

The Mother's Reply

A Pamphlet for
Mothers

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A Book for Girls

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A FOREWORD TO MOTHERS.

So much has been said of the necessity of parents instructing their own children in those matters which have to do with the origin of life, that many would gladly do so, only they do not know how. The most natural, and for many reasons the best way, is by what is called the biological approach. Beginning with the flowers, the child is taught the processes of reproduction through the simplest forms of animal life to the higher forms, and thence to the human being. Some very good books have been written illustrating this method, but many parents have had no instruction in biology themselves and feel quite unequal to the task even with the aid of such books. Besides this, many schools are now teaching reproduction in the lower forms of life, so that it is not so necessary for the parent to take up the biological side as it might otherwise be.

This pamphlet is written to show mothers who have no knowledge of biology how to tell about the coming of the baby. It is intended for use with children from the ages of four or five to twelve or thirteen. The first chapter is for use with the very little child, either boy or girl. As soon as a child is old enough to wonder and to question, he is old enough to be told this simple story. The other three chapters are written for the purpose of showing how to continue the story to the little girl as she grows older and asks more questions. Each chapter deals with a different and progressive phase of the subject. *The whole story should never be*

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told at one time unless the child draws it out by questions. The pamphlet is intended as a guide for the mother and is not to be placed directly in the hands of the child. The best results will be obtained if the mother does not let it be known that she has been reading about the subject, but rather, after getting what help she may need, speaks as from her own personal knowledge. This will make the talk much more informal and intimate.

The story is told in greater detail than is necessary or even desirable to give to most children. Children differ so much that they cannot all be treated alike, and the mother must use her own discretion as to how much to tell, being guided mainly by the child's questions. Her attitude should always be one of willingness to answer any question that may be in the child's mind.

There are three things which I wish could be impressed upon every parent. The first is the great desirability of keeping his child innocent. To do this he must not keep him ignorant. Ignorance may include both good and evil, while innocence refers only to evil. The very best way to abolish morbid or prurient curiosity is to satisfy normal curiosity. Tell a child all that he wants to know about the normal side; then he will not be tempted to discuss the prurient side with other children. In talking to children, *always* give the normal and ideal side; let the first impression, which will be the strongest and will tend to be the underlying one, be of the highest.

Secondly, the best time to acquaint a child with the facts of life is before the age of

puberty. There is a psychological reason for this. Before puberty, a child sees things from the objective standpoint; facts are interesting in themselves, rather than in their relation to him. But after puberty, and particularly during the period of adolescence, knowledge becomes subjective; it is seen in relation to himself. This is especially noticeable in matters relating to sex. To the child, they are interesting for their own sake, but to the girl or boy in the teens, these facts—particularly if learned for the first time, or if talked over among themselves—are all thought of in a personal way.

Finally, I wish every parent could realize the importance and the value of keeping the confidence of his children. It is pathetic to hear children say, as they have said to me many times, "Of course I couldn't talk to my mother about that." A refusal to tell the story of life, or a deception by the parent upon this subject, is the rock upon which many a confidence has been wrecked. If the parent is able to get the child to discuss the subject, even after he has heard about it from other children, it may be the means of re-establishing that confidence which every parent should make it his aim to win and to hold.

THE MOTHER'S REPLY.

CHAPTER I.

Come sit on mother's lap and she will tell you what you want to know—where the baby comes from. But first let me ask you a question. Where does the bird come from? Why, of course, you know that! The bird comes out of an egg which the mother bird has laid in a nest.

The father and mother birds build the nest on purpose for the mother bird to lay her eggs in. They gather pieces of straw or grass or twigs, or sometimes the hair that falls out of a horse's tail with which to make the nest. They don't want anyone to steal their eggs or hurt the little birds, and so they build the nest way high up in a tree or in some other place that is hard to reach and where it will be quite safe.

After the nest is built, the mother bird sits on the eggs to keep them warm until the little birds hatch out. The father bird brings her things to eat, and fights anyone that tries to hurt her or steal her eggs. After the little birds come out of their shells, both the mother bird and the father bird hunt for food with which to feed their hungry ones. The mother and father birds take good care of their little birds and protect them from harm until they are old enough to fly away and take care of themselves.

Now the little baby starts life just the same as the bird—in an egg; only it is such a tiny, tiny bit of an egg, and such a very precious egg, that it must have a much better, safer nest than the kind that the birds build for their

little ones. It is God who made the nest for the little baby; a wonderful nest, so soft and warm, and in the very safest place you could possibly imagine, right close under mother's own heart.

This little egg in mother's nest grows and grows, and pretty soon it turns into a wee little baby. Oh, a tiny, tiny little bit of a baby; so small that it must stay a long time in the nest where it is warm and safe.

All the time that the baby is in its nest, mother is thinking about it, and sewing little baby clothes for it and wondering how it is going to look. Father knows that the little baby is growing in mother's nest, too. He works hard to earn money so that he can take good care of mother, and buy all the things that the little baby will need. Father is very kind to mother now; he waits on her, and does not let her do any hard work. He does not want her to get tired, for then she could not take such good care of the baby that is growing in the nest close under her heart.

When the baby is big and strong enough to leave the nest, it just knocks on the door and comes out. Mother and father are so glad to see it. They have been waiting for it such a long time that it makes them very happy to be able to look at it and hold it in their arms, and they love it now more than ever.

This is such a beautiful story, let's make it a secret between just you and mother. If any other little boy or girl asks you if you know where the baby comes from, you say, "Yes, my mother told me, but it's a secret we have together, so I can't tell, but if you want to know, you ask your mother, then you can have a secret, too."

CHAPTER II.

When you were a little girl you came to me one day and asked me where the baby came from. I promised you then that I would answer any other questions if you would always come to mother with them; so now I will tell you these other things that you want to know about.

Of course you know that it is God who creates every living thing; but He allows His creatures to help Him in His work. Even the animals must do their part to help in bringing up little animals like themselves.

When the chicken begins life it is a tiny, tiny, bit of a soft round egg tucked away in a warm safe place inside the mother hen. This egg grows and grows until by-and-by it is surrounded by a shell. Then the mother hen lays it in a nest that is made of straw out in the chicken house.

If you break open a chicken's egg you will find two things. First there is a yellow ball surrounded by a sticky white substance. Now look more closely. Floating on top of the yellow ball is a tiny little thing called the embryo. If the egg is very fresh you will scarcely be able to find the embryo; but if the egg has stood for several days you can see it without difficulty. Embryo is the name that is given to living things when they have just begun to live; before they look like anything at all. This little thing does not look a bit like a chicken now; but if it had the chance, it would grow

into a chicken. The rest of the egg is there only to supply food for the little embryo.

After the eggs are laid, the mother hen sits on them and keeps them warm until the little downy chicks hatch out, then she scratches around in the ground hunting for things for them to eat, and at night she spreads her wings over the little chicks to keep them warm. If any one tries to steal or hurt her little ones, she fights to protect them. All this she does until they are quite old enough to take care of themselves.

So too, it is with the coming to life of the little baby. It is God who creates the baby life but He entrusts much to the mother's care. God prepares the place for the baby near mother's heart in a soft warm safe little nest called the womb. Here the baby begins its life as a tiny little embryo; so small that you could scarcely imagine it any smaller. It does not look a bit like a baby either, but just like a tiny round egg. But very soon the embryo baby begins to grow. Indeed such marvelous things take place from now on inside the womb, that one could very easily imagine a good fairy standing near waving her wand and causing everything to happen in just the right way.

First the little embryo must have food if it is going to grow. This it gets from the mother's blood which is brought through very small blood vessels right to the place where the embryo baby lies. Besides this, the little thing must have oxygen like every other living creature. The embryo chick gets its oxygen through pores in the shell. But the embryo baby gets its oxygen from the mother's blood, brought to it from her lungs.

Then too, the baby must have room to grow. The chick begins life as a tiny embryo surrounded by food inside a shell. As the chick grows bigger, the food supply inside the shell is used up; until by the time it is ready to hatch, the food is about gone and the chick fills the entire shell. But with the embryo baby it is quite different and much more wonderful. For when the embryo baby is small, the womb, the home in which it lives, is small too; oh, very, very small, only just big enough for an embryo baby; but as soon as the baby begins to grow it begins to grow too; bigger, and bigger, and bigger, so the little embryo baby will have plenty of room. Pretty soon the embryo begins to change in appearance. At first you could hardly tell what it is going to be, but before long it begins to look like a baby, a really truly baby, only a tiny mite of a one. However, the baby keeps growing larger and larger all the time. After a while it moves its arms and legs a little once in a while, just as if it wanted to remind its mother that it was there and make her think about it and wish she could see it.

¹After the baby has been in the womb for nine months, it is time for it to be born. It is lying all curled up with its head next to the door of the womb; just ready to come out. This door opens into a sort of vestibule which leads from the womb to the outside down at the lower end of the mother's body. The vestibule is very small before the baby is ready to use it, and you could not imagine how the baby could ever get through; but a way has been provided; for the sides of this vestibule are elastic like a

¹Tell only in answer to a question.

rubber band. They stretch and stretch wide enough to allow the baby to pass, and then when the baby has gone through, they pull together again.

²When the time comes for the child to be born, the womb, which has always grown so as to give the baby plenty of room, now does just the opposite thing. Its sides pull together and crowd the baby. They keep pushing against the baby, harder and harder until they push it out of the home it has lived in so long, out through the vestibule, right out into the outside world.

The very first thing that the baby does when it arrives is to cry. It seems as if it were trying to say in the only language it knows, "See mother, I've come, your own little baby." Oh how happy mother is to hear that cry, for then she knows that her baby is really here!

After the baby has begun life in the outer world the womb begins to shrink; not suddenly but gradually, the way it grew. It gets smaller, and smaller, and smaller, until after a while it is scarcely any larger than it was before the baby started to live in it. The reason that the mother stays in bed for a while after baby is born, is so as to keep the womb quiet while this change is beginning to take place.

The new little baby is very helpless; it cannot do anything for itself at all, and would soon die unless there were someone to take care of it. I have seen little downy chicks run around and pick up food only a short time after they came out of the shell, but the baby must have everything done for it for a long time. I think that

²Tell only in answer to a question.

is one reason why mothers love their little babies so much, because they are so helpless and need so much care.

When the baby is little it cannot eat as older children do, so there is milk prepared for it in the breasts of the mother; milk that is warm and just right in every way. Can you guess how much a new-born baby's stomach will hold? About an eighth of a glass, that is all; so there is only a little milk in the beginning; but as the baby grows bigger and needs more milk, more milk comes, until the baby is old enough to eat a little food. Then the milk gets less and less, and by-and-by it stops altogether.

Just think how large a part God gives to the mother in the creation of the baby! It is the mother's body that supplies all the material needed by the embryo with which to build bone and muscle and brain and every other part of its body. These materials are found in her blood and come from the food she eats and the oxygen she breathes. For this reason, the mother must be careful to eat good nourishing food and breathe plenty of fresh air. Then too, the mother should try not to get tired or worried or feel unhappy. When anyone gets tired or worried or unhappy, the stomach does not digest the food properly, nor do any of the other organs do their work as well as they should. Then the blood is not supplied with good material, and if that person is going to have a baby, the embryo will not be able to get what it needs from the blood.

Whenever you see a woman who is going to have a baby come to her, think how much she must do so that her baby can grow big and

strong as it should. Try to help her and save her steps. Wait on her whenever you can, but most important of all, don't worry her or make her cross. Do all you can to keep her happy and well. For when you do this, you are not only helping the mother, but you are being kind to the little unborn baby too.

CHAPTER III.

Now that you know how the baby develops in the mother's womb, I am going to tell you some more about the organs that are given to women for the purpose of producing new life. I am doing this so that you may know what care these organs should have.³

The baby develops inside the womb, but the place in which the tiny egg begins its life is called the ovary. There are two ovaries; one on either side of the womb. They are filled with thousands of tiny little eggs called ova; each one so small that you could not see it unless you looked at it through a microscope. The ovaries themselves are quite small; only about as large as an almond nut.

The womb looks something like a small pear set with the large end up; only instead of being perfectly round, it is flattened from front to back. The ovaries are connected with the womb by means of very fine tubes through which the ova pass. The womb and ovaries are located in the lower part of the abdomen; abdomen being the name given to that part of the body which lies below the ribs.

³Every girl should have this knowledge before she reaches the age of puberty.

In the body of every little girl are two ovaries and a womb similar to those in mother's body, only much smaller; but when a girl gets to be twelve or thirteen they begin to grow. At this time the girl's breasts commence to increase in size and grow full and plump. All this means that she is changing from a child into a little woman.

When a child is small, the ovaries are small too, but even then the tiny little ova are there. They were there even before the baby was born. They stay all quietly asleep until a girl gets to be thirteen or fourteen. Then once in every four weeks, a little egg leaves its home in the ovary and goes on a journey down through the tube to the womb. Before the girl is married, this little egg keeps wandering along until it reaches the vestibule; then it passes out, and the little girl doesn't know anything about it because it is so tiny she couldn't see it anyway.

But after a girl has grown up and married and the father is there to care for her and the children, then sometimes the little egg stays in the womb and the baby develops in the way I have told you.

You know how a little drop of blood comes whenever you prick your finger. The blood comes from tiny little blood-vessels that lie close together under the skin. You can see some of the larger ones, but these small ones you cannot see at all, no matter how closely you look. Now the inside of the womb is lined with a soft skin like the lining of your mouth. Close under this skin are a great many fine blood-vessels, just the same as in your finger. When it comes

time for the egg to leave the ovary and begin its journey to the womb, these blood-vessels get full of blood. By the time the egg arrives, they are just as full as they can hold.

Now if the girl were grown up and married, and the time had arrived for the baby to begin life in the womb, the blood would be there, all ready to feed the little thing and to supply it with all that it needed to grow into a real live baby. But long before a girl is old enough to get married, whenever the time comes for the egg to leave the ovary, the blood-vessels in the lining of the womb get very full, and when the little egg passes out of the womb the blood is not needed any more, so it just squeezes through the soft fine skin, and runs down through the vestibule, or vagina as it is called, to the outside.

Beginning when she is in her teens, every girl and woman has such a flow of blood about once in four weeks. It comes down slowly, and it takes three or four or five days before it is all gone; lasting longer with one person than with another. This is perfectly pure blood brought to the womb for a purpose; that of nourishing the new little life. The reason it comes away is that it is not needed. The next month a new fresh supply will be on hand. If that is not needed, it too must come away.

This flow of blood is called menstruation or the monthly flow. If a girl does not know about the monthly flow, she is apt to be frightened the first time it appears; but now that you know you will not be disturbed. Come at once and tell mother quietly, and she will

show you how to fasten on a cloth so that your clothes will not get soiled.

You know that if you cut your finger you go to the basin and let cold water run on it to stop the bleeding; but you must never try to stop the blood that comes from the womb, because Nature intends it to come away, and stopping it is likely to cause inflammation and pain. You must not go in bathing or paddling or take a cold bath at this time. Also be careful not to get your feet wet or sit in a draught, since by doing any of these things you may stop the flow of blood.

While the womb is giving off the blood it no longer needs it is in a sensitive state and exercising the body irritates it. So you must not run and jump and play hard at this time, the way you do at other times. Exercise is good because it sends the blood rushing through every part of your body, but you do not want the blood to be sent rushing to the womb at this time. During the monthly period, the womb should not be disturbed; so keep more quiet and walk less than usual. If mother thinks it best for you to stay home from school for a day, just remember that you must do your part in helping these organs to get ready for their great work in the future.

Another thing you must remember is to keep the outside parts of these organs very clean, especially during the menstrual period. Always at this time, you must take a wash-rag wrung out in warm water, put soap on it and wash this part of your body night and morning.

Finally, do not get impatient or cross if your monthly period comes at a time when you want

to go for a walk or dance or play some lively games, or go in bathing or paddling. When you feel that way just think what a great thing these organs are preparing for, then you will not mind giving up your pleasure in order to help them in their work.

The creation of life is a very wonderful thing; something that no one fully understands; something that all things which live are allowed to share with God. You know that everything that has to do with God is sacred, so this is sacred too. That is why every girl should take good care of these organs that have been entrusted to her. That too is why we keep the external parts of these organs covered, and never touch them except to make them clean. Some people think that it is because we are ashamed, but they do not understand. There is nothing to be ashamed of, only something to be kept sacred and private.

That too, is why we do not talk about the coming of the baby or of the monthly period as we do about other things. These things are private and only to be talked about with mother. Girls who talk about such things do so because they have never been told the true story as you have heard it. I am sure now that mother has told you all these things, you will not talk about them to anyone else, but if there is anything you do not understand, you will come to mother and she will explain it to you.

CHAPTER IV.

In the little talks that we have had together, we have thought a great deal about the part that God has given to the mother, both in the creation and care of the little baby. He has given a share in this creation to the father too; not quite so big a share as the mother has, but still a very important one. This is true of all of the animals and of the human father too.

You remember how the father and mother birds bring the materials and build the nest for their young ones and how, after the mother bird lays her eggs in the nest her mate helps her to take care of them; then when the young birds come out of their shells, both birds carry food to their hungry family.

But that is not all that the father bird does, for to him has been given an important part in the very beginning of the life of the little birds. You know about the ovaries that contain the ova or eggs in the body of every woman. The hen has ovaries in her body too. You have probably seen the ovary of the chicken when it was being cleaned. It is filled with round yellow balls of different sizes from little bits of things up to some as large as a good sized marble. The reason why the eggs produced in the ovary of the chicken, or even the bird, are so much larger than those of the human mother is that the baby develops inside of the mother's body and is nourished by her blood, whereas the bird develops after the egg is laid. The ovum, which is the life part containing the character-

istics of the mother bird, is very small and floats on top of the yellow ball which is the food material. The females of all living things have ovaries containing ova; each ovum, although almost microscopic in size, has within it the characteristics of the mother ready to pass on to the next generation.

The males of all living creatures have corresponding organs called spermaries which produce sperms. The sperm is so small that you cannot see it at all without the aid of a microscope, and yet it contains the characteristics of the father just as the ovum contains the characteristics of the mother. The new little life cannot begin until first these two, the sperm and the ovum unite. These together start the life in the embryo.

God has taught the father bird that he must place his sperms where they will reach the ova that are in the body of his mate; so while the yellow balls are still small, the father bird forces the sperms from his body into a sort of tube in the body of the mother bird that leads to the ovary. These sperms are extremely small but they are very active. Once inside of the mother bird's body, they hurry along until they reach the ovary filled with yellow balls. Here one sperm unites with the ovum that is floating on top of each yellow ball; then the life of the embryo begins.

Somehow the joining together of the ovum and sperm always makes me think of the story of Prince Charming and the sleeping princess. You remember how the beautiful princess lay asleep inside the enchanted castle, and could never wake up until Prince Charming found her

and kissed her into life. We might call the ovary inside of the mother bird's body the enchanted castle, and the ovum floating on top of the yellow ball the princess asleep on her golden throne. She will never, never wake up because she is only half a life until the other half, the sperm, comes like Prince Charming to awaken her, then together they will live in the new little life.

Is not that a beautiful thought, that God did not give all the wonderful work of creation to the mother, but gave the father just the same share as the mother in starting the new little life? The same thing that is true of the birds is true of all the animals; dogs, and cats, and horses and cows, and of human beings, too.

Every girl and woman has two ovaries where the ova are tucked away, and every boy and man has two spermaries where the sperms live, waiting until it is time for them to do their important work. This time does not come until the boy has grown to be a man and has married some girl whom he loves very much. Then, in order that the baby may begin its life, the father places his sperms where they can reach the ova, at the entrance to mother's womb. When the ovum and sperm meet, inside the body of the mother, these two together begin the life of the little baby.

This is father's part in the creation of the baby; after that, mother must protect and feed the child growing in her womb, until it comes into the world. Then she must still feed it with the milk that God has sent to her in her breasts, and she must watch over it and take care of it for a long, long time. All that father

can do now is to watch over and take care of mother; giving her what she needs and making her life as happy and free from trouble as he can, so the little baby will have the best possible chance to grow strong and fine.

Now you can understand why it is that children sometimes look like father and sometimes like mother; and why some things about them remind you of father and others of mother, because in the very beginning, just half of the baby life came from father and the other half from mother.

The very beginning of the baby's life when father gives into mother's care the sperms from his body is the part that God allows father and mother together to share with Him in the creation of life. Therefore, it is something which is holy and sacred and should not be talked about, excepting quietly and privately by those who are near and dear to each other, such as father and mother together, or you and mother together. It should not be spoken of to other girls, or before other people. Those who really understand the sacredness and wonder of it all do not talk about it as if it were just an ordinary subject.

Now that you are old enough to understand, mother is glad to explain these things to you. Everything that has been created by God is pure and beautiful and good, and therefore right for us to know about; but we must understand it in the way God intended, so that we can see the beautiful side.

I think these talks have made you understand just a little of what father and mother have had to give in order to bring their little children into

the world and care for them while they are growing up. Now you will love them more than ever.

There are three things that mother would like to have you remember always. The first is that every girl should think of her body as something sacred, because God has entrusted to her the care of the little ova. Even while she is small, they are there, asleep inside her ovaries, and they are kept alive by her blood. If she is strong and healthy and true, very likely they will take after her, but if she is sickly, or if she does not take good care of her body, no one knows what harm she may do to them, too.

Next, never allow anyone to do anything to you which you would be ashamed to have mother see. Boys and girls can play and have all sorts of good times together, but no girl who thinks of her body as sacred will allow a boy to maul her, or kiss her, even in fun or in a game; she will want to keep herself pure and fresh and sweet for the one boy who may come some day to be her mate for life.

Finally, if you want to keep your body clean and pure, you *must* keep your thoughts always pure. You can never do a kind act without first having a kind thought, and you can never do a mean act unless first you have had a mean thought. Our thoughts are the very most important things in our whole lives, because it is, after all, our thoughts which form our characters.

Keep these things always before your mind; never do anything that you would not want your mother to see; never say anything that you would not want your mother to know; never

listen to anything that you would not want your mother to hear; try always to keep your thoughts kind and sweet; and whenever you have done something that you know to be wrong, come and tell mother. Mother is your best friend to whom you can tell everything. She is always ready to help her daughter, even when she has done wrong, to do better next time. Remember this, then you will grow into the pure, noble woman that mother and father want you to be.