

CATS AS MODEL MOTHERS.

How absurd! A cat teach a human mother! What ridiculous nonsense! Not so fast, gentle reader. Why should it be so absurd? If the slug-gard is advised on high authority to go to the ant, to consider her ways, and be wise, why should not a human mother consider the ways of a cat, and learn wisdom therefrom?

And is there not sore need for wisdom in the nursery?

The number of babies who die before they reach the age of one year is simply appalling. Lucky for them, says the cynic, they get a speedy release from this troublesome world. That may be so, Mr. Cynic, but what of the thousands of infants that don't die, that just manage to scrape through, and grow up with weakly constitutions, sickly bodies, and feeble minds, ill fitted to fight the battle of life, destined to be a misery to themselves, and a burden to every one about them?

If, then, we admit, and admit we must, that the human mother has been singularly unsuccessful in rearing her offspring, is it unreasonable to advise her to study nature's methods? Let her pay no heed to the wise matron who has buried many children, nor to the well-meaning curate who has never had any, nor even to the learned professor, though he may have dissected a great number. Let her rather consider the ways of the nearest natural mother to whom she has access, and in most cases this will be the cat.

Pussy will bring up litter after litter of kittens to healthy cathood, save for such accidents of flood and field as the bucket and the mop, for which she can hardly be held responsible.

In the first place, then, I would respectfully beg you to notice, oh, mothers, that pussy feeds her babies herself! She knows well that bottle-fed infants have not nearly such a good chance of surviving as those who are fed Nature's fount.

Then, please observe that the mother cat does not feed her kittens too much or too often. If she thinks they have had enough her ruthless paw sweeps them relentlessly away, and if she considers that it is not the proper time for their meal, she stalks calmly off, heedless of their cries. Many human mothers, on the contrary, are in the habit of feeding their children whenever they cry, either because they think crying is an evidence of hunger, or "just to quiet them." There could not be a greater mistake.

The child may be crying because its last meal has not been properly digested. No matter, it must be fed again! This makes it still more uncomfortable, and in a short time it begins to cry afresh. This convinces the mother that milk does not satisfy the child, and she gives it some preparation of farinaceous food, which it cannot by any possibility digest, and which adds to the discomfort.

Mothers would do well to remember that it is not the whole amount of food that is taken by a child that nourishes it, but only that portion that is assimilated, and that to be constantly cramming a child with food is not the surest way to make it grow up strong and healthy. Now, our model mother is not only moderate in the amount of nourishment she gives her babies, but

she gives them nothing but milk in their early days.

She does not give them butter, sugar, honey, biscuits, bacon, cheese, or gin, all of which I have known human mothers to administer.

It is a common idea with human mothers, especially among the poor, that milk alone is insufficient to sustain life. If one could only induce them to study the cat, or any other mammal they would find that milk is amply sufficient, and that any addition to milk in the way of farinaceous material is unnecessary and indeed harmful, at all events, until after the seventh month in the case of human babies. The young mammal is not adapted for the digestion of bread or sausages, or even rabbits' brains, though once I knew an old nurse who was fond of giving babies the last-mentioned delicacy, under the impression that it was a cure for tongue-tie.

The cat gives her kittens no castor oil. Just think of that!

The human baby rarely escapes having a dose of castor oil rammed down its throat soon after birth. The consequence is that the child is violently purged, and by a natural reaction is constipated afterward. Thereupon the nurse or mother gives the unfortunate infant another dose, and so the vicious circle goes round, and the foundation is laid of that habit of constipation and pill-taking that is the curse of so many people in this country.

Another interesting point to note is that our mother cat does not consider it necessary to drink malt or stout while feeding her kittens. Many mothers have a rooted idea that they cannot nurse their babies unless they imbibe stout. It is vain to urge that much stout makes the mother dyspeptic, and the baby fretful and cross. The invariable reply is that they would have no milk for the baby if they did not drink stout.

Is it too much to hope that a candid consideration of pussy's success as a mother may do something to eradicate this error?

Strict personal cleanliness is the rule in pussy's nursery. Not that I would for one moment suggest that human mothers should wash their babies in the primitive manner that our tabby adopts. Nevertheless, if her methods are crude, her results are excellent, as the sleek and shining coats of her kittens testify.

For the human baby a warm bath every day is the preferable method, but let not the mother go to the extreme of too much rubbing and scrubbing. I have seen the delicate skins of beautiful babies nearly scrubbed off by the vigorous hand of the rigorous nurse, and sometimes a troublesome rash is produced by these drastic methods.

Our model mother puts no tight binder round her kitten. The human mother often binds the poor little mortal in a tight and sometimes stiff binder, as firmly as she possibly can; she stitches it up to prevent any possibility of its slipping, and, having thus made the unfortunate little wretch thoroughly uncomfortable, she vaguely wonders what makes it cry.

It is probable that this tight-lacing is a frequent cause of rupture in children. At any rate, we may safely say that rupture is unknown in the feline tribe.

That abomination called a "comforter" is not used in pussy's nursery. Continual sucking produces many ills, and has a bad effect on the formation of the mouth.

Now as to clothing, can we learn any lesson from the mother cat on this important subject? We observe that the kittens are clothed evenly all over their bodies in a garment of fur. We must not, of course, give the credit for this entirely to their mother, but we may note with approval that she does not wrap up her children's chest in multitudinous layers of flannel and leave their arms and legs uncovered.

In the case of human infants this is commonly done, and, generally speaking, the poorer the mother the larger is the assortment of garments that she puts round her children's chests, so that while the upper part of the body is overheated, the little legs and arms

are blue with cold. When the child runs about and plays, the upper portions of its body will become bathed in perspiration. It then stands in a draft of air and "catches cold."

The careful mother promptly seeks to remedy the evil by putting more clothing around its chest, with the same unfortunate result as before, making her constantly wonder why it is that her child "catches cold" so easily, as she is quite sure that she "wraps it up enough."

I do not suggest that human children should be clothed in fur, or not clothed at all, but would have them warmly and evenly clad—arms and legs and bodies well-covered with easy-fitting, comfortable garments. Moreover, when the child goes out to play let it not be smothered in thick overcoats and mufflers. Running about with a hoop or ball will keep it warm, and too much extra clothing will cause it to get overheated, and bring about that very chill that its anxious mother is trying to avoid.

And now we have nearly reached the conclusion of the lessons to be learned from the mother cat. But there is one final hint that we may take, and that is, that little children need plenty of play. Our model mother plays with her kittens herself, at least when she is not too sleepy, and even then she will let them play with her tail, at considerable personal discomfort. She recognizes their need for romps and games and healthy exercise, and does not perpetually scream at them: "Don't do this!" and "Don't do that!" and "Don't do the other!" until all their natural playfulness is crushed out of them. It is good for all young animals to be frequently moving their limbs, and all children are young animals.

It was formerly believed that the cat was created by a beneficent Providence in order to catch mice, but I venture to think that a candid consideration of the foregoing facts will convince even the most skeptical that the chief reason for pussy's existence is to serve as a model to mothers.—HENRY GERVIS, M. D.

SHOEING AN UNRULY HORSE.

I saw a query in a recent issue of your excellent paper re shoeing a wicked horse. I will give you my experience of one I had which had to go half time without shoes, and was a very valuable farming horse only for this one fault. My own smith refused to touch him at all so I heard of another smith and went to him. His plan was this; he took an ordinary pair of reins; on one end he put a loop the same as a plowman would do if the rein were too long, and where he put the knot he put a large iron ring. He then put a loop on the horse's tail, so tight that it could not slip off (I let his tail grow for that purpose); he took the other end of the rein and put it through the two rings of the horse's bit and back to the ring, he put in the knot of loop and pulled tight, which brought the horse's head and hind parts round as far as to put him in considerable trouble and held it there without tying. He then started the hind foot in the side the horse's head was tied to and then changed to the other side in the same way—no danger to man or horse, as when you let go rope it pulls back through ring. My horse was shod that way for fifteen years and never had an accident.

J. Mc.

GAS FROM CORN COBS.

The lighting problem for the middle States has been solved at Beatrice, Nebraska, by the manufacture of a commercial grade of illuminating gas made from corn stocks, corn cobs, hay and other vegetable matter. This is being used for fuel and lights and has superseded the coal gas, which was formerly used in the city. The quantity is as good as the coal or oil gas and the cost is \$1.19 per thousand, the lowest price at which gas is sold in any city in Nebraska. John D. Rockefeller is at the head of a company which has established a \$100,000 plant for the manufacture of the new gas. It is the first plant in the world in which gas is produced in this manner.

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