

SOUTH 3015.

88 OXFORD ROAD,
MOSELEY,
BIRMINGHAM 13.

21st May 1935.

Dear W. Bro. Barlow, 22 Hamstead Hill,
Birmingham. 20

C. J. Barlow. 30°

W. must do
the writing with
other people
in other
matters -
W. R. Barlow.
March 1946.

Here, at long last, is an elaboration,
although in somewhat halting terms, of the thoughts
that were in my mind when we were discussing, a
month ago, the terms of custom, address to a Candidate
newly admitted. They are probably too late to
be of any use to you for the particular occasion you
had in mind, but if they will be of any use on any
future occasion they are entirely at your service.

Sorry that amongst so many distractions I
was not able to get them at any rate semi-coherently
set out, & sent on to you before.

Yours fraternally

C. J. Barlow

Some of the most wonderful of the works of nature are secret things, formed quite slowly in quiet places hidden from the casual glance of the passer-by, and attracting by the very gradualness of their growth little attention even from the observant and earnest seeker, until they have already attained such a state of development as to claim his enthusiastic admiration.

A typical example of such perfection of growth, achieved without ostentation but with infinite patience and unceasing toil, is found in the stalactites which adorn the caverns in some limestone cliffs. Perhaps the best and finest examples of these are in the far-famed Yosemite Valley, in the U.S.A.; other fine examples are found in the Dolomites, and in this country we have some not unworthy examples in the caves at Cheddar.

Even if you have never seen the originals of these, you have probably seen coloured illustrations of some of them, and will be able to appreciate the marvellous beauty, delicacy and strength which they shew; here a fluted column of milky opalescence, there a mantle or curtain of delicate rose pink or palest violet, and again a pillar of jade green or of amber, flecked and streaked with vivid bands of colour, throwing back the light of your torch as if it were cut from some huge opal and held a living fire within itself, or breathed and pulsated with light and feeling in tune with the thoughts and hopes that the sight of such sublime beauty raises in your own heart.

But consider how such perfection has been achieved; not by any spectacular convulsion of nature, emerging full grown from an ordeal of fire and tumult, but apparently out of nothing; just by the slow percolation of water through the overlying strata, and the dropping of this water, spot by spot, from some crack or fissure in the roof of a cave into which a part of it eventually finds its way.

As the water percolates through these overlying strata, it dissolves some of the mineral salts which they contain, and as the spot of water hangs from the crack in the roof, it dries, just a little, and before it quite drops off, it has left a little film, microscopically thin, of these mineral salts, to form just an infinitesimal addition to the projection from which it is pendent.

So first the roughness of the rock becomes smoothed over and covered with a faint but fine opalescence, which with the passage of time develops into a pendent icicle, itself a thing of beauty and a glow of colour, whilst immediately beneath it, rising up from the floor of the cavern, commences to form the corresponding stalagmite; this also is formed from the salts in the water which has dropped from above, but since the water here is not collected to a point, but is free to run off quite rapidly, the evaporation is not so great, and the stalagmite forms more slowly, and is more irregular in its shape, frequently forming a widespreading but almost formless base and becoming then a rough lump, dull and apparently devoid of life or any special lustre, before it begins gradually to aspire; finally, however, it grows, and, meeting the stalactite hanging from the roof, unites with it to form a perfect column, which further deposits merely serve to strengthen.

Can we not liken this growth to that of the human character, and draw a just comparison between the two?

We have man at the commencement of his life, just a part of the rocky floor of the cavern; as it were a small pebble, which happens to be so placed that it will receive influence from above. Gradually, slowly, but persistently, through all the years, there come into his life, - flow over his soul if you like - influences, to which he is at first unresponsive, as the early spots of water run away from the stone on the floor; then they begin to have some small effect and the first roughness of the stone wears off; later their influence grows, and as the stalagmite begins to rise from the floor of the cave from the shapeless lump on which it is based, so we may say that the man's character has then begun to form, and his mind to develop.

Steadily the process goes on, and each influence which comes

to bear on the individual adds its quota to the column of character which he is building; they may not all be of the one kind, giving a column of uniform colour such as we mentioned a little while ago, but of various kinds, each helping to build up that variegated column which most truly represents the development of the normal man.

Just as the stalagmite does not grow upward so fast as the stalactite reaches downward, so the development of character is not so clearly perceptible as the flow of influence to which it is subject, but with patience and perseverance, if aided by conscious endeavour, just as the two unite eventually to form the perfect column of physical beauty, so may the character of man become imbued with the Divine influences which are ceaselessly flowing over him, until the column which he has built unites itself with the Divine attributes which endow it with moral beauty, and takes on a new nature which will reflect the glory of the Creator.

Your own character has been formed so far on lines which have met with at least our approbation, & have induced us to admit you as a Member of our Society; we trust that you will find in Masonry an atmosphere which will be propitious to its further development.