

THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF GARDEN CITY

DAWSON



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BY

JEAN DAWSON, A.M., PH.D.

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY, CLEVELAND NORMAL SCHOOL
SOMETIME HONORARY FELLOW, CLARK UNIVERSITY
AUTHOR OF "THE BIOLOGY OF PHYSA"

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TO
JEAN HAMILTON DAWSON
MY MOTHER
WHO INSPIRED HER CHILDREN
TO EXPRESS TRUTHS AND TO DO THE WORK
HER OWN SOUL YEARNED TO DO

PREFACE

The purpose of infancy and childhood is to prepare, adapt, and educate for efficiency in adult life, and, under present conditions, this means chiefly social efficiency. The progress of science and discovery, too, is so rapid that the scientific education of even thirty years ago is totally inadequate to meet present social needs. What will these needs be thirty years hence, when our boys and girls are in the midst of their generation's struggle for social progress? We can only judge the future by the past, but one thing is certain: progress in science is likely to be increasingly rapid, and in order to keep social life abreast of its discoveries we must instill into the young mind the spirit and method of the alert and active scientist. The true function of youth, with its ability and avidity to learn, ought to be to keep the community life continuously abreast of discovery. This is the problem of elementary-science instruction.

With the young of animals, play is the method of education which prepares for the strenuous activities of adult life. Hence it is but natural that we find the play instinct the most dominant, universal, and wholesome impulse of child life. Instead of repressing the play instinct, as too much of our school life in the past has attempted to do, why not guide and develop this strong current of child life, and make it a real preparation for future social efficiency? Any group of parents can help their children to organize in the spirit of play for all sorts of wholesome social activities — for health and perfect

physical and mental growth, for improvement of home conditions, for solution of local problems in gardening, agriculture, and horticulture — and so have them truly learning the complex game of modern social life. The following quotation from Huxley expresses the thought in classic form :

Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But we also know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated — without haste, but without remorse.

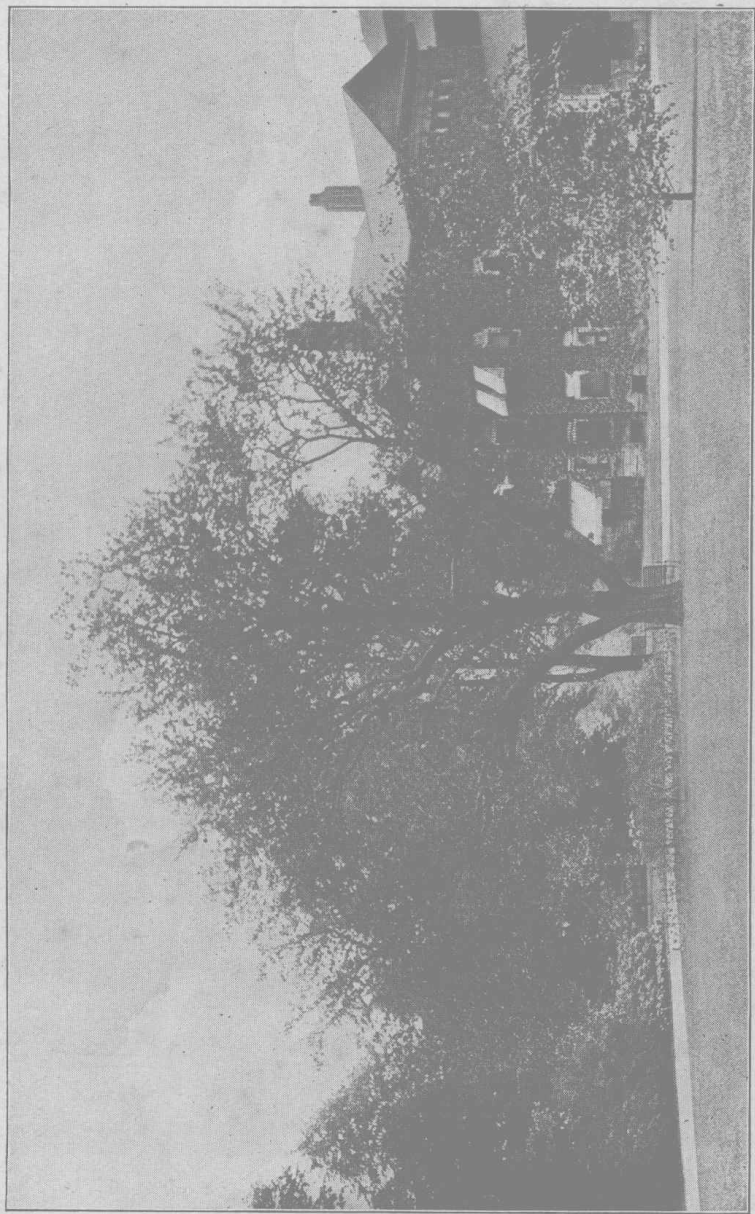
The boys and girls of Garden City are the children of a neighborhood who have banded themselves together through their mutual interest in the things about them that are worth while. Their enjoyment becomes keen as they realize the importance of their efforts and, working together, they help to solve some of the vital problems of their community and even lead in movements that become city wide. These children are playing a social game while developing themselves and helping one another to learn the rules of the game of life.

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JEAN DAWSON

CLEVELAND NORMAL SCHOOL



They turned the machine into the drive which led through the beautiful grounds of the old Dunsmure estate

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THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF GARDEN CITY

CHAPTER I

PHIL ACCEPTS A NEW OFFICE

"Phil Elliott is appointed to the office of superintendent of the board of health, and Joe Ross and Mabel Craig are to be his assistants."

At the sound of his name Phil's heart leaped and then stood still. The boys behind him snickered, and he heard whispers of: "Hurrah for the board of health!" "Don't take it, Phil," and "The office is no good; let's do away with it."

Phil's heart was now pounding so hard that he did not dare trust himself to rise and reply to his appointment. He sat with his eyes bent on the ground during the rest of the meeting, and as soon as the motion to adjourn was seconded, he rushed from the building without speaking to any one.

Dr. Dunsmure was on the porch enjoying the soft moonlight and the perfume of June roses, when he noticed his nephew approaching. The boy walked with his head bent, and his face looked very pale in the moonlight.

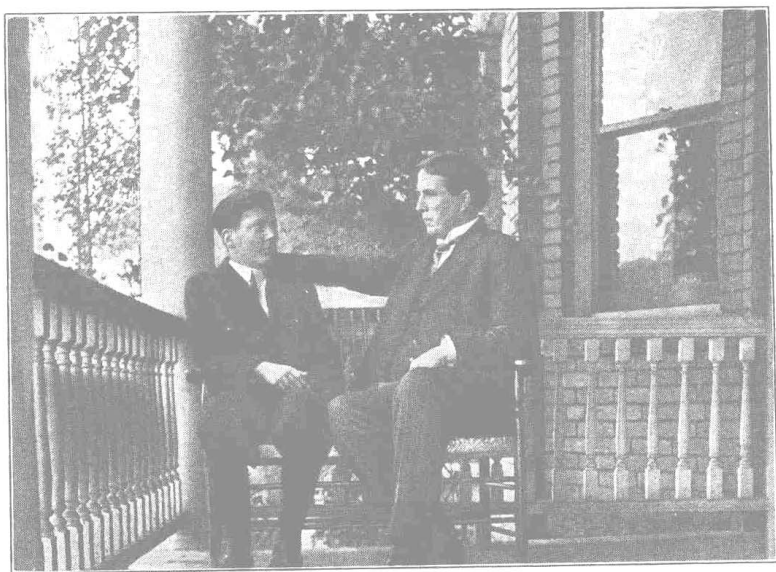
"How are you enjoying the first day of your vacation, Phil?" asked the doctor, kindly, as the boy came upon the porch.

"Oh, uncle," almost sobbed the boy, "my whole summer has been spoiled." Then, in answer to his uncle's look of

astonishment, he went on to explain: "You know I was city forester last year, but I thought I would run for alderman in my ward. Tommy Downey won in the election, and then I was appointed superintendent of the board of health."

"Is that all that is troubling you, Phil?"

"It's enough, I should say. I hate the old thing, and it is no good anyhow. I would rather have any other office."



"Of course you will keep it, boy"

"Well, well," exclaimed the doctor, "it is strange how different we feel. Now I would rather be at the head of the board of health than hold any other office. You feel the way you do, Phil, because you do not know anything about health and disease. When do you begin your work?"

"I shall have to make my first report one week from to-night if I keep the office."

"Of course you will keep it, boy; our family never backs down in that way," said the doctor, making room for his nephew to sit by his side. "I will help you to understand what such an office means. I dare say that by the end of the week you would not trade your office with any boy in Garden City."

A week had passed. The clock in the corner church had struck half past one before Dr. Dunsmure's last patient had been visited and he and his young nephew turned the machine into the drive which led through the beautiful grounds of the old Dunsmure estate. Neither spoke until they stopped before the door of the fine old house and greeted Phil's mother, who was awaiting their coming.

At the table Phil was thoughtful and silent; he ate little and excused himself before the meal was over. Mrs. Elliott's eyes followed the retreating form of her fourteen-year-old boy with an anxious expression in them. Dr. Dunsmure smiled and said: "The boy is clear grit, and I am proud of him, Margaret. He has gone with me from bedside to bedside, from hospital to sanitarium, and from infirmary to asylum this week. He has seen enough misery and suffering to depress a grown man. You remember they appointed him superintendent of the board of health of Garden City. I promised to help the lad and told him that he might go with me to visit my patients until the end of the week. You should have heard him ask questions of the nurses and doctors and have seen him taking notes in his 'Why Book.' I have never seen a boy more wide-awake and interested. I gave him a number of books, and I think you will find him reading the greater part of the afternoon."

Mrs. Elliott thought about her boy's experience of the week long after luncheon was over. She knew that Dr. Dunsmure

had ideas of his own upon the education of children, especially boys, and she knew too how well these ideas had worked in Phil's case.

Dr. Dunsmure was childless and alone when his sister and her little boy of ten came to live with him. Phil was a sensitive boy, and it took some time for the doctor and his nephew to become friends. Dr. Dunsmure was wise; he



Miss Mills showed them pictures of school gardens with the children at work

let Phil alone and waited until he learned what the boy was most interested in. He had not long to wait. Miss Mills, teacher of gardening in the schools, talked to the children on how to grow plants, and showed them pictures of school gardens with the children at work. From that time on Phil was a gardener. Miss Mills taught him many things about the soil and fertilizers, and showed him how to transplant, graft, and bud. Little or no space could be had in the school

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garden, and Phil asked his uncle for land. Dr. Dunsmure was delighted, for this was just what he wanted Phil to do. He often said : " The way in which boys are brought up to-day is all wrong. When I was young, a boy had an important place in the home ; he sawed and split the wood, brought in water, made the fires, and really was of some use. But nowadays steam and electricity do all the work, and for the boy there is nothing in the home to do. Of course I wouldn't do away with modern conveniences, but something has to be done for the boys. My idea is to give them gardens, and a little city government of their own to run on their own responsibility."

So, now that Phil showed an interest in gardening, the doctor was glad to help him. The estate was large, and Phil soon had an excellent garden plot. Even when only eleven years of age the boy had a garden that attracted much attention in the neighborhood. He sold flowers, fruit, and vegetables in the " School Market," which the ladies of the city had built for the sale of produce from children's gardens. This was the first money that the boy had saved, and his uncle gave him an account book and taught him how to do his bookkeeping and banking.

Phil's success and enthusiasm carried many of his boy and girl friends with him, and the following summer the doctor gave two acres of land for gardens. The children laid out the ground into lots, with a road on each side, and called it " Garden City." Afterwards they formed a government with all the offices of a real city. Elections were held, officers were appointed, taxes were levied and collected. Mrs. Elliott smiled to herself as she thought how busy parents and friends had been kept, answering questions and settling disputed points on government.

Nor was that all. After Garden City had been governing itself for about a year, the council voted to build a city hall in which to hold its meetings. Most of the money for building materials was to come from taxes and from lawn and garden parties. The council ruled that since many of the boys had had manual training in school, they should build the hall themselves. What a summer it was, and how the boys planned and toiled! There was a time when mistakes were so plentiful and money for materials became so scarce that the boys would have given up in despair had not Dr. Dunsmure come to their aid with the idea of bonding Garden City for the needed amount of money. He pointed out to them how an unfinished building would look in a neighborhood, and the bad effects that giving up and acknowledging defeat would have upon themselves. With renewed courage the boys sold bonds and finished their building. "How happy every one has been," thought Mrs. Elliott, as her glance wandered over to a one-storied building nestling among well-kept garden plots, "and how much about gardening, government, and building they all have learned."

Although it was early in the evening, Phil heard the murmur of voices as he approached the city hall, and he knew that several members of the council were there before him. He went up the central aisle, which was formed by low partitions that served to divide the large hall into offices. The boy, glancing neither to right nor left, walked to the end of the hall, until he came to the railing at the entrance of the council room. Opening a gate, he entered, hesitated a moment, and then, walking over to where "Mayor Paul" stood, handed him a letter. As he did so the talk, which had stopped suddenly on his entrance, burst forth again.

"I'll bet he's refused the office."

"Well, you can't blame him; it's a crazy old office anyway. Let's do away with it. Hush, there's the gavel."

After the ordinary business Paul arose with Phil's letter in his hand. Silence fell as the boys glanced from the mayor to Phil's grave, thoughtful face. Phil didn't look angry exactly, they thought, but he looked different; then they turned all attention to the mayor.

"Members of the council," he said, "I have here a letter from Phil, in which he accepts the office of superintendent of the board of health of Garden City, and says that he will be glad to make his report."

"Whew!" an exclamation of surprise interrupted, and a perfect buzz of whispered remarks followed the first gasp of astonishment. The mayor rapped for order and called on Phil for his report.

Phil always felt nervous and shaky when he was called on, but to-night he was so interested that he forgot about being afraid and just talked ahead.

"I did n't intend to accept this office when I went home last Saturday, but Uncle Robert said that the reason I did n't like it was because I did n't know anything about it. So then he offered to show me. I've been going around to the different hospitals through the week. You should have seen the number of people who were sick; lots of boys and girls and even babies were there. I kept wondering what had happened that so many people were sick. I asked Dr. Stone about it, and he told me that there were always as many as that; that about 3,000,000 people were sick in the United States all the time."

"Oh my! I don't believe there are so many."

"You're easy, to believe him."

Phil went on as if he had not heard the boys. "I told him that I did n't think it was fair that so many people should be sick and have to pay out their money for medicine, doctors, and nurses, and that others should be well. He did n't answer for a minute, and then said, 'Sickness is largely a question of ignorance.'

"I asked him how he could say that, when Judge Wright was sick in the hospital. He said that he did n't mean that sickness was found only among ignorant people; that no matter how well educated a person is, he is ignorant in spots, and most people are ignorant when it comes to questions of health and disease. 'You should think of your body as a machine,' he said; 'it is just as truly a machine as a locomotive or an automobile. How long would it be before these machines would be in the repair shops if a child or one ignorant of machinery should attempt to run them? A man must spend some time in learning to run an automobile or a locomotive. But how much time do people usually spend in learning to run the human machine?'

"I said, 'I guess not much,' and he said, 'That is why there are so many people in the repair shop.'

"'Can't the doctors do something?' I asked him.

"'Doctors save more people's lives now than they ever have saved before,' he replied, 'but they are called to help only after the damage is done. Now we need more people who know how to keep themselves well. You have heard the old saying, have n't you, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure?'

"'You mean that all these people need n't be sick, then?' I said in astonishment.

"'That is just what I mean,' he said."