

THE RULE OF THE MOTHER.

IN America the tendency is to hold the mother responsible for the spiritual tone of the household. This unformulated theory has been pushed to so great an extreme that at length society is threatened with what has been designated a *matriarchate* or a return to that primitive state when the child was supposed to belong to the mother alone. Every teacher can bear testimony to the fact that the direction and oversight of the child's education are largely under the control of the mother. Even after the youth has entered college it is she who keeps in touch with his success or failure. Admirable as this interest may be, wife and child, nevertheless, suffer from the want of closer sympathy on the father's part in all that relates to the things of the spirit. Besides, however praiseworthy their intentions may be, mothers are not always the most judicious advisers. The father in many instances is an infinitely better guide; at any rate, his broad contacts with life and his natural force of character make him an ally that cannot safely be dispensed with.

All through the ages man has endeavored to dominate and impress his personality upon the world at large, until this form of activity has rendered irksome any more limited field of exertion. He has believed himself compelled to sing to the wide world so persistently and copiously, in such resonant praise-eliciting accents, that he has become fascinated, not only with the public deed, but with the oratorical utterances he finds so pleasing to the collective ear. As a result of these outside allurements it is difficult for him to subdue his voice to individual and immediate teaching. Furthermore, it is hard to persuade the politician and the philanthropist that the reforms needed in the state are first needed in the home, and that solicitude about other people's progress

might in a measure be spared if men were primarily solicitous about those immediately dependent upon them. The transference of paternal responsibility to institutions, and more especially to the mother, shows that there is a widespread conviction on the part of fathers that, however it may be with other people's children, his own, at least, live by bread alone. Acting upon this belief he is generous beyond compare in supplying his family with physical luxuries. He is, however, far less lavish with his time and companionship. Indeed, he refuses to be bothered about such petty details as the formation of character, the discipline of the child, and the general conduct of the home. Even in the pursuit of his pleasures he often sets an example of independence which serves to strengthen in the average American household the proclivity shown by its members to fly off in a tangent.

Although there is much room for the improvement of the mother, she is, in a measure, constrained to the fulfilment of her duties. The means for evolving the perfected father are, however, more uncertain owing to the existing impediments to the operation of *selection*. The greater number of eligible wives among well-to-do people as compared with desirable husbands, so far reduces the range of choice that there is no guarantee that the noblest, strongest, or handsomest men will marry refined women. The difficulty here arises in part from the fact that men of this class, if poor, are apt to go into remote and uncultivated regions and become the husbands of inferior women, while the rich often satisfy the claims of affection without incurring the obligations of the marriage tie. Thus the absence of healthy competition diminishes the chance of developing the best husbands and fathers.—*North American*.