

THE COUNTRY NORTH OF THE OTTAWA.

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Looking across the River Ottawa from the level terrace on which the Parliament Buildings are situated, we see rising to the north the series of hills known as the Chelsea Mountains, of which King's Mountain forms a prominent feature. Many of the readers of the *Naturalist* are familiar with these hills, since some of the pleasantest excursions of the Club have had them for their objective point. They rise out of the broad clay flat which extends for many miles along the course of the lower Ottawa, and consist, for the most part, of some variety of gneiss, with occasional bands of limestone. They constitute the oldest rock formation on the surface of our globe, and these rocks extend for many miles to the north, as well as to the east and west, presenting an exceedingly rugged landscape, densely clothed with forest. Where this has been removed by fires, the surface discloses great masses of rock, almost without a trace of vegetation or soil, on which such might grow. Valleys occur here and there among these hills, in which a certain amount of drift or decomposed rock has lodged, and here, for the space of several acres, conditions of soil and surrounding suitable for settlement exist. Large rivers traverse the district, and can be traced for hundreds of miles. Along these, and on many of their branches from either side, fertile areas extend, which have already been, to some extent, occupied by the hardy settler; but the area of these fertile lands, as compared with the great stretch of craggy hill and forest, is small. It was one of these settlers who, when told that his farm was situated upon the very backbone of the continent, replied with an air of disgust, that "it might very well be the backbone, but at any rate they had taken all the meat off it."

While, however, we have before our eyes daily the beautiful panorama of the Laurentian hills of the Ottawa District, it is surprising how very little is really known about the character and resources of the country lying immediately to our north. True it is that for many years the sound of the lumberman's axe, and the crash of the mighty pines have been heard; and the slash of the hunter in his lonely quest for furs, or the trail of the explorer in the search for mineral wealth, can be recognized in the heart of the most desolate wilderness. Yet beyond the narrow fringe of settlement, which skirts the northern bank of