

perhaps, be handled by a layman; but I suppose I am either "greatly daring," or else indifferent to much of what is supposed to be clerical "criticism." In the English version in the Nicene Creed, the words read "the Lord and giver of life," whereas they ought to be, as in the American version, "the Lord, and giver of life," i.e., the pause should be made after "Lord," otherwise the reader implies that the Holy Ghost is the "Lord of life" as well as the "giver of life." Again, in the American version, the comma or pause in the words "liveth and reigneth ever one God," comes properly after "ever," while in the English version it comes after "reigneth." In the Absolution there is, in the English version, always a colon after "sins," instead of a full stop. The "He" in "He pardoneth" really commences a new sentence; or the "He" might properly be omitted, as the word "pardoneth" depends upon the words "(The) Almighty God." The American Prayer-Book also contains several prayers which meet special wants, and which can justly find a place in either public or private devotion.

A. BISSET THOM.

#### Extracts from Browne on the Thirty-Nine Articles.

SIR.—J. H. W. has given us a neat little letter. However, it is too bad to complain of the extract being admitted to your correspondence column. Some will consider J. H. W.'s remarks just as much a blot as the language of Browne. It is far from desirable that the correspondence printed should be always so picked as to voice the editor's ideas. The purpose of these columns is that we all shall have a chance to amuse and relieve ourselves by a little writing, and their merit is that one gets a hearing as well as another, so that we can chat with many minds instead of one. The extracts from Browne bristle with points of controversy, and rouse one to active opposition. J. H. W. has dealt nicely with one mistake. May my clumsy pen endeavour to rectify another. Browne tells us that absolution is nothing more than release from rubrics or Canons disciplining evil doers. I absolve—this means, I admit you to Holy Communion. How does this agree with Prayer Book use of absolution? Morning and Evening Prayer contain a form of absolution to be said for the benefit of all the baptized. A great many in the congregation are not confirmed, yet the absolution is for their soul's welfare. Others are not under any discipline, yet the absolution is habitually said to and received by their faithful hearts. If the absolution is only permission to come to God's table, it is a useless form in a very vast majority of cases. Besides, pardon would admit to higher privileges. Yet there is a distinction made between pardon and absolution. He pardoneth and absolveth those who repent, or as it is in the Eucharist, pardon and deliver you from all your sins. In this last quotation we have the Prayer-Book meaning of absolution. While pardon removes all penalties of sin, absolution frees the soul from the bondage of evil habit. This seems in strict agreement with "Who-soever sins ye remit they are remitted." The idea of punishment of any kind does not find place in these words. The mind is directed to the sins. The sins are remitted or loosed. That this is necessary in the complex process of salvation, both our Lord and St. Paul inform us by saying that he who commits sin is a bond servant of sin. A bond servant is one needing release from bondage by his master. So we need release from our bondage to sin by Him who came to deliver the captives. This release is effected first in baptism. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. St. Paul in Rom. vi. distinctly states that freedom from this bondage is one result of our baptism, and makes it the sure ground of a strong exhortation to maintain our freedom. Yet who obeys not sin at times and binds not himself in chains more or less powerful? The greatest saints admit some bad habits, however venial. Therefore all need absolution. Therefore the Church of England has taken care to have absolution rightly and duly administered. The words of power are said by the priesthood only, and are just as efficacious to penitent and faithful souls as the initial sacrament of baptism. In trying to be evangelical men are in constant danger of turning our Lord's ordinances into Jewish ceremonies, forms of godliness without the power of God's Holy Spirit unto inward salvation from all the curse of disobedience.

S. D. HAGUE.

#### Family Reading.

##### In the Morning of the Vicar's Life.

BY ARTHUR W. TARBELL.

The young probationer who had been called from Oxford to the lonely little parish of Kerndale

in the north of England, had arrived that afternoon at the vicarage, and was now sitting alone before the study-fire watching with languid interest the oak logs as they crumbled and glowed on the hearth-stone. The room about him was quiet; no sound reached his ears save the drowsy, rhythmical ticking of the old clock, that from the hall-way broke in upon an otherwise perfect stillness. The light from the fire threw out a soft, mellow glow, giving a ruddy aspect to the gloaming, and causing fantastic shadows to flicker and dance about on the opposite walls; while outside, in the bleak Westmoreland valley of Blacksmoor, the cold, dreary December afternoon was creeping slowly to a close, and the first few flakes of a snowstorm that had been threatening for the past twenty-four hours were beginning to descend like a silent white robe over the cheerless landscape.

The Vicar himself had just left the room. He was failing rapidly, so rapidly, in fact, that the probationer, when he clasped hands with him for the first time that afternoon, saw at a glance why he had been summoned so suddenly from Oxford. The good old Churchman could not last much longer; four and fifty years of such work as he had done in the scattered parish of this desolate valley, had finally begun to tell upon him. One wondered even now how he had withstood the advance of years with so little apparent decrease of vitality. In his talk that afternoon the old Vicar, who might be considered as having earned the right to sheathe his sword after the long fight, had shown a far greater amount of enthusiasm and energy of purpose than the younger man considered himself as having, who had not even as yet drawn his blade in the good cause. And now it was the body, not the will, that was being forced to succumb. The probationer marvelled at this spirit that could carry a man through so many years of what to most men would appear a dreary and unappreciated toil among a people that lived mainly, if not wholly, upon the most humble and lowest planes of existence. Fifty years of solitary life, preaching the Word of God to the rude dalesmen of this barren valley—what a sacrifice from a worldly standpoint! Ah! but that was not the question, although the situation weighed itself keenly in the young probationer's mind as he sat there before the fire wondering, now that he was about to take his first step, what successive steps the future held for him.

But his thoughts at this point were interrupted by a door opening and the entrance into the room of the decrepit old housekeeper who had come to light the lamps. After watching her for some time the probationer ventured a question.

"The Vicar is poorly, my good woman?"

"Ar, hae is that, God bless 'im. I'm muckle afeared hae's slippin' awa'." The poor creature was so visibly affected by the mere thought of this, that she was obliged to raise one corner of her apron to her eyes to conceal her emotion.

"And the good people here in the valley will miss him sorely when he is gone. I hear they think a deal of the Vicar."

"Ar, sir, yae canna ken hoow mqoch. Foor an' fifty years—na woonder the love 'im. 'Tis a muckle bit hae's doon foor 'em. I dinna ken whut they'll doo widoot th' maister. Ar mae, t'll nat bae lang noo that hae has t' laive, gude man that hae is, God bless 'im. I dinna blae hae'll aver mak' another joorney, an' I dinna thaink theer'll bae any v'lets on th' foin laidy's pictur', any mair, any mair." This allusion, though not in the least understood by the probationer, was followed by a series of mumbling, half-articulate utterances concerning the "maister's" goodness. Occasionally her remarks, as she moved about the room, were interspersed with disparaging exclamations derogatory to the Vicar's tidiness.

Whether it was for his especial benefit that she did this, or whether it was her habitual outflow of solicitude for her master, the young Churchman could not determine, but before long he found himself listening with considerable interest to what appeared to be a disconnected sketch of the Vicar's life. Much of what she said was unintelligible, owing partly to her confusion of circumstances and places, and partly to her irregular dialect, but by the time the Vicar had entered the room again, and the old dame had hobbled out, the probationer was left with an indistinct impres-

sion that the Vicar was a man with a story. Years ago, it seemed, some great disappointment had befallen him, and unable or unwilling to suffer a second one from the world's harsh hands, he had in consequence buried himself in this northern valley to accept the spiritual guardianship of as poor and as lowly a flock of worshippers as could be found anywhere in the length and breadth of all England. Once a year, in the spring time, he was known to journey southward, but no one knew just where; and each time that he returned he brought back a cluster of violets and a countenance that betrayed a strange mingling of past happiness and present suffering. This little journey, so short and apparently insignificant, was regarded by the dalesmen as the connecting link of the Vicar's past, a past which they reverently respected by never mentioning. But they would have given—ah, how much, to know what it meant.

The Vicar had returned to the room, and was seated once more by the fire. The probationer expected that they would resume their talk on Church matters, but it was not so. Something had happened in the interval. There was not that vigour nor hopefulness in the Vicar's face that the young man had seen there in the afternoon. He seemed visibly weakened and resigned. Could it be that the presence of his successor had given him an inkling of what was coming? It was possible. The probationer was even afraid it was so, for on glancing down at the Vicar's hands he noticed that one of them held a cluster of faded violets. He recalled the words of the housekeeper, and wondered if he, a stranger, was to be permitted a glimpse of a past that had hitherto met with no utterance. But he could only wait; he could not at that moment comprehend the Vicar's mood.

TO BE CONTINUED.

#### The First Foot.

The first foot over the threshold  
In the new year's dawning gray  
Means woe or weal to the household—  
So the wise old people say.  
Now who to my door is coming—  
Stranger, or kith and kin?  
Pray God it be no foe of the clan,  
To bring the ill luck in.

I am fain for the step of the baby,  
The little foot that sways  
Like a wind-tossed flower in the sunshine,  
In the grace of early days;  
Or the step of the dear grandmother  
Who has walked with God so long  
That thoughts of heaven within her  
Like the echoes of angels throng.

But, Lord of our generations,  
Keep off the furtive tread  
Of the evil and the alien,  
The step our chilled hearts dread.  
Let the first foot over our threshold,  
In the dawn of the glad new year,  
Bring us much to hold and to cherish,  
And nothing to hate and fear.

#### Christ the Christian's Model.

Christ took our flesh that in it He might go up and down among us; that in it He might be seen by us; that in it He might speak to us, and leave deeds and words which might, in characters of love, be traced in our souls, and there live on for ever. He came among us in order to set before us, in His own Divine person, the loveliness, and beauty, and majesty of Divine love and Divine holiness. The life of Christ is the whole sum of the Christian's life. Whatever holiness the Holy Spirit has wrought in any of the saints is wrought after that pattern. By meditating on that life we live with Him, converse with Him, enter into His holy and hallowing society. Through studying Him we know how to follow Him; through following Him we understand what we study. And so, by a continual round, the contemplation of Him kindles our souls to long to be like Him and to copy Him; to copy Him enlightens our eyes, and clears away the film which dims their sight and that sight, through His Spirit, transforms our spirits into the likeness of Him whom we behold.

—F. B. Pusey.