and cuesta ridges.

In a broad way the Laurentian plateau may be regarded as a great U or V-shaped, amphitheatre-like area rising abruptly along its outer margin and sloping gently towards the great central basin of Hudson bay. That the surface of the plateau has this basin-like form is indicated not only by the elevations determined at various points, but also by the drainage, the larger part of which flows into Hudson bay. The proportion of the drainage discharging in this way would be much greater, however, were it not for the fact that many large rivers such as the Ottawa and the Hamilton escape from the plateau through deep, narrow, gorge-like depressions, the gradients of which have no relationship to the slope of the surrounding uplands.

The outstanding physiographic feature of this great plateau area is its remarkable uniformity of relief in contrast with the detailed irregularity of its surface. The greater part of its immense area has a range in elevation of less than 1,200 feet, the minimum elevation being generally greater than 800 feet, and the maximum less than 2,000 feet above the sea: locally the range in elevation is generally less than 300 feet. Despite this remarkable absence of relief, the plateau surface in detail is exceedingly irregular and rough, in consequence of which the drainage of the plateau is of an extremely juvenile type. Lakes of irregular outline and filled with numerous islands abound everywhere; the water from these spills over the margin at its lowest point and in this way descends by successive rapids and waterfalls from basin to basin. Thus, while, on the one hand, the flat surface of the plateau truncating the structures of its Pre-Cambrian rocks is a feature characteristic of mature