

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

μη εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν.—MATT. vi. 13.

I SUPPOSE it may be fairly concluded from these words that God does upon occasion lead men into temptation. But it has become so customary to regard temptation as synonymous with solicitation to sin, that many shrink from admitting this as possible, and consequently seek for a way out of the difficulty by turning, so to say, the edge of the verb, and making it equivalent to no more than this, "Suffer us not to be led into temptation." And yet the verb is active, and most distinctly conveys the idea of God as Agent bringing us into some given situation. It is something that God can do, or forbear to do as part of His own dealing with His children, that is definitely in question. The verb must therefore stand. Nor is there any objection at all to this if the noun that follows be as carefully restricted to its natural signification. For *πειρασμός*, as everybody knows, simply means, in its first intention, the making trial of anything, or putting it to the test. A whole army of Government inspectors exist at the present day for purposes of *πειρασμός*. Whether it be boilers, bridges, bayonets, or what not, the House of Commons at question-time has enough to hear about these. That bayonets, for example, should curl up innocuously in action is highly undesirable. They must be subjected, therefore, to a severe test beforehand, a test under which a large percentage will indubitably fail; but better so than that they should be found useless for their proper purpose when the critical moment comes when everything depends on their being relied upon.

The unlettered reader has doubtless often found a difficulty in the text, "It came to pass after these things that God did *tempt* Abraham." The Revised Version has substituted "prove," and it is well. God had confidence in His servant Abraham, and this confidence, as the event showed,