

coincident, however, with the latitude of the head-waters of the Missouri, a change occurs in the character of this Cordillera region. It becomes comparatively narrow, and runs to the 56th parallel or beyond, with an average width of about four hundred miles only. This narrower portion of the Cordillera comprises the greater part of the Province of British Columbia, and consists of four main ranges, or more correctly speaking, systems of mountains, each composed of a number of constituent ranges. These mountain systems are, from east to west, (1) The Rocky Mountains proper. (2) Mountains which may be classed together as the Gold Ranges. (3) The system of Coast Ranges sometimes improperly regarded as a continuation of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon and Washington Territory. (4) A mountain system which in its unsubmerged parts constitutes Vancouver and the Queen Charlotte Islands. This last is here actually the bordering range of the continent, as beyond it, after passing across a submarine plateau of inconsiderable width, the bottom shelves very rapidly down to the abyssal depths of the Pacific. The Tertiary coast ranges of the south are here entirely wanting.

Between the second and third of the above mountain systems is the Interior Plateau of British Columbia, with an average width of about one hundred miles, a mean elevation of about 3500 feet and peculiar character and climate. The present paper refers more particularly to a portion of the Rocky Mountains proper. This system of mountains has, between the 49th and 53rd parallels, a mean breadth of about fifty miles, which, in the vicinity of the Peace River, decreases to forty miles, the general altitude of the range, as well as that of its supporting plateau, at the same time becoming less. Beyond the Peace River region, these mountains are known only in the most general and unsatisfactory way. The portion of the Rocky Mountains which has been explored, is bordered to the eastward by the Great Plains, which break into a series of foot-hills along its base, and to the westward by a remarkably straight and definite valley which is occupied