

Chapter 1 : The Curious Republic of Gondour

The Curious Republic of Gondour is a short story by Mark Twain. Twain proposed a state in which all citizens have at least one vote, but where further votes (up to a dozen) could be acquired through education, which was provided by the state for free, or by relative wealth.

I kind of dodged, and the boot-jack broke the looking-glass. I could have waited to see what became of the other missiles if I had wanted to, but I took no interest in such things. I have long felt that while the magazine literature of the day had much to recommend it, it yet lacked stability, solidity, weight. It seemed plain to me that too much space was given to poetry and romance, and not enough to statistics and agriculture. This defect it shall be my earnest endeavour to remedy. If I succeed, the simple consciousness that I have done a good deed will be a sufficient reward. Also, in my department will always be found elaborate condensations of the Patent Office Reports, wherein a faithful endeavour will at all times be made to strip the nutritious facts bare of that effulgence of imagination and sublimity of diction which too often mar the excellence of those great works. And, finally, I call attention with pride to the fact that in my department of the magazine the farmer will always find full market reports, and also complete instructions about farming, even from the grafting of the seed to the harrowing of the matured crop. I shall throw a pathos into the subject of Agriculture that will surprise and delight the world. Such is my programme; and I am persuaded that by adhering to it with fidelity I shall succeed in materially changing the character of this magazine. Therefore I am emboldened to ask the assistance and encouragement of all whose sympathies are with Progress and Reform. In the other departments of the magazine will be found poetry, tales, and other frothy trifles, and to these the reader can turn for relaxation from time to time, and thus guard against overstraining the powers of his mind. I have not sold out of the "Buffalo Express," and shall not; neither shall I stop writing for it. This remark seems necessary in a business point of view. I would not conduct an exclusively and professedly humorous department for any one. We cannot keep the same mood day after day. I am liable, some day, to want to print my opinion on jurisprudence, or Homeric poetry, or international law, and I shall do it. It will be of small consequence to me whether the reader survive or not. I shall never go straining after jokes when in a cheerless mood, so long as the unhackneyed subject of international law is open to me. I will leave all that straining to people who edit professedly and inexorably "humorous" departments and publications. I can print under it statistics, hotel arrivals, or anything that comes handy, without violating faith with the reader. Puns cannot be allowed a place in this department. Inoffensive ignorance, benignant stupidity, and unostentatious imbecility will always be welcomed and cheerfully accorded a corner, and even the feeblest humour will be admitted, when we can do no better; but no circumstances, however dismal, will ever be considered a sufficient excuse for the admission of that last--and saddest evidence of intellectual poverty, the Pun. In a recent issue of the "Independent," the Rev. De Witt Talmage, of Brooklyn, has the following utterance on the subject of "Smells": I have a good Christian friend who, if he sat in the front pew in church, and a working man should enter the door at the other end, would smell him instantly. My friend is not to blame for the sensitiveness of his nose, any more than you would flog a pointer for being keener on the scent than a stupid watch dog. The fact is, if you, had all the churches free, by reason of the mixing up of the common people with the uncommon, you would keep one-half of Christendom sick at their stomach. If you are going to kill the church thus with bad smells, I will have nothing to do with this work of evangelization. We have reason to believe that there will be labouring men in heaven; and also a number of negroes, and Esquimaux, and Terra del Fuegians, and Arabs, and a few Indians, and possibly even some Spaniards and Portuguese. All things are possible with God. We shall have all these sorts of people in heaven; but, alas! Which is to say, we shall lose the company of one who could give more real "tone" to celestial society than any other contribution Brooklyn could furnish. And what would eternal happiness be without the Doctor? Matthew without stockings or sandals; St. Jerome bare headed, and with a coarse brown blanket robe dragging the ground; St. Sebastian with scarcely any raiment at all--these we should see, and should enjoy seeing them; but would we not miss a spike-tailed coat and kids, and turn away regretfully, and say to parties from the Orient: To all outward seeming, the Rev. It may be because here, in the

nineteenth century, Dr. There was a lack of polish about them, and a looseness of etiquette, and a want of exclusiveness, which one cannot help noticing. They healed the very beggars, and held intercourse with people of a villainous odour every day. If the subject of these remarks had been chosen among the original Twelve Apostles, he would not have associated with the rest, because he could not have stood the fishy smell of some of his comrades who came from around the Sea of Galilee. He would have resigned his commission with some such remark as he makes in the extract quoted above: Is there a choir in Mr. And does it ever occur that they have no better manners than to sing that hymn which is so suggestive of labourers and mechanics: We are not prepared to believe so, the reverend Doctor and his friend to the contrary notwithstanding. I purposely wrote the thing as absurdly and as extravagantly as it could be written, in order to be sure and not mislead hurried or heedless readers: I thought that manifest lunacy like that would protect the reader. But to make assurance absolute, and show that I did not and could not seriously mean to attempt an Agricultural Department, I stated distinctly in my postscript that I did not know anything about Agriculture. It lets a little light in on me, and I fancy I perceive that the farmers feel a little bored, sometimes, by the oracular profundity of agricultural editors who "know it all. Shall I tell the real reason why I have unintentionally succeeded in fooling so many people? It is because some of them only read a little of the squib I wrote and jumped to the conclusion that it was serious, and the rest did not read it at all, but heard of my agricultural venture at second-hand. Those cases I could not guard against, of course. To write a burlesque so wild that its pretended facts will not be accepted in perfect good faith by somebody, is, very nearly an impossible thing to do. It is because, in some instances, the reader is a person who never tries to deceive anybody himself, and therefore is not expecting any one to wantonly practise a deception upon him; and in this case the only person dishonoured is the man who wrote the burlesque. In other instances the "nub" or moral of the burlesque--if its object be to enforce a truth--escapes notice in the superior glare of something in the body of the burlesque itself. And very often this "moral" is tagged on at the bottom, and the reader, not knowing that it is the key of the whole thing and the only important paragraph in the article, tranquilly turns up his nose at it and leaves it unread. I have had a deal of experience in burlesques and their unfortunate aptness to deceive the public, and this is why I tried hard to make that agricultural one so broad and so perfectly palpable that even a one-eyed potato could see it; and yet, as I speak the solemn truth, it fooled one of the ablest agricultural editors in America! Dan Murphy enlisted as a private, and fought very bravely. The boys all liked him, and when a wound by and by weakened him down till carrying a musket was too heavy work for him, they clubbed together and fixed him up as a sutler. He made money then, and sent it always to his wife to bank for him. She was a washer and ironer, and knew enough by hard experience to keep money when she got it. On the contrary, she began to get miserly as her bank account grew. She grieved to part with a cent, poor creature, for twice in her hard-working life she had known what it was to be hungry, cold, friendless, sick, and without a dollar in the world, and she had a haunting dread of suffering so again. Well, at last Dan died; and the boys, in testimony of their esteem and respect for him, telegraphed to Mrs. Murphy to know if she would like to have him embalmed and sent home, when you know the usual custom was to dump a poor devil like him into a shallow hole, and then inform his friends what had become of him. Murphy jumped to the conclusion that it would only cost two or three dollars to embalm her dead husband, and so she telegraphed "Yes. She uttered a wild, sad wail, that pierced every heart, and said: A telegraph station has just been established upon the traditional site of the Garden of Eden. As a companion to that, nothing fits so aptly and so perfectly as this: Brooklyn has revived the knightly tournament of the Middle Ages. A "tournament" in Lynchburg is a thing easily within the comprehension of the average mind; but no commonly gifted person can conceive of such a spectacle in Brooklyn without straining his powers. Brooklyn is part and parcel of the city of New York, and there is hardly romance enough in the entire metropolis to re-supply a Virginia "knight" with "chivalry," in case he happened to run out of it. And let the reader remember, and also add to his picture, as follows, to wit: It seems impossible, and yet it is true. This was doubtless the first appearance of the "tournament" up here among the rolling-mills and factories, and will probably be the last. It will be well to let it retire permanently to the rural districts of Virginia, where, it is said, the fine mailed and plumed, noble-natured, maiden-rescuing, wrong-redressing, adventure-seeking knight of romance is accepted and believed in by the peasantry with pleasing simplicity,

while they reject with scorn the plain, unpolished verdict whereby history exposes him as a braggart, a ruffian, a fantastic vagabond; and an ignoramus. All romance aside, what shape would our admiration of the heroes of Ashby de la Zouch be likely to take, in this practical age, if those worthies were to rise up and come here and perform again the chivalrous deeds of that famous passage of arms? Nothing but a New York jury and the insanity plea could save them from hanging, from the amiable Bois- Guilbert and the pleasant Front-de-Boeuf clear down to the nameless ruffians that entered the riot with unpictured shields and did their first murder and acquired their first claim to respect that day. The doings of the so-called "chivalry" of the Middle Ages were absurd enough, even when they were brutally and bloodily in earnest, and when their surroundings of castles and donjons, savage landscapes and half-savage peoples, were in keeping; but those doings gravely reproduced with tinsel decorations and mock pageantry, by bucolic gentlemen with broomstick lances, and with muffin-rings to represent the foe, and all in the midst of the refinement and dignity of a carefully-developed modern civilisation, is absurdity gone crazy. Now, for next exhibition, let us have a fine representation of one of those chivalrous wholesale butcheries and burnings of Jewish women and children, which the crusading heroes of romance used to indulge in in their European homes, just before starting to the Holy Land, to seize and take to their protection the Sepulchre and defend it from "pollution. Parties desiring to examine this singular relic with a view to purchasing, can do so by calling upon Daniel S.. In a single instant of time, a long drawn panorama of sights and scenes in the Holy Land flashed through my memory--town and grove, desert, camp, and caravan clattering after each other and disappearing, leaping me with a little of the surprised and dizzy feeling which I have experienced at sundry times when a long express train has overtaken me at some quiet curve and gone whizzing, car by car, around the corner and out of sight. In that prolific instant I saw again all the country from the Sea of Galilee and Nazareth clear to Jerusalem, and thence over the hills of Judea and through the Vale of Sharon to Joppa, down by the ocean. Leaving out unimportant stretches of country and details of incident, I saw and experienced the following- described matters and things. Immediately three years fell away from my age, and a vanished time was restored to me September, It was a flaming Oriental day--this one that had come up out of the past and brought along its actors, its stage-properties, and scenic effects--and our party had just ridden through the squalid hive of human vermin which still holds the ancient Biblical name of Endor; I was bringing up the rear on my grave four-dollar steed, who was about beginning to compose himself for his usual noon nap. I was fervently thankful when we had gotten well up on the desolate hillside and outstripped them and left them jawing and gesticulating in the rear. What a tempest had seemingly gone roaring and crashing by me and left its dull thunders pulsing in my ears! I was in the rear, as I was saying. Our pack-mules and Arabs were far ahead, and Dan, Jack, Moulton, Davis, Denny, Church, and Birch these names will do as well as any to represent the boys were following close after them. As my horse nodded to rest, I heard a sort of panting behind me, and turned and saw that a tawny youth from the village had overtaken me --a true remnant and representative of his ancestress the Witch--a galvanised scurvy, wrought into the human shape and garnished with ophthalmia and leprous scars--an airy creature with an invisible shirt- front that reached below the pit of his stomach, and no other clothing to speak of except a tobacco-pouch, an ammunition-pocket, and a venerable gun, which was long enough to club any game with that came within shooting distance, but far from efficient as an article of dress. I thought to myself, "Now this disease with a human heart in it is going to shoot me. I found he was only a friendly villain who wanted a trifle of bucksheesh, and after begging what he could get in that way, was perfectly willing to trade off everything he had for more. I believe he would have parted with his last shirt for bucksheesh if he had had one. He was smoking the "humbliest" pipe I ever saw--a dingy, funnel- shaped, red-clay thing, streaked and grimed with oil and tears of tobacco, and with all the different kinds of dirt there are, and thirty per cent. I never smelt anything like it. It withered a cactus that stood lifting its prickly hands aloft beside the trail. It even woke up my horse.

The Curious Republic of Gondour by Mark Twain is one of the background documents relevant to the document series that discusses limiting franchise directed to mitigating the worst consequences of unrestricted franchise within the context of poorly educated populations.

I found that the nation had at first tried universal suffrage pure and simple, but had thrown that form aside because the result was not satisfactory. It had seemed to deliver all power into the hands of the ignorant and non-tax-paying classes; and of a necessity the responsible offices were filled from these classes also. A remedy was sought. The people believed they had found it; not in the destruction of universal suffrage, but in the enlargement of it. It was an odd idea, and ingenious. You must understand, the constitution gave every man a vote; therefore that vote was a vested right, and could not be taken away. But the constitution did not say that certain individuals might not be given two votes, or ten! So an amendatory clause was inserted in a quiet way; a clause which authorised the enlargement of the suffrage in certain cases to be specified by statute. But of course the newspapers soon began to suspect; and then out they came! The victory was complete. The new law was framed and passed. Therefore, learning being more prevalent and more easily acquired than riches, educated men became a wholesome check upon wealthy men, since they could outvote them. Learning goes usually with uprightness, broad views, and humanity; so the learned voters, possessing the balance of power, became the vigilant and efficient protectors of the great lower rank of society. And now a curious thing developed itself—a sort of emulation, whose object was voting power! Whereas formerly a man was honored only according to the amount of money he possessed, his grandeur was measured now by the number of votes he wielded. A man with only one vote was conspicuously respectful to his neighbor who possessed three. And if he was a man above the common-place, he was as conspicuously energetic in his determination to acquire three for himself. This spirit of emulation invaded all ranks. A man honoured as the possessor of great voting power could not afford to risk the loss of it upon a doubtful chance. It was curious to observe the manners and customs which the enlargement plan produced. Walking the street with a friend one day he delivered a careless bow to a passer-by, and then remarked that that person possessed only one vote and would probably never earn another; he was more respectful to the next acquaintance he met; he explained that this salute was a four-vote bow. He said there was no law to regulate this thing, except that most powerful of all laws, custom. Custom had created these varying bows, and in time they had become easy and natural. I took off mine, too, with a mysterious awe. I was beginning to be infected. Nine immortals is his political weight! He would swing a hundred and fifty votes if our system were perfect. Nine immortal votes is the only power we uncover for that is, in civil life. Very great officials receive that mark of homage, of course. It was also common to hear youths planning a future of ever so many votes for themselves. I knew of more than one case where an heiress was married to a youngster who had but one vote; the argument being that he was gifted with such excellent parts that in time he would acquire a good voting strength, and perhaps in the long run be able to outvote his wife, if he had luck. Competitive examinations were the rule and in all official grades. I remarked that the questions asked the candidates were wild, intricate, and often required a sort of knowledge not needed in the office sought.

Chapter 3 : The Curious Republic of Gondour by Dru Sauer on Prezi

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Chapter 4 : Inkspired - The curious republic of Gondour, and other whimsical sketches By Mark Twain

The Curious Republic of Gondour by Mark Twain. As soon as I had learned to speak the language a little, I became greatly interested in the people and the system of government.

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Chapter 5 : The Curious Republic of Gondour by Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) - Full Text Free Book

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I found that the nation had at first tried universal suffrage pure and simple, but had thrown that form aside because the result was not satisfactory. It had seemed to deliver all power into the hands of the ignorant and non-tax-paying classes; and of a necessity the responsible offices were filled from these classes also. A remedy was sought. The people believed they had found it; not in the destruction of universal suffrage, but in the enlargement of it. It was an odd idea, and ingenious. You must understand, the constitution gave every man a vote; therefore that vote was a vested right, and could not be taken away. But the constitution did not say that certain individuals might not be given two votes, or ten! So an amendatory clause was inserted in a quiet way; a clause which authorised the enlargement of the suffrage in certain cases to be specified by statute. To offer to "limit" the suffrage might have made instant trouble; the offer to "enlarge" it had a pleasant aspect. But of course the newspapers soon began to suspect; and then out they came! It was found, however, that for once--and for the first time in the history of the republic --property, character, and intellect were able to wield a political influence; for once, money, virtue, and intelligence took a vital and a united interest in a political question; for once these powers went to the "primaries" in strong force; for once the best men in the nation were put forward as candidates for that parliament whose business it should be to enlarge the suffrage. The weightiest half of the press quickly joined forces with the new movement, and left the other half to rail about the proposed "destruction of the liberties" of the bottom layer of society, the hitherto governing class of the community. The victory was complete. The new law was framed and passed. Therefore, learning being more prevalent and more easily acquired than riches, educated men became a wholesome check upon wealthy men, since they could outvote them. Learning goes usually with uprightness, broad views, and humanity; so the learned voters, possessing the balance of power, became the vigilant and efficient protectors of the great lower rank of society. And now a curious thing developed itself--a sort of emulation, whose object was voting power! Whereas formerly a man was honored only according to the amount of money he possessed, his grandeur was measured now by the number of votes he wielded. A man with only one vote was conspicuously respectful to his neighbor who possessed three. And if he was a man above the common-place, he was as conspicuously energetic in his determination to acquire three for himself. This spirit of emulation invaded all ranks. Votes based upon capital were commonly called "mortal" votes, because they could be lost; those based upon learning were called "immortal," because they were permanent, and because of their customarily imperishable character they were naturally more valued than the other sort. I say "customarily" for the reason that these votes were not absolutely imperishable, since insanity could suspend them. Under this system, gambling and speculation almost ceased in the republic. A man honoured as the possessor of great voting power could not afford to risk the loss of it upon a doubtful chance. It was curious to observe the manners and customs which the enlargement plan produced. Walking the street with a friend one day he delivered a careless bow to a passer-by, and then remarked that that person possessed only one vote and would probably never earn another; he was more respectful to the next acquaintance he met; he explained that this salute was a four-vote bow. I tried to "average" the importance of the people he accosted after that, by the-nature of his bows, but my success was only partial, because of the somewhat greater homage paid to the immortals than to the mortals. He said there was no law to regulate this thing, except that most powerful of all laws, custom. Custom had created these varying bows, and in time they had become easy and natural. I took off mine, too, with a mysterious awe. I was beginning to be infected. Nine immortals is his political weight! He would swing a hundred and fifty votes if our system were perfect. Nine immortal votes is the only power we uncover for that is, in civil life. Very great officials receive that mark of homage, of course. It was also common to hear youths planning a future of ever so many votes for themselves. I heard shrewd mammas speak of certain young men as good "catches" because they possessed such-and-such a number of votes. I knew of more than

one case where an heiress was married to a youngster who had but one vote; the argument being that he was gifted with such excellent parts that in time he would acquire a good voting strength, and perhaps in the long run be able to outvote his wife, if he had luck. Competitive examinations were the rule and in all official grades. I remarked that the questions asked the candidates were wild, intricate, and often required a sort of knowledge not needed in the office sought. One was, that ignorance and incompetence had no place in the government. Brains and property managed the state. A candidate for office must have marked ability, education, and high character, or he stood no sort of chance of election. If a hod-carrier possessed these, he could succeed; but the mere fact that he was a hod-carrier could not elect him, as in previous times. It was now a very great honour to be in the parliament or in office; under the old system such distinction had only brought suspicion upon a man and made him a helpless mark for newspaper contempt and scurrility. Officials did not need to steal now, their salaries being vast in comparison with the pittance paid in the days when parliaments were created by hod-carriers, who viewed official salaries from a hod-carrying point of view and compelled that view to be respected by their obsequious servants. Justice was wisely and rigidly administered; for a judge, after once reaching his place through the specified line of promotions, was a permanency during good behaviour. He was not obliged to modify his judgments according to the effect they might have upon the temper of a reigning political party. The country was mainly governed by a ministry which went out with the administration that created it. This was also the case with the chiefs of the great departments. Minor officials ascended to their several positions through well-earned promotions, and not by a jump from gin-mills or the needy families and friends of members of parliament. Good behaviour measured their terms of office. The head of the governments the Grand Caliph, was elected for a term of twenty years. I questioned the wisdom of this. I was answered that he could do no harm, since the ministry and the parliament governed the land, and he was liable to impeachment for misconduct. This great office had twice been ably filled by women, women as aptly fitted for it as some of the sceptred queens of history. Members of the cabinet, under many administrations, had been women. I found that the pardoning power was lodged in a court of pardons, consisting of several great judges. Under the old regime, this important power was vested in a single official, and he usually took care to have a general jail delivery in time for the next election. I inquired about public schools. There were plenty of them, and of free colleges too. I inquired about compulsory education. This was received with a smile, and the remark: Our free schools and free colleges require no law to fill them. I had long been unused to the sound of it in my own. The Gondour national airs were forever dinning in my ears; therefore I was glad to leave that country and come back to my dear native land, where one never hears that sort of music. Get started by clicking the "Add" button. Add The Curious Republic of Gondour to your own personal library.

Chapter 6 : Schilb Antiquarian

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i'd seen "the curious republic of gondour" mentioned in another place, noticed the recommendation, and acquired it on this amazon kindle that the wife picked up for me for christmas. this handy little device is a treasure and i look forward to future generations as they will, no doubt, improve on the model.

Chapter 8 : The Curious Republic of Gondour by Mark Twain

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known by his pen name Mark Twain, was an American author and calendrierdelascience.com is noted for his novels Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (), called "the Great American Novel", and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer ().

Chapter 9 : The Curious Republic of Gondour - Wikipedia

The Curious Republic of Gondour As soon as I had learned to speak the language a little, I became greatly interested in the people and the system of government. I found that the nation had at first tried universal suffrage pure and simple, but had thrown that form aside because the result was not satisfactory.