

## CHARMING READING IN HUMAN VALUES

"Surely Goodness," by Janet Rankin Aiken. Quarry Books, Ridgefield, Conn. 1942. 405 pp. \$2.50.

Three people should be assigned to review Dr. Janet Aiken's newest book. Or one person should request the prerogative of writing three reviews: one on the contents, one on her liberties with style, one on the footnotes.<sup>1</sup>

For fifteen years, we are to gather, our good Georgeist friend has been filing cards or scraps of paper about her friends.<sup>2</sup> For herein she bares their souls to the reader as she presents her Nineteen Ways to Become Good at Living in Sixty-six Little Sketches. I would say that there have been approximately five equally important influences in the author's life—factors which have molded her character to a little more discerning degree than such factors affect the lives of most of us:

One is Fred, upon whom there is no elaboration. Another is her scholarly father and creative-minded mother. The third is motherhood itself, for your reviewer can attest that no lovelier children could be desired.<sup>3</sup> The fourth is Christian Science. And the fifth is Georgeism. Mix these ingredients within the flesh and bones and spirit of a woman whose Ph.D. sets lightly on her person, and there is bound to come from her intellect a fine book.

A book that defies reviewing. For what shall I select from the Nineteen Ways to Become Good at Living to dissertate on?

Is "Surely Goodness" a textbook? It is, but no student would call it such because the average school youth does not expect to have English, Economics and Ethics served in one combination—or in such gay fashion. Will the book give pleasurable reading to the lay-public? Definitely! But who would expect to find a mid-semester exam bisecting the book, and another exam of a totally different nature completing it?

Shall I tell you that Christian Scientists will enjoy her refreshing way of presenting Goodness and Health? Well, the Georgeist hair-

<sup>1</sup> They're amusing—but distracting.

<sup>2</sup> She has no enemies I am sure.

<sup>3</sup> I've met Joan and Donny.

splitters will find no better presentation of the True Science of Economics—told differently.<sup>4</sup>

"Surely Goodness" is as full of goodness as one honest woman could encompass in a lifetime, yet anyone who knows this author realizes that not only will more books come from her pen, but more goodness will be spread by her spirit. However, sometimes Dr. Aiken's goodness overreaches itself. She wanted to be eminently fair to the medical profession because she personally has no use for its services. But she erred badly on her guess that physicians are long-livers. They are not; they are not even average within the professions; they are a crying testimonial to their own blundering prescriptions! The average death year is near 60!<sup>5</sup>

There is only one unfavorable thing I have to say about "Surely Goodness." I sincerely hope that my contemporaries give Dr. Aiken a good trouncing for her stylistic tricks. She may have gone both Shaw and Wells one better in dispensing with commas, apostrophes, etc. But why get along without commas if you have to use more dashes and parentheses? Why, if one likes to forget apostrophes in "don't" and "shan't," must consistency require them to be abandoned in the possessive use of words, too? I am sure it is not only habit that makes us object to these autocratic changes in our grammar forms, but most of the rules of grammar seem to have established themselves, because they help to clarify our reading and writing.

Be prepared, reader of ingrained and fussy traditions, for an electrifying shock. In the chapter on Death (Book Four—"Wisdom"), is a cleancut proposition that deserves a pamphlet. I'm not going to lift the shocking<sup>6</sup> sentence from page 67 that I hope will give you considerable pause for thought. But Janet Aiken has said in strong language what I have been too timorous to say. And if enough people say it, perhaps that decadent idea of wasting perfectly good land on millions of tons of human garbage will some day be done away with. Perhaps also will go the crazy trades of tombstone-making and mortuary parlors.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the day will come when most of mankind refuses to pay rent for this garbage!

Bravo, Janet, for a good book. Give us more.

WILLIAM W. NEWCOMB.