

History Through Literature (continued)

His Majesty's neck; he gave them an extremely gracious welcome and courteously invited them to supper.

In the meantime, they were shown around the city; they saw public buildings that rose up to the clouds, market places adorned with countless columns, fountains of clear water, pink water or sugarcane liqueurs which flowed continuously in broad public squares paved with a kind of precious stone that gave off an odor like that of cloves and cinnamon. Candide asked to see the law courts; he was told that there were none, that law-suits were unknown. He asked if there were prisons; the answer was no. What surprised and delighted him most of all was the Palace of Science, where he saw a gallery two thousand paces long filled with instruments of mathematics and physics.

After they had spent the whole afternoon covering about a thousandth of the city, they were taken back to the royal palace. Candide sat down to table with His Majesty, his valet Cacambo and several ladies. No better meal was ever served, and no supper conversation was ever more sparkling than His Majesty's. Cacambo explained his witty remarks to Candide, and they seemed witty even in translation. Of all the things that amazed Candide, this was by no means the least amazing.

They spent a month in the palace. Candide kept saying to Cacambo, "Once again, my friend, I admit that there's no comparison between this country and the castle where I was born; but it's still true that Lady Cunegonde isn't here, and you must have some mistress in Europe too. If we stay here, we'll only be like everyone else, but if we go

back to our world with no more than twelve sheep laden with stones from Eldorado, we'll be richer than all the kings of Europe put together."... So the two fortunate men decided to be fortunate no longer: they asked His Majesty for permission to leave.

"It's a foolish thing to do," said the king. "I know my country doesn't amount to much, but when a man is fairly well off somewhere, he ought

to stay there. I certainly have no right to prevent foreigners from leaving: that kind of tyranny is sanctioned by neither our customs nor our laws. All men are free. You may leave whenever you like, but you'll have a very difficult journey. It's impossible to sail against the current of the river that miraculously brought you here, and which flows through vaults of rock. The mountains surrounding my kingdom are ten thousand feet

high and as steep as a wall; they're all over twenty-five miles wide, and they drop straight down on the other side. However, since you're determined to leave, I'll order my mechanical engineers to construct a machine that will carry you in comfort. When you've been taken over the mountains, no one can go with you any farther, because my subjects have all sworn never to go beyond them, and they're too wise to break their word. But you may ask me for anything else you wish."

"All we ask of Your Majesty," said Cacambo, "is a few sheep laden with food and some of the pebbles and mud of your country."

The king laughed and said, "I can't understand why you people from Europe are so fond of our yellow mud, but take as much as you like, you're welcome to it."

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Questions to Think About

1. What are the "pebbles" and "yellow mud" of Eldorado that Europeans value so much?
2. Why does no one leave Eldorado?
3. **Identifying Central Issues** What does Candide find to admire as he tours the city?
4. **Humanities Link** In what ways is the king of Eldorado an ideal Enlightenment ruler?