

Religious Snobbery.

THERE is a tone in the manner in which some men preach religion that may be called demagogical. It is, as it were, an ignoble bidding for votes, an appeal to something not the best in the man who is listening in order to win his sympathy and suffrage. It is a spirit that ignores the decent instincts of human nature; that does not hesitate to offend the refined listener, while catering to the prejudices and vulgarities of the more ignorant and brutal. It is a kind of preaching that has not even the excuse of being based on the dangerous principle of doing evil that good may come. It is the preaching of vulgarians, who naturally express themselves in terms that are coarse, and who are, moreover, bent upon making effects by fair means or foul. They are themselves vulgar by nature, and their determination to be effective carries them into oratorical excesses, unmitigated either by taste or conscience. We could give numerous and recent examples of demagogical preaching of the Gospel, but we should then be compelled to disfigure our page with vulgarities, and even with shameless blasphemies.

On the other hand, there is a certain kind of religious snobbery which is not altogether unknown in America, but which has hitherto taken no very deep root here. That it is not a wide-spread or serious social disease in this country may be inferred from the fact that our fiction does not often deal with examples of this sort of snobbery, though the thing is, of course, by no means unknown, and is perhaps yet to receive the treatment it deserves at the hands of our story-writers.

Native religious snobbery does not flourish among us very vigorously, nor does the plant give signs of powerful growth in its exotic varieties. We are led to this statement by the comparative non-success, on this side of the water, of one who has been called in England "the apostle to the genteel." This apostle (famous not only socially, but by means also of the glamour wrought by the pen of an eminent romancer) came among us not long ago and began at once a public career of interviewing and lecturing. In the natural course of events, a number of "wealthy" and "fashionable" (in lieu of "noble") converts should have adorned the mission of the distinguished apostle. So far, however, we have heard of few or no "conversions," and we have been led to consider the cause. As nearly as we can determine, this cause lies in the fact that Americans recognized immediately the uncongenial tone and bearing of the religious snob. The interviewers early discovered in the apostle a willingness to talk, with seemingly deprecation, of the fact that he had been the means of converting the rich and the noble; and when the apostle called their attention to the fact that he had also converted at least one poor man, this poor man, it was noticed, was that interesting social phenomenon, a noble bankrupt. Finally the

reporters were called upon to chronicle the public statement, by the modern apostle, that his great predecessor as a converter, St. Paul, was the one man among the Apostles who might be called a "gentleman!"

It was, therefore, soon understood that the genius of the romancer had created a fascinating image which had no counterpart in reality; and as snobbery in religion is not considered beautiful or desirable in this country, the "apostle to the genteel" evidently made the same mistake, in coming to America, that was made by a fellow-countryman and fellow-apostle of his who, instead of the robes of a priest, wore the knee-breeches of an æsthete.

"Minister and Citizen."

THE recent consecration of Dr. Henry C. Potter as Assistant Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal diocese of New York, while an event of unusual interest and importance inside the denomination to which Bishop Potter belongs, is also an event of public and general interest, not only on account of the prominence of the office, but more especially owing to the antecedents and character of the man. For Dr. Potter, as rector of Grace Church, has not only proved himself on occasion a sympathizer and co-worker with other communions, but he has shown himself to be one of those clergymen who were described not long ago in these columns (on the occasion of the death of Dr. Bellows) as equally zealous and useful in the capacity of minister and in that of citizen.

While rector of a parish which has been unfortunately known as "fashionable," Dr. Potter has distinguished himself and his church as leaders in charitable work; he has been a helper of the poor,—not of the miserably poor only, but also of the respectably (and therefore sometimes neglected) poor. He has not troubled himself with partisan politics in either church or state, but his labors have been directed to advance the causes of religion and civilization in this great and teeming city among the poor and among the rich as well; and he has been an earnest worker in every movement in which a good and public-spirited citizen should make himself felt. It is not every faithful preacher of the Gospel who has the qualities which fit him in addition for this work of citizenship; it is not necessary that every minister should be so gifted; nevertheless, such men are greatly needed in New York. They form, and always have formed, an important and most valuable part of our life as a community; and it is a satisfaction that Dr. Potter's church, in bidding him go higher, has not bidden him go away from a city where his usefulness has been so pronounced, but has merely placed him in an office of wider and more visible influence.