

WOMAN'S RIGHTS AND THE PROGRESS OF MANKIND.

BY PROF. ALFRED WALLACE.

THE first place in the January number of the *Arena* is given to an article on "Human Progress, Past and Present," by Prof. Alfred Russel Wallace, who starts from the assertion of Mr. Francis Galton that the Greeks at the time of Pericles were as much superior to our race, intellectually, as our race is superior to the African negro. After tracing the various causes which have tended to the degradation, and those which assist in the development of mankind, he sympathetically explains Prof. Wissman's theory of heredity, and comes to the conclusion that the two principles which will enable the human race to accelerate its progress are, first, the elimination of the unfit by natural causes, and secondly, the increasing liberty of choice given to women in marriage. It is this which points to the most suggestive and interesting part of Dr. Wallace's article. It is a scientific re-enforcement of the cause of the emancipation of women, and shows that progress of the cause of female enfranchisement is identified with the progress of humanity. Dr. Wallace says:—

When such social changes have been effected that no woman will be compelled, either by hunger, isolation, or social compulsion, to sell herself whether in or out of wedlock, and when all women alike shall feel the refining influence of a true humanising education, of beautiful and elevating surroundings, and of a public opinion which shall be founded on the highest aspirations of their age and country, the result will be a form of human selection which will bring about a continuous advance in the average status of the race. Under such conditions, all who are deformed either in body or mind, though they may be able to lead happy and contented lives, will, as a rule, leave no children to inherit their deformity. Even now we find many women who never marry because they have never found the man of their ideal. When no woman will be compelled to marry for a bare living or for a comfortable home, those who remain unmarried from their own free choice will certainly increase, while many others, having no inducement to an early marriage, will wait till they meet with a partner who is really congenial to them.

In such a reformed society the vicious man, the man of degraded taste or of feeble intellect, will have little chance of finding a wife, and his bad qualities will die out with himself. The most perfect and beautiful in body and mind will, on the other hand, be most sought and therefore be most likely to marry early, the less highly endowed later, and the least gifted in anyway the latest of all, and this will be the case with both sexes. From this varying age of marriage, as Mr. Galton has shown, there will result a more rapid increase of the former than of the latter, and this cause continuing at work for successive generations will at length bring the average man to be the equal of those who are now among the more advanced of the race.