



## The BOOK TRAIL

### CIVILIZATION'S HOPE PORTRAYED IN ALLEGORY

"The Garden of Doctor Persuasion," by Francis Neilson.  
C. C. Nelson Publishing Co., Appleton, Wisconsin.  
1942. 235 pp. \$2.

"The March of Christendom," "How Diplomats Make War," "Duty to Civilization," "The Tragedy of Europe," all these and others, some of them translated into Swedish, German and French—now Mr. Neilson gives us "The Garden of Doctor Persuasion," a work of fiction as gentle as its title. When one who may command our reason by his logic, instead appeals to our hearts, who can resist?

The story of "The Garden of Doctor Persuasion" is an account of the steps by which a member of the British Cabinet, owner of a vast estate, attains the conviction of certain basic truths. As a logical result of this new light the Squire resigns from The Government, puts his estate in trust for his tenants and accepts his mission to the masses of people everywhere who are waiting for someone to come and tell them the truth.

Doctor Persuasion's garden is located on the Squire's vast estate in a remote rural district of England. So backward are the tenants of the estate that few of them have been thirty miles from their tiny village. So little has progress touched the area that none of the natives is rich, none is poor, and no one is idle. It is hard for them to believe a visitor from London who tells them that there, "Thousands go hungry and never know a decent bed."

These unlettered rustics naturally have difficulty in understanding a number of things which are quite clear to educated people. One of their perplexities is the current war, which in itself points up conditions which seem inexplicable to Mr. Neilson's primitives. On food rationing, for instance, they are told it is necessary because "most of our food comes from other parts." They answer, "Queer—seeing most of the land about this place ain't been put to use, nay some of it not 'arf, not a quarter."

These farmers who live so close to the land are not even unconscious Malthusians. When some of their men are hauled off to the war they notice immediately that the living standards of those remaining goes down. They shake their heads and remark, "The land canna afford to lose its men."

Mr. Neilson's backward people have stopped voting! To them their government appears more a menace than a source of hope. "Seems to me, we 'uns who work on the land be the country, and the chaps up in Parlyment they be the government that 're paid and fed by us—sometimes for years we never 'ear much about it and

then when some fellows that get five thousand pounds get themselves into a fix its the chaps on fifteen bob a week that have to go and give their lives for their country."

Some readers of "The Garden of Doctor Persuasion" will be disappointed in the book as a stroke for the cause of freedom. But, are not the quotations above examples of the most effective kind of persuasion—that which is not recognized as special pleading?

For bringing closer the day of our economic emancipation, "The Garden of Doctor Persuasion" is, I believe, worth a dozen tomes of political science. The almost universal acceptance of Marxian philosophy today is not the result of the ideological harangues of communist and socialist politicians nor is it based on widespread understanding of "Das Kapital." Such writers of entertainment literature as Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Bernard Shaw, together with countless others in every department of letters, planted in the public mind acceptance of the idea that the cure for social injustice is government intervention. Mr. Neilson's book is, with Louis Wallis' "By the Waters of Babylon," the pathfinder, I devoutly hope, for a school of literature and art which will stir the soul of our century to reawakened hope of economic and social liberty.

But, as all true reformers know, there are certain eternal truths which underlie the tenets of all philosophies and all causes. Into the mouths of his rustics Mr. Neilson has put the materialistic, what after all, are the superficial aspects of his message. It is Doctor Persuasion himself and his converts who state and exemplify these deeper truths of which such concepts as freedom, justice, fraternity are but implications: "Men must see themselves as they are if they are to read aright the symbols of Truth"—"We are not responsible to society, or to each other, but only unto God"—"Man's purpose here is solely to find leisure to use his mind for God's work."

And so it is that Mr. Neilson's story is told when the Squire can say, with a philosopher of the middle ages, "Once I saw clearly the road which led to the goal, I knew there was but a step to realize it. And so fair and so free was the path that all I had to do was to put out my foot and place it on the way."

—JAMES W. LE BARON

*That we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us—that we should respect the rights of others as scrupulously as we would have our own rights respected, is not a mere counsel of perfection to individuals, but it is the law to which we must conform social institutions and national policy if we would secure the blessings of abundance and peace.*

—HENRY GEORGE