

CHAPTER VI

The Mammals and Their Children



THE first question one of the boys asked was "What is a mammal?" It was explained to the children that a mamma is an animal with a hairy covering which breathes with lungs and has warm or red circulating blood. They have little ones which when born are not in the form of eggs like the frogs or birds but have the same shape as their parents though smaller and weaker. The mother mammal nurses these little ones with milk secreted from glands called mammary glands. And that is why they are called mammals.

Their instincts are highly developed and they are considered the highest animals.

Many instances were shown them of the meaning of instinct as that of the mother bird turning over her eggs every day. In fact from the first the word was explained in every stage to enable them to know the difference between *instinct* and *reason* later on.

There was no one creature taken up this time but all together and some pictures were shown them of lower tribes of man and it was

decided that man must be classed with the mammals for he is partly covered with hair gives birth to young in his own shape and feeds the young from mammary glands They were told that there is a mammal the spiny ant eater covered with hair which however lays eggs like the birds in nests They were told about the kangaroo and opossum who give birth to their little ones very early and carry them in a pouch until they are able to help themselves As soon as the little opossum is born Mother Opossum picks him up in her mouth and places him in her pouch where he sucks away at the milk which is secreted there until he is strong and able to get food for himself—which is about the same length of time that other mammals carry their young before giving birth to them

They were told of the bats and the flying squirrels They were told that Bobby's cat must be given a new clean box or bed that she must not be handled roughly or chased because she was going to have little kittens To the utter astonishment of Bobby's mother there was a chorus of How do you know? and she realized that she might have omitted a most important piece of information

They were again reminded of the birds and the undeveloped eggs coming from the ovary of mother bird which at a certain time become

ripe for fertilization of how the father bird at a certain time feels he has developed (since the fertilizing principle within him has developed) so that in coming in contact with the undeveloped egg within the mother's body these are quickened into life. The same process goes on with the mammals but as the instinct becomes more developed as they go higher in the scale of life breeding becomes more complex.

They were told that where in birds the whole egg shell and all passes out of the mother's body into the nest with the mammal the shell becomes a thin skin which envelops the little one but remains within the mother's body until it is grown enough and strong enough to live on the milk from the mother. While it is within the mother's body it is fed from the blood of the mother and all the food she eats helps to make the little ones within her strong.

It is of great assistance for a mother to have some knowledge of the processes of assimilation so that the children will learn how the food products in the blood instead of supplying the mother go to the child to build up bone muscle nerves and tissues.

They were told that as the mammal grows and develops within the body of the mother her shape becomes changed—becomes larger in the region where the new life lies and that is how

one could tell that Mrs Pussy Cat was going to have a family

It was dwelt upon at great length that it was necessary to know this because every mother needs protection from worry excitement cruelty overwork starvation at such a period that she needs kindness rest good food sunshine in order that she give the little one strength and health

They were told that in smaller animals many more eggs develop at a time and are fertilized but in the larger animals such as cows horses elephants etc only one egg develops and one animal is born In man too this is true One egg develops at a time and if it is fertilized it remains in its little nest (or uterus) and grows until it is ready to stand the changed conditions into which it must come after it is born If it is not fertilized it passes on out of the body and is lost but when it is fertilized by the father it remains in the uterus and grows until it is grown enough to withstand a different life and different surroundings

At first the new being is only the size of a pea (that is in a week after it is fertilized) In a few weeks (eight) it is the size of a lemon and its shape is complete In four months it begins to move about to kick to move its little hands and in nine months Mother Nature can develop it no more It is time to change if it

is to live so she sends it along the passage enlarging the passage and stretching it as it goes—which causes much pain and suffering to the mother until it reaches the outside world where it is taken and cared for and loved and all the mother's pain is forgotten in the joy of having her little one alive and strong and well

One of the mothers was expecting the arrival of a little one and great care and tenderness was shown her after the children knew of this event. She was assisted up the hills brought flowers and all the tenderness of which children are capable was bestowed upon her.

They anxiously watched and waited for its arrival looked over the small clothing which was being prepared for it and seemed as interested as any grown up could ever be.

The most interesting questions were asked her each day. At first the young mother was rather embarrassed but they were asked with such simplicity and frankness that she realized the prudence was in herself alone and she soon entered the talks and answered their questions. These were mainly of the little one's movements etc. Can it see? said one. Does it kick? said another. Does it like ice cream? etc. etc. all perfectly innocent questions which can be answered and makes the reproductive act the natural and beautiful part of life that it really is. Soon the young mother and the children

were on the most friendly terms. They would come to her and confide their secrets to her, tell her words other boys had used and ask her about these words. They came to her in preference to telling their parents, which shows again the necessity of every mother being the first one to tell the child this sex knowledge, for the one who does tell it usually holds a strong influence over the child for some years to come.

They were taken to a farm some miles away to see a calf a few days old. Stories were read to them at this time about the habits of these animals and the care of their young. They were taken to the Museum of Natural History in New York and to Bronx Park, and such excursions were red letter days in their book of childhood.

They were told of the freedom of the animals in choosing their mates—that beauty and strength seemed the greatest qualifications. The story of the bees was briefly told. How the queen bee leaves her home amidst the hundreds of male bees who are all anxious to be the father of the future hive. How she rambles about for a little while, then up she flies—up, up, straight into the clouds with hundreds of male bees following. Gradually the weakest bees drop off and return, but the stronger ones still follow until there are often only two male bees left in the race. The weaker of the two

returns and the strongest bee of the whole hive wins the queen bee and fertilizes the eggs within her body After this act of reproduction he dies and Mrs Bee returns to her hive and lays thousands of bee eggs The strongest gave his life that the future bees should be given his great strength

The children were sad about this They wanted the strongest to live and it was now the place to teach them of their own bodies what cleanliness and strength means to the future race of man

To give the children an idea of the shape of the uterus Bobbys mother took a pear turned the large side up letting the stem part hang down it was then cut open lengthwise the seeds core and stem removed Both halves were fastened together again with thin sticks just to get an idea of the shape of the babys nest

The part where the stem was is like the passage where the little one comes out into the world after the seeds have grown