

The Precambrian Shield is drained by many swift-flowing rivers: the Saguenay, the St. Maurice, and the Ottawa flowing southwards into the St. Lawrence; the Moose, Albany, Nelson and Churchill flowing into Hudson Bay; and thousands of other rivers, great and small. Numerous waterfalls provide a wealth of potential hydro-electric power undergoing progressive development.

During the past three centuries the wild regions of the Precambrian Shield have provided one of the world's chief sources of luxury fur—beaver, otter, fisher, muskrat, fox, mink, ermine, marten and lynx. The maze of rivers and lakes enables trappers to go far into the wilds by canoe.

With the exception of the arable Clay Belt in northern Ontario and Quebec, little of the Precambrian Shield is well adapted for agriculture. The climate is rigorous. In spite of its great resources, the adverse factors of soil and climate have limited the population of this region.

## The Great Central Plain

Extending westward from the edge of the Precambrian Shield to the Rockies are the broad meadow lands of the Great Central Plain which covers a large part of the three Prairie Provinces. This area is largely treeless in the south, but its soil and climate are favourable for agriculture.

Although the Prairie Provinces give the impression of being flat, in reality the ground rises gently from east to west: from an elevation of less than 800 feet above sea level at Winnipeg to

Cattle round-up in the Valley of the Milk River, Alberta.



Field of wheat and country elevators, Saskatchewan.

3,500 feet at Calgary where the Rockies can be seen in the distance.

From southern Manitoba through Saskatchewan and central Alberta northward to the Peace River district there stretches, with but one break, a broad belt of soil productive of the world's finest high-protein wheat, which is exceptionally hard and possesses excellent bread-making qualities. Prairie farms are much larger than those in eastern Canada: in the wheat-growing areas many cover a full "section" (one square mile) or more. In the southern grazing districts the average ranch is several "sections" in size.

The climate tends to extremes. Winter temperatures may fall far below zero; summer days are long and hot. In southern Alberta, the warm Chinook winds blowing from the Rockies break the winter cold and produce early springs.

Both snow and rainfall are generally light and crops depend largely upon rains during the growing season. In summer long hours of sunshine provide ideal conditions for rapid growth. In the "dry belts", irrigation projects in several areas have turned the fields green with alfalfa and sweet clover.

The lakes of the Prairie Provinces yield fish of high quality: whitefish, pickerel, trout, and the renowned "goldeye" which, lightly smoked, is a famous breakfast delicacy. Two of the largest lakes are Winnipeg (9,398 square miles or 24,430 square kilometers) and Athabasca (3,058 square miles or 7,920 square kilometers), and there are thirteen other Canadian lakes with an area of over one thousand square miles (2,590 square kilometers).

Great river systems drain the prairies: to the east, the Red and the Assiniboine; in the central plains, the Saskatchewan and its tributaries. The waters from the northern parklands flow down to the Arctic through the Mackenzie River system, which includes the Peace and Athabasca Rivers, Lake Athabasca, Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes. It is the longest river system in Canada: 2,500 miles (4,025 kilometers) from the source of the Peace to the mouth of the Mackenzie, almost as long as the Mississippi.

