

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

UNTEMPERED MORTAR.

"Say unto them which daub it with the untempered mortar, that it shall fall.—Ezekiel, 13:11.

Ezekiel is the prophet of the exile. He has always struck me as an eccentric sort of man. He finds feathers for his arrows of truth in the wings of strange birds. His sayings are often quaint. He gathers illustrations where no one but himself would think of looking for them, homely perhaps, but as happy as homely. You feel, however, he is a teacher of truth, a man of God, and in his lips a message. And so we go to him today for inspiration in our union service.

Here is a man mixing mortar. So he takes you to him to teach you. You watch the process. He selects different ingredients—lime, clay, sand, and other things. They are in a dust-heap before him. He pours water on the heap. Then he mixes it all up together. It is important to have the ingredients in proper proportions, just so much lime, clay, sand. But it is still more important that they be thoroughly mixed. So he keeps working the mortar over and over till it has the consistency that satisfies him. Some mortar-makers get through with their mixing in quick style. Others, however, keep mixing away, an dunking it over and over long after it looks as if it is as much mixed as it can be. But the mortar-man knows what he is doing.

As the prophet puts it here, there is a temper in mortar just as in men, and unless you can get it worked into the proper temper, its different ingredients will not coalesce, either among themselves, or with other things; and so it will be no good. There will be no strength in it. Untempered mortar—that is what Ezekiel calls it, and he cannot find words strong enough to denounce the stuff. He would not sleep for a single night in a house built with untempered mortar. He would not be a citizen of the city whose walls and towers were daubed with untempered mortar. You see him going to the builders who are building with trashy mortar, cheap cement, and how he denounces them in the name of the Lord. "Say unto them," and he says—"Say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall."

The other day I was taken to see a tower. A tower is a thing of strength and beauty. Every city is proud of its towers. It seems to lean on its towers. But this tower lay all sprawled out in a heap. There had been no earthquake. There had been no cyclone. It had fallen under its own weight. Now, it will not do for me to say, for I know nothing about mortar or masonry, but the quaint old prophet would say: "Untempered mortar! Bad cement! Say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall!"

A clever Japanese writer has been interviewing the ruins of the city of "The Golden Gate," and gives it forth as his honest conviction, that the terrible catastrophe owes itself, not so much to the earthquake, as to the quality of the mortar used in the construction. Perhaps he never heard of Ezekiel, but here is what the prophet wrote in the days when they knew how to mix mortar as they do not today: "Say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar that it shall fall."

Do not blame Heaven for the catastrophe, but put the blame just where it should be put, on the architects, the contractors, the cement manufacturers,

the building inspectors, and especially the public that make themselves believe they can have first class work without paying the price. Say unto builders of every name and class—home-builders, city builders, nation-builders, church-builders, character-builders—to beware of the untempered mortar evil. Say unto the people who live in a city built of fraud, cheap and trashy cement, that their city shall fall and bury them in its ruins, and they are fools who are saying: "Peace and safety!" where peace and safety are impossible. Especially say unto the teachers of false doctrine, glossing things over that are scandalous with smooth and flattering words, building up for souls a refuge of lies, that their daubing with untempered mortar will come to naught, and all who trust in their lying words will perish with them. Heaven here gives due warning by lips that are inspired, that if there is a crash some day, it will not be held responsible for the blood of those who perish. Their blood will be upon their own heads: "Say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall."

Home Builders

Of all that is being built on earth, home stands first. Put it before the church even. You must have the home before you can have the church. You must have the home before you can have society. You must have the home, the family, before you can have the nation. The first thing to build, and the best thing to build, is the home, and you are to see to it that it is well built. Daubing its walls and rooms with untempered mortar, owing only for the look of things—that is not the way to build a true home.

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. It takes two to build a home—one man, one woman. It was thus the first home was built. How beautiful to see those first two, with God as their architect, building the first home, and thus laying the foundations of society, church and state, and all that the world has grown to since, and is to grow to as the ages unwind themselves.

Now, how to cement the two together, so that the two become one—that is the home-building problem. And that is where the mission of the mortar comes into place. Sometimes the two are so different. They can hardly be more so. One is rough, the other smooth; one strong, the other weak; one fearing nothing, the other fearing everything. How then can these two be built into one and the same home-wall? And it all depends on the quality of the mortar. There is a mortar that cements together in a solid wall the most dissimilar building material, and nothing can pull it down. The storms of life break upon it. Floods pour themselves around it. The earthquake puts his mighty shoulder to it, and shakes it hard. The tooth of time wears and tears. But there the home-wall stands unshaken. Ah! none of the untempered mortar the prophet denounces in that home-wall.

I need not tell you that there are home-walls all cracked, never properly cemented indeed—husband and wife at variance, parents and children at variance, brothers and sisters at variance, members of the same family at variance. And I need not tell you of the way things are daubed over to be appearances, of the white-washing

of the outside to make things look better than they are. But some day there is a storm, an earthquake and down things go in a heap. And so the word here is, and it is just the word home-builders want to hear: "Say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall."

There is not time to say all that one wants to say, but this let me say, that the thing called temper has so much to do in home-building. Untempered mortar—that is the trouble where many a once slightly home lies a heap to-day. Tongue and temper did it.

Business Builders

A word to you. It is in place. There are businesses that have stood the test of years, that have come through terrible financial upheavals, and have come through them unshaken, and not only unshaken, but all the stronger for them. They began perhaps in a very humble and unpretentious way. Their foundations were laid deep and strong on the rock of truth and righteousness. Honest effort worked hard and patiently, and prayer prayed, and Heaven smiled. There were no business-booms in those early days, and no scandals—such as we hear of to-day. And so they have slowly grown to be the great industries that are the pride of the city, the glory of the Dominion. Anything and everything they put their mark on the country can rely on, and the people know it. The goods they make and sell, the manufactures they turn out, the buildings they put up, are not shams and shams, but genuine, the honest truth that will stand the wear and tear of the years, no untempered mortar in their construction.

Then there are businesses of another sort. How they boom things! They sell cheap, for they manufacture trash. They call it bread, but it is the husks the swine feed on, and only fit for swine. Everything in the shape of food is adulterated. Honesty cannot compete with them and so is elbowed out of the market. Truets they call themselves, and invite the confidence of the public, and that is not always hard to get. But who can trust them? They are cruel betrayers, seditious, utter frauds, sheer shame. The thing they deal most in is what the prophet calls here untempered mortar. They build up their success with that. Shall they prosper? Shall they succeed? They seem to. They build up fast. They make money fast. But this is written, and it is the word of the Lord, and let my lips burn with it: "Say unto them, the business builders, that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall, and great shall be its fall."

City Builders

We are building a great city here on the Banks of the St. Lawrence. It is a great city now, but it is to be a greater city still. Does it matter, then, how we build it, and what we build it of—the masonry and mortar? The buildings of a city have their place and importance, and it is everything, in its own place, that they be substantial. If the earthquake that shook the City of the Golden Gate, should come here, and shake the city of Mount Royal, would it be found, that our edifices are built of untempered mortar, and that the very first shake would tumble them all down into a heap of fallen bricks and stones? Never so much building going on all over the city as today, and never so much need therefore of thorough inspection to guard against fraud in construction.