dissatisfaction and to wish it over. We are here by God's appointment; we already possess God's love. The song of rejoicing should be in the tabernacle of the righteous, and the great hope of immortality, while it lightens the weight of earthly troubles, should do nothing to lessen our delight in earthly happiness.

R. W. DALE.

THE IDEAL PREACHER.

THE embassy of the Baptist to Christ[1] is an incident in the life of the Forerunner which has always enlisted the attention of students of the Gospel narrative. "Art Thou the coming One, or are we to expect another?" Does the challenge represent an eclipse of faith, or does it not? and for whose sake was the question addressed by John to the Lord? It seems as if the data were insufficient to make a reply which should be final. It is difficult enough to calculate upon our own conduct under unexpected conditions, and how is it possible to forecast the issues in the case of others? Every crisis in each several human life marks also a new departure in morals, and before there can be any certain anticipation of its direction, one must be in full possession both of the nature and stability of the moral principle of the individual. But here adequate knowledge is denied to men; they can only guess, surmise, or infer, and always from imperfect premises. Yet they often make conclusions as if there was a complete science of human character, and as if there was a uniform line of conduct for all under like conditions. For such speculations this narrative has presented a field of special interest, partly from the greatness of the two figures which occupy it, partly because of the touch of nature in it, which so

[1] St. Matt. xi. 2–15, and St. Luke vii. 18–30.

far has made all enquirers "kin." To be transparently loyal to a lofty ideal and yet to find the ideal itself obscured by some depressing cloud of circumstance, what Christian, since the Baptist's time, is not humbly conscious that he is the one, and has at times painfully made the other experience? The narrative is clear enough upon the point that the Baptist felt depressed. That this depression of spirits was not natural to him is plain from the character and success of his mission;[1] it was the outcome of his circumstances.[2] Place any man of high aims, and with splendid performances in the past, in a Machærus which renders further enterprise impossible, and he will be greater than the Baptist if he does not feel and express it. Indeed the special greatness of the Baptist appears to lie in the fact that the expression was unselfish. If he felt the issue deeply for himself, he felt it still more for that faithful band of followers who clung no less loyally to their Master in the fortress than when they streamed forth to Him in the free spaces of the desert. If any needed cheering, surely these disciples did, nor could any one speak the word of comfort save Christ, to whom they were despatched.

It appears that the Baptist selected two[3] messengers for the honourable and anxious task of seeking an interview with Jesus. One can imagine them filled with the same kind of forebodings as pursued Clopas and his unnamed companion on the journey to Emmaus, for the conditions have singular analogies in occasion and circumstance: a master, it would seem, fallen, high hopes dashed, the enemies of truth and goodness and purity triumphant. It seems not unnatural to suppose that the precise form which their enquiry took was due to the anxiety which they were experiencing. It may be that the Baptist

[1] St. Matt. iii. 5. [2] St. Matt. xi. 2, ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ.
[3] δύο τινὰς, St. Luke vii. 18. Cf. St. Matt. xi. 2, v.l.

simply charged them with the question, "Art Thou the coming One?" and that his messengers added the alternative challenge, "or are we to expect another?" It was a question of timorous hearts, yet it needed some boldness in the putting. How would the enthusiastic witnesses of Christ's wonder-working power receive such an embassage? how would the Lord Himself entertain it? Must they return with their mission discredited, with some short, sharp rebuke for themselves and their master ringing in their ears, or would their faith and his receive a fresh and gracious confirmation from His sacred lips? The narrative of Emmaus has again its suggestions. There the slow intelligence of the two companions upon the way was quickened by reminding them of the testimony of the Scriptures,[1] here a pause intervenes before the rebuke falls. Once more in the presence of the ambassadors Christ addresses Himself to His wonted tasks of love and pity. Their case needed strong demonstrations of His character, His office, and His power; when He had given these, and not before, comes the chiding, which is itself a new beatitude, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." It is impossible not to discern a rebuke in such language. The Baptist had not yet reached that height of bliss, though he was still to reach it, when no stumbling-block hindered the free avenue of his approach to the idea of Jesus the Son of God.

The messengers had either left or were on the point of departure,[2] and were taking back to the Baptist not only Christ's words but the witness of their eyesight, for this was an integral part of the Lord's reply. But how about the reputation of the Baptist? Was this to remain for ever with a slight put upon it, tarnished and damaged, and this in the presence, doubtless, of many of his followers? To

[1] St. Luke xxiv. 25.
[2] St. Matt. xi. 7. Cf. St. Luke vii. 24.

suppose this possible would be to imagine the Lord as destitute of that tender consideration for the feelings of others which marks His character through and through. Hence the word of rebuke has hardly passed His lips before He hastens to repair and make good such a loss. He therefore delivers an encomium upon the Baptist's career. He recalls to the multitudes the scene and circumstance of the Baptist's ministry. He presents them with an ideal portrait of any one who down the ages should announce Him, through good and evil report, as the Messiah and the Saviour. He takes occasion from the circumstance to declare His view, a divine view, as to the source as well as to the power of all influence that is true, and great, and lasting. He presents the Church with a just conception of all that is best in the life and character of a Preacher of the Gospel. It is needless to say that His method of statement fit place and time and hearers. No ethical treatise follows, His audience were not philosophers, there is no subtle analysis of motives, no attempt at making the picture harmonious by sacrificing fidelity to life; but in a way which would triumphantly appeal to simple Orientals, He invites His hearers while the memories of the great desert missioner were still strong upon them to ask themselves the secret of such influence which was supremely his. The method adopted was in the form of a threefold challenge to that intelligent and enthusiastic devotion which they still were right in paying to the Baptist. Why was it paid to him? why were they spellbound under his power? what was the great secret of his influence? Why did he compel a more than respectful attention from Pharisees and publicans, from peasants and soldiers on the march, from kings and courtiers?[1]

The threefold challenge is severally followed by suggested replies, and each of these in turn is rejected not as wholly

[1] Cf. St. Luke iii. 7–20.

false, but as entirely inadequate. The suggestions are conveyed in parabolic form, and as such deserve more consideration than may be given them within the limits of this paper; all that may now be observed is that the figures employed are of extreme simplicity and force, and that the appeal they make to mind and heart is direct and inevitable. To this may be added that the figures standing by themselves appear as ranged in the order of probability. The reed, the rich man, the prophet. It is within the bounds of possibility that a man might be drawn to study some of the natural and characteristic features of the desert, and among these would certainly be its hapless and pitiful vegetation. But there would be a wretched sameness in its forlorn appearance as the dry stalks and foliage waved wearily to and fro with the breeze. Nor, again, would the spectacle of a rich man in the desert, however familiar the phenomenon may be in this century, the startling contrast of his fine clothes and high living with the arid waste and miserable sustenance around, evoke anything but a passing protest and surprise at such an incongruity. Nor, once more, would a mere preacher or teacher detain attention longer. True, indeed, it might be that the trumpet-call of truth and duty had been heard, and might be heard again, in the wilderness. The message of civilization will best find a hearing in the streets, in the theatre, in the senate; philosophy calls for the quiet of the academic grove, the lecture-room, the study; the voice of science needs the medium of the museum and the laboratory; but the gospel challenges attention wherever its news is spread; indeed its success sometimes seems the greater when the surroundings are to all appearances uncongenial. Its forth-tellers need not despair if they find themselves in the wilderness, for, if ancient prophecy is to be trusted, it shall be glad for them, "it shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," The glories of Lebanon, of Carmel, and Sharon shall be

given unto it."[1] But if so, the prophet must make his appeal to heart as well as to mind; he must not concern himself merely with the problems of existence, or of economics, or of nature, or of ethics; he must speak of sin, sorrow, and suffering, and of their eternal remedies, and his message must be one of hope for the life of men here and hereafter. Here, however, we are somewhat anticipating the order of the present enquiry.

It is almost impossible not to come to the conclusion, as one reads between the lines of our Lord's panegyric upon the Baptist, that He is presenting to His hearers three several types of human influence, the first of temper, the second of position, the third of intellect, and is showing them, and through them us down the ages, that the secret of true influence does not lie in any of these sources. It will be observed that He does not wholly depreciate such powers in society, only that of themselves and by themselves they lack the strong compelling force which shall first draw and then hold mankind.

I. First, then, is that kind of influence which is the outcome of disposition and temperament. There is that gentle type which in its measure is distinctly of the Christian character, meek, easy to be entreated, amiable. "The reed skaken by the wind" does not seem to picture a mere "Pliable," while it furnishes a portrait of a loving, yielding heart. But the Preachers of the Gospel must be of sterner stuff than this. The popular estimate of amiability is one which Christianity is bound to endorse according to the Master's suggestion. They must prove themselves lion-like as well as lamb-like, for the kingdom of heaven has to be won by violence, and Christian experience is not exhausted by self-depreciation. The charms of a sweet and tender temper go far, and often will find an introduction for the Gospel message, but the moment that weakness is discernible

[1] Isa. xxxv. 2.

in such a disposition then the influence is paralysed, if not lost. The influence of such is at most narrow, personal, domestic; men will not "go forth" at the bidding of the amiable. To have the courage of one's convictions is absolutely essential to the success of one's ministry; there must be no thought of compromise, no concessions made to a low standard of public opinion, no pursuit of popularity for its own sake. In a word, men will not go out to see "a reed shaken by the wind."

II. It will seem strange to latter-day enthusiasts that Christ did not only not depreciate but assigned a measure of regard to influence of the second order—the influence of rank and wealth, of birth and station. He made none of those wild socialistic pronouncements with which we have become in these times so familiar. He was not for setting the masses against the classes. He who was aware of the danger of riches knew also the value and influence of wealth. It was one thing to put trust in riches, it was another to put them in trust. And for His followers to ignore the power of rank, of property, of social standing, is to shut the eye to the experiences of life and of society. The rich and great thus have their sphere. The socialistic cry is, "Away with possessions and possessors!" Christ declares that they have a place, not, it may be, in the kingdom of heaven, save by some convulsive effort like the proverbial entrance of a camel into a needle's eye,[1] but in kings' palaces. There, as the history of the Christian Church declares, the just and mild rule of princes who are good as well as great may effect much for the kingdom of heaven upon earth. But history also demonstrates how powerless such an influence often is to bring about the good order which it desires. It is checked and hindered by courtiers, subordinates, and officers lacking the high ideals and noble enthusiasms of their chief. The royal summons

[1] St. Matt. xix. 24, and parallels.

to virtue and godliness of living is drowned in the din of political faction and party interest. The voice is not clear enough or loud enough to reach the multitude. All the multitude can do is to see the gay clothing, and hear of the sumptuous fare. Men do not go out for such a spectacle as this; it has no strong attractive power for the human heart.

III. But supposing any true and lasting influence must be denied alike to sweetness of temper and to wealth and station—what of the prophet? Readers of the EXPOSITOR do not need to be reminded that the title has a far wider significance attaching to it than belongs to modern usage. In this passage it is clear that the predictive element is not in question. The prophet is the conspicuous teacher and preacher of the day, the man of commanding intellect, and persuasive talent. So far as the mind is the measure of the man he is bound to be a leader of men, for his is a master mind. Give such a one his sphere, let him have the chance of addressing an audience, and he will exercise a sway, the strong sway that is the outcome of intellectual gifts. It seems as if the source of influence was almost reached here. The language of Christ not only admits such influence, but affirms it, yet not without a grave qualification. Who can deny the impress upon thought left by such master minds as Plato and Aristotle, but the humblest student of philosophy perceives the limit of their influence? In the splendid days of Greek thought the area of philosophic influence was intensely narrow. The little band of masters and scholars which paced the academic grove ignored the common people; the idea that the message of philosophy could be appropriately conveyed to the multitude would have been scouted as a simple absurdity by the intellectual aristocracy. The case of philosophy remains the same to-day. Devotion to a teacher may bring about some wonders, but no one can ever create a wide enthusiasm out of mere speculation. The mass of mankind will not listen long to preaching of

this type. Humanity is conscious of evil, of sorrow, suffering and death, it has some faint forward hopes which it believes to be not wholly delusive; it would hear of remedies for the former, and confirmations of the latter. Hence it is written of Christ, as it could never have been written of Plato, that "the common people heard Him gladly."

A sweet temper, a commanding position, intellectual force, all are factors of success in any great missionary enterprise, and the preacher may not disregard them in his unselfish pursuit of influence. It appears that the Baptist was possessed of such gifts and advantages. Yet severally and collectively are they pronounced, and pronounced by Christ, inadequate. The ideal preacher of righteousness must both have and be "something more," "something far greater."

Even devout students may have regarded our Lord's recorded language at this point as somewhat vague. Yet a little attention to the quotation He makes from the last of the prophets,[1] taken in connexion with His subsequent utterances on the occasion, will surely make His meaning luminous. The greatness of any teacher or preacher, and therefore the greatness of his success, Christ measured simply by his credentials and his message. The Baptist was an apostle all but in name, if prophecy spoke rightly of him,[2] and his message was divine. It follows by consequence that unselfishness was the conspicuous note of his ministry; the personality was as nothing; the man became a voice.[3] The ideal preacher must be unselfish too. If he gathers a party, a clique, a congregation about him, caught by some charm of manner, or delighted by his intellectual distinction, his message will be as quickly forgotten as himself. Self-effacement is the law of spiritual success. Preachers cannot at once serve truly the ministry of the Lord and their

[1] Cf. Mal. iii. 1. [2] ἀποστέλλω, St. Luke vii. 27. [3] St. John i. 23.

own reputation, and the former often suffers grievously from the advancement of the latter.[1] But this was not the Baptist's danger; he had known something of the sweets of wielding great influence, but the secret of it largely lay in the fact that he could put it aside and say without any passionate regret, "I must decrease."[2]

One last thought remains. The view that "the lesser one in the kingdom of heaven" is indeed Christ Himself is not one to be summarily rejected, yet even if another interpretation is more wisely preferred, no student of the passage can avoid the conclusion that Christ now pointed His hearers to Himself. For in Him was united in perfect harmony every grace of temper, the awful dignity of Divine Sonship, and a revelation of the Father beyond the highest flights of sage or seer. But He too was about to illustrate something "greater still," for He came to do not His own but the Father's will, and to show all men that in love and in suffering lies the highest influence, since in and by His Passion He should draw all men after Him.[3]

B. WHITEFOORD.

[1] Cf. Gal. i. 10. [2] St. John iii. 30, ἐλαττοῦσθαι. [3] St. John xi. 32.