

"Syrian Yankee"

By Salom Rizk

What astonished me most about America was the "depression" everyone was talking about. You see, in the old country, we do not have depressions. We just have honest-to-goodness, first-class poverty. But it is easy, even for the simple and illiterate peasants, to understand our poverty. We needed no economists and no professors to explain it to us. It was caused by constant war and foreign invasions; by naked oppression and brute, primitive tyranny; by the rapacious demands of the tax gatherers and the lords and pashas who owned the land; by lack of modern tools and lack of natural resources. No matter how hard we toiled, how much drudgery and pain we endured trying to make the stoney, stingy earth yield, there just was not enough.

But here in America, where God has poured out wealth, and where the ingenuity of man and science have multiplied God's bounty a thousand fold, where the land is so fertile that if you tickle it with a hoe it laughs with a harvest or gushes with an oil well, where reason and freedom and democracy reign, and have made this the hope for all the hungry and oppressed peoples of the earth, I saw poverty and unspeakable wretchedness.

For sixteen adventurous years I have been searching diligently for the answer to this paradox. I have found and lost the trail countless times, devoured many books, joined and supported many causes. Now, at last, I think that I have found the real answer, thanks to the Henry George School. I am still too dazzled by the brilliance of Henry George's mind, too humbled by the nobility of his soul and the immensity of his scholarship to express an opinion, but among the world's great thinkers, I consider

George the most penetrating and Christlike the world has ever produced. It is worse than useless to try to solve the economic ills of the world, to set up a government, to try to organize an enduring peace or think one thought about social problems without being familiar with "Progress and Poverty."

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