

Appendix

Jefferson's Letter on Climate to Jean Baptiste Le Roy

The original letter resides in the Library of Congress. The diagrams are omitted here. Reprinted from The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, edited successively by Julian P. Boyd, Charles T. Cullen, John Catanzariti, and Barbara B. Oberg (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950-); copyright Princeton University Press.

Paris, November 13, 1786

Sir, I received the honour of yours of Sep. 18. a day or two after the accident of a dislocated wrist had disabled me from writing. I have waited thus long in constant hope of recovering it's use. But finding that this hope walks before me like my shadow, I can no longer oppose the desire and duty of answering your polite and learned letter. I therefore employ my left hand in the office of scribe, which it performs indeed slowly, awkwardly and badly.

The information given by me to the Marquis de Chastellux, and alluded to in his book and in your letter, was that the sea breezes which prevail in the lower parts of Virginia during the summer months, and in the warm parts of the day, had made a sensible progress into the interior country: that formerly, within the memory of persons living, they extended but little above Williamsburg; that afterwards they became sensible as high as Richmond, and at present they penetrate sometimes as far as the first mountains, which are above an hundred miles farther from the sea coast than Williamsburg is. It is very rare indeed that they reach those mountains and not till the afternoon is considerably advanced. A light North-Westerly breeze is for the most part felt there, while an Easterly, or North Easterly wind is blowing strongly in the lower country. How far Northward and Southward of Virginia this Easterly breeze takes place, I am not informed. I must therefore be understood as speaking of that state only, which extends on the sea coast from $36\frac{1}{2}$ to 38° of latitude.

This is the fact. We know too little of the operations of Nature in the physical world to assign causes with any degree of confidence. Willing always however to guess at what we do not know, I have sometimes indulged myself with conjectures on the causes of the phænomena above stated. I will hazard them on paper for your amusement, premising for their foundation some principles believed to be true.

Air, resting on a heated and reflecting surface, becomes warmer, rarer and lighter: it ascends therefore, and the circumjacent air, which is colder and heavier, flows into it's place, becomes warmed and lightened in it's turn, ascends and is