

A SCIENTIFIC PROPHET.

[TO THE EDITOR OF "THE OUTLOOK."]

SIR,—Women have no sense of humour, men say. Well, our ideas of fun are not always the same ; but we have one huge joke all to ourselves—men's opinion of us. They do not "begin to know" how funny they are about it. We mere women do not pretend to understand men ; mothers and sisters spend their lives in exasperated efforts to guess what the unaccountable animals will be at next—whether they will show strength and wisdom beyond our reach, or ruin themselves by some absolutely childish freak that no sane woman would dream of. On the whole, we regard our male relatives much as a small and patient spider might consider a bumble bee ; the creature seems extraordinarily clumsy, but is too big to be easily managed.

But "man, proud man," has no doubt of his ability to put us under a microscope, to dissect our characters, disentangle our motives, and predict our actions in varying circumstances. It is pretty to hear them complimenting each other on the subject : "Mr. Meredith's masterly analysis of female character ; Thackeray's intimate knowledge of women," and so on. Nobody asks what the woman thinks of Meredith or Thackeray. It is but fair to say that they are most amusing when they are most complimentary. Essayists and social reformers have prophesied many smooth things about us, but the crowning testimony in our favour comes from a distinguished scientist. Dr. Wallace, in the January *Fortnightly Review*, takes gloomy views of man's mental and moral progress ; indeed, he denies that there has been any. He can see no difference between Cetewayo and Charles Gordon, and considers the pyramid-building Pharaohs superior to Queen Victoria. But although thousands of years have failed to raise by a hair's-breadth the character of mankind, he expects "in the not distant future" an entire renovation.

This is to be brought about by two simple changes : in education and selection by marriage. At present education is a failure because "the very first essential in the teacher—true love of or any sympathy with the children, is not made one of the conditions of entering that great profession." (In the "not distant future" love of children will evidently be tested by competitive examination !) "The other, and more permanently effective agency, selection through marriage, will come into operation only when a greatly improved social system renders women economically and socially free to choose ; while a rational and complete education will have taught them the importance of their choice, both to themselves, and to humanity." *Pas plus difficile que ça !* We have only to get rid of those irrational instincts of selection that have drawn men and women together in all times and places, from the days of the primeval ape ; and women are to make the change.

Man has played the leading part in selection for thousands of years, and has made a mess of it ! Now woman is to be the chooser, and she in her sweet reasonableness will discard the foolish sentiment we call love, rise superior to all personal attractions, and select her mate after an exhaustive inquiry into his physical and mental qualifications for fatherhood, with a view to the ultimate benefit of humanity ! And Dr. Wallace has not the least idea of being funny ! Is it only women who have no sense of humour?—I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

EVE.

January 8.