

surface from the action of ice moving over them, as modern glaciers slide upon their beds. He was thus led to conclude that the Alpine ice, now restricted to the higher valleys, once extended into the central plain, crossed it, and even mounted to the southern summits of the Jura chain.

Before Agassiz took up the question, there were two prevalent opinions regarding the transport of the erratics. One of these called in the action of powerful floods of water, the other invoked the assistance of floating ice. Agassiz combated these views with great skill. His reasoning ought to have convinced his contemporaries that his explanation was the true one. But the conclusions at which he arrived seemed to most men of the day extravagant and incredible. Even a cautious thinker like Lyell saw less difficulty in sinking the whole of Central Europe under the sea, and covering the waters with floating icebergs, than in conceiving that the Swiss glaciers were once large enough to reach to the Jura. Men shut their eyes to the meaning of the unquestionable fact that, while there was absolutely no evidence for a marine submergence, the former track of the glaciers could be followed mile after mile, by the rocks they had scored and the blocks they had dropped, all the way from their present ends to the far-distant crests of the Jura.

Agassiz felt that the question was connected with large problems in geology. The former vast extension of the Swiss glaciers could be no mere accidental or local phenomenon, but must have resulted from some general lowering of temperature. He coupled with