1879-03-01

Letter from James Geikie to John Muir, 1879 Mar 1.

James Geikie

Perth March 1 1879

Dear Sir

I am glad that you found my paper on the glaciation of the Outer Hebrides of interest. I quite agree with you that so many details as I give are not needed to convince any one who is conversant with the modes of glacial action that these islands have been glaciated from the South-east. But the prejudices (if I may be allowed to use so hard a word) of English geologists in favour of icebergs are hard to overcome, and one can only hope to do so by piling up the evidence that tells against that most inept & unsatisfactory iceberg-hypothesis.

I have long wished to see your Sierras and have read with the liveliest interest what you and Clarence King and others have written about them. Certainly these glacial phenomena must be very grand, and some day I hope to make some acquaintance with them. But my time is much occupied, and when I shall be able to go, I do not know. I send you

by this mail copy of a paper on the Geology of Gibraltar, which may have some interest for you; inasmuch as it proves that the cold of the glacial epoch had so decided an effect so far South as the South of Spain, and at a comparatively low elevation. I believe similar breccias or "glacial agglomerates" occur in many other regions in the South of Europe, and these I hope some time to describe. In short the more I study the Pleistocene deposits of our continent the more am I impressed with the wide-spread influence of frost action during our glacial period. By & by I shall hope to send you a little work on which I am now engaged, & which will give an outline sketch of the physical and climatic changes which have taken place in Europe since the earliest known appearance of man.

Hooker has just published a work on Morocco & the Great Atlas, in which he makes mention of the remains of considerable glacial action in the valleys of the Atlas range. He also describes great conglomerate or gravel hills which lie out upon the plains at the foot of the mountains ~~hills~~ — which strongly resemble the gravel & sand hills of formerly well-glaciated regions!

Yet some of our geologists still maintain that there never was a glacial period — but that each particular region has been glaciated on its own account at some separate period! Mr. Campbell for example trots round the world in one year and a day, and finds no trace of a general cold period in our hemisphere!

I had recently a most interesting account by Prof. Chamberlin of the glacial deposits of Wisconsin. He describes the Kettle Range of gravel hills as an immense moraine, and seems to make out a very strong case. But I suppose you have seen his paper.

Excuse this rambling letter. And again thanking you for your kind letter, and for your kind offer to show me the wonders of glaciation in your splendid country — (I would gain start off now!)

I am faithfully yours
James Geikie