

Happiness Is Self-Made

A SERMON

By Janet Rankin Aiken

Somewhat glumly the Bible warns us that "Where there is no vision, the people perish," and it is a testimony to the incorrigibly pessimistic bias of our carnal natures that we remember the threat and forget the rest of the verse. What comes after "perish"? You see, you don't know, and yet it is much the most important part, "Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

Notice that it doesn't say, "he who can pay his bills," or "he who is let alone by obnoxious relatives." It doesn't make happiness in any way dependent on others, or on circumstances. It disregards the "if only" with which the weakling excuses his lack of happiness. All it says is that one must keep the law, that is, remain true to what he knows of truth and good.

It should be and it is easy for Georgists to be happy people, on that platform. They recognize the basic law of justice and mercy, the law which will eliminate the hell-on-earth of poverty; and they keep and spread that law energetically and gladly. They become extroverts in the service of their convictions. One Georgist I know went to see a new house just built by a friend of his. Discovering a painter working there, he promptly lined him up for a correspondence course in fundamental economics; and when another stranger came along, this time a lady who was interested in buying the house, he spread the gospel to her also. Yet he did not make himself disliked as a monomaniac, nor was he unable to speak on any but the one topic. In happy friendliness he showed the painter and the purchaser, in his own person, what good people Georgists are, and thus he won them into friendliness for the law of freedom.

Happiness is self-made, and springs

from keeping faith with oneself and one's convictions. A few people seem to be afraid of certainty. They go through life preserving what they call "an open mind"—as if you could have an open mind about the multiplication table! They hold aloof from any danger of conversion; they are not joiners, and they glory in the fact. But neither are they happy, for caginess is not conducive to joy. They go through life warding off the convictions which alone make life an adventure rather than a bore.

Virtue in the stuffy moraliistic

sense also fails to insure happiness, because it is negative and consists largely in deprivation rather than enjoyment. Yet it is quite within the range of probability that the less savory enjoyments will lose their appeal to the person who "keepeth the law." A lot of virtue may alternately be called common sense; it is sensible to eliminate pursuits which do not actively promote permanent well-being. The Georgist keeps himself too busy to bother with such unhappy foolishness. "He that keepeth the law, happy is he."