

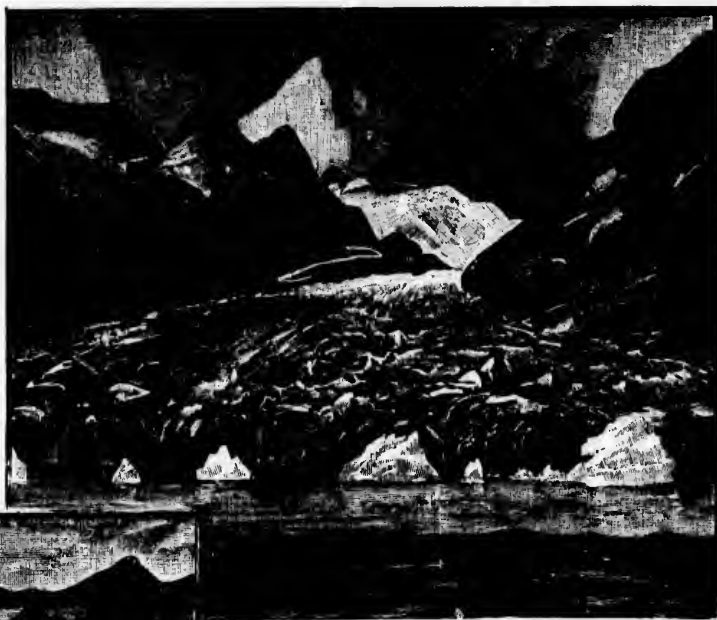
What island is near the west coast, at the widest part of North America? This island belongs to our own country, Canada.

16. Mountains.

On the map on page 28 the broken and irregular shading shows where the surface of North America is mountainous, the smooth and even shading shows where the land is smoothest and flattest.

Where does the surface of North America appear roughest and most mountainous? The western part is almost entirely covered by mountains.

When a hill is so high that it seems to reach the clouds everybody calls it a *mountain*.



A Glacier—Parent of the Iceberg.



Hills and Ridges.

Generally, however, when a hill is much higher than the neighboring country it is called a mountain.

Sometimes a hill stands by itself and is surrounded by low lands. More frequently, the top of the hill extends in a long line, like the ridge of a roof. How many slopes would such a ridge have? A line of hills extending for a considerable distance is called a *ridge* or a *range*; and a number of ranges, parallel or nearly parallel to one another, is called a *chain* of hills or mountains.

What is the direction of most of the ranges in the west of North America? What name is given to the longest mountain chain? They extend nearly the whole length of North America. Even in the torrid zone, some of their highest points or *peaks* are covered with snow all the year round. You probably know that the higher we go the colder the air is so that even in the hottest part of the world, if the mountains are high enough, we find their tops as cold as it is in the frigid zone.

This snow which lies always on the tops of high mountains is called a *glacier*. It is continually sliding down the mountain to lower and warmer regions. When it arrives far enough down the mountain side, it melts and leaves masses of gravel, sand, earth, and stones which have fallen upon it. This mass is called the terminal *moraine* of the glacier. It crushes and smooths the rocks beneath it as it passes down. Geologists think that the northern half of North America in ages long past, was covered with a huge glacier which has left great *boulders* scattered about. In many places the surface of the ground consists of a tough clay mixed with stones which is called *till*. This also was left by the great glacier. The lakes scattered over the whole of the northern part of North America are supposed to have been ground out of the rock in some places by the glacier, while in other cases they have been produced by the damming across of old river valleys by the till and other glacial deposits. The period of time when the great glacier covered North America is called the *Glacial Period*.

Near the Pacific coast are shorter ranges between which and the Rocky Mountains is a broad *highland* or *plateau*. This plateau with the mountain ranges on its borders, is much higher than any other part of North America, and is sometimes called the *cordillera* or Cordilleran system of mountains. Find where this plateau is widest. What part of the whole width of the continent there does it occupy? Where does it occupy nearly the whole width of the continent?