

THOUGHTS ON THE "PRAYER BOOK."

BY A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

I think our 'Book of Common Prayer' is sadly overlooked; not so much neglected or thought lightly of, as not used and appreciated as what it really is, and what its name emphatically denotes, namely, a book of common, general prayer for daily use, suitable as well to the best cultivated understanding as to the highest learning and refinement. It is usually looked upon, and termed the "Prayer Book," to be used on Sunday when we go to Church, and then, generally, only as a *form* to enable us to go through the service regularly and decently together; but for its daily and common use it is seldom thought of. When getting ready to set out for Church the fashionable lady places it beside her gloves and scented handkerchief; or the tidy labourer's wife, taking it from its place on the shelf or in the cupboard, gives it to her eldest daughter who holds it reverently while the mother ties the strings of a younger one's hat or bonnet. If thought of, at any other time, it is with the idea or feeling that it is only fit or appropriate for Sunday use. Now this, I think, is limiting its use to a very narrow compass, making it a mere form, and betrays much ignorance of what that book really does contain, of what it is intended for, and under what circumstances it was compiled.

Before entering, however, more fully into the subject, and as a necessary step towards a full understanding of the value of our "Prayer Book," it may be as well to turn our thoughts for a moment to the subject of prayer itself; a clearer idea respecting which than we generally hold, would be very desirable, but which,

in its vast importance, can not be dwelt upon now, or even alluded to farther than may be necessary to show how useful in its simple words, how valuable in its very arrangement, how high in our affections as a channel for the expression of the holiest thoughts, how applicable to all our needs in its Confession, Creed, Thanksgiving, is this our book of common prayer. And this, not only for the time of public worship, for which it is more especially intended when we meet as a congregation to perform our daily worship, as part of a people, or, more properly, as a nation, but also as a form of words to shape and give utterance to our thoughts when we assemble as a family as well as when we kneel before our Maker in the silence of our chamber, or almost at any time when we address Him, "to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid."

There is one view of prayer to which I should like to call attention, and which is most particularly characteristic of the Christian faith, namely, that it should be Catholic; rising from the private prayer, whether uttered in the pauper's shed, the rich man's dwelling, or the noble's castle, and carried on through the worship of the family, meeting together for that purpose, to the larger worship of the nation assembled at stated times in its several congregations and that national worship only forming part of the service of God's Holy Catholic Church; and thus only can a people offer to their Maker and Redeemer that daily sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving which is required of us. As a means to this end our book of "Common Prayer" is invaluable; as a national liturgy it is unrivalled. Modern Europe, with all its surprising knowledge and mastery of