

400 miles. Beyond the North Saskatchewan River, however, it loses its essentially prairie character, and, with the increasing moisture of the climate, becomes, with limited exceptions, thickly covered with coniferous forest.

The north-eastern boundary of this interior continental plateau, north of latitude forty-nine, is formed, as above stated, by the south-western slope of that old crystalline nucleus of the continent which extends north of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes from Labrador to the Lake of the Woods; with a general east and west course, and then, turning suddenly at an angle of  $60^\circ$  to its former general direction, runs with a north-north-west course to the Arctic Sea. The eastern barrier is rather a rocky plateau than a mountain region. It presents no well defined height of land, and the watershed-line follows a very sinuous course among the countless lakes, small and great, which cover its surface. Northward from the Lake of the Woods, it divides the waters flowing into Hudson's Bay from those draining directly into the Arctic Ocean, with one important exception. The Nelson River, carrying the accumulated waters of the Saskatchewan, the Red River and innumerable smaller streams, breaks through the Laurentian plateau at the north end of Lake Winnipeg, and empties into Hudson's Bay at York Factory. The Churchill or English River, a not inconsiderable stream, passes through the same gap.

Near the 49th parallel, the Rocky Mountains on the west rise abruptly from the elevated plain at their base, and often present to the east almost perpendicular walls of rock. A short distance farther north, however, they become bordered by an important zone of foothills composed of crumpled Mesozoic rocks, and these continue with varying breadth at least as far north as the Peace River region. Between the fifty-first and fifty-second parallels the Rocky Mountain range appears to culminate, and to the north gradually decreases in elevation till on the borders of the Arctic Ocean it is represented by comparatively low hills only. With this decrease in height the mountains become a less complete barrier, and the streams flowing eastward across the plains rise further back till in the cases of the Peace and Liard Rivers the waters from the central plateau of British Columbia completely traverse its range.

The whole interior region of the Continent slopes gradually eastward from the elevated plains lying near the base of the Rocky Mountain, to the foot of the Laurentian highlands, and though the inclination is more abrupt in approaching the mountains, it is not so much so as to attract special attention. Between the fifty-fourth and forty-ninth degrees of latitude, however, along the lines which are in a general way parallel and hold a north-west and south-east course across the