

MANNIKINS IN THE MAKING

TO preach, to propagand, to fill a pulpit of one's own : this is said to be the deepest desire of every Englishman. The ambition is, at any rate, a common one, happily more common than the experience ; though the reviews do what they can to give the earnest-minded an opportunity of holding forth now and then. Unfortunately, here as elsewhere, it is not always the best or the best qualified man who preaches most often or draws the largest and most attentive congregations. Power and popularity in one sphere are held to imply fitness in another ; so that wisdom too often goes unbeneficed while a successful novelist or ballad writer may confidently ordain himself to the preaching of sermons in the vulgar tongue upon any subject whatever, from the Lordliest Life on Earth to the Birth Possibilities of Projected British Babes.

This last is Mr. H. G. Wells's subject. He has been "called" to a ministry in our own neighbourhood, and, like the rest of the world, we have attended his fortnightly discourses out of respect and admiration for the powers he has displayed elsewhere. But we are far from being convinced. We hardly recognise the voice ; it no longer moves us : we acknowledge the good intention of the preacher, we doubt his vocation : we are stimulated by his text and then proportionately depressed as it is borne in upon us that the sermon reveals an experience and a study neither wider nor more profound than that of the man in the Free Seat. Mr. Wells's genius seems to us out of