

Candide

- Date** ■ 1759
- Place** ■ written in Geneva, Switzerland, published in Paris
- Type of Source** ■ Novel, satire, comedy (original in French)
- Author** ■ Voltaire (pen name of Francois Marie Arouet)
- Historical Context** ■ While Voltaire wrote novels, plays, and poems, he also is considered an Enlightenment philosopher. He was imprisoned in the Bastille and briefly went into exile in Great Britain for his political views.
- Internal Context** ■ *Candide* is a commentary on the religion and politics of the time. It chronicles of non-stop, life-threatening misadventures that befall Candide, a romantic young man recently evicted from his childhood home. He was forced to fight in a war and travels to Holland, Portugal, Argentina, and Paraguay before wandering into El Dorado, a utopia in the mountains of Peru. Later he traveled to Suriname, France, England, and Constantinople.

Chapter 18—What They Saw in the Country of El Dorado

...Candide and **Cacambo** got into the coach, the six **sheep flew**, and, in less than a quarter of an hour, they arrived at the King's palace, which was situated at the further end of the capital. At the entrance was a portal two hundred and twenty feet high and one hundred wide; but it is impossible for words to express the materials of which it was built. The reader, however, will readily **conceive** that they must have a **prodigious** superiority over the pebbles and sand, which we call gold and precious stones.

Twenty beautiful young virgins in waiting received Candide and Cacambo on their **alighting** from the coach, conducted them to the bath and clad them in robes woven of the down of hummingbirds; after which they were introduced by the great officers of the crown of both sexes to the King's apartment, between two files of musicians, each file consisting of a thousand, **agreeable** to the custom of the country.

When they drew near to the **presence-chamber**, Cacambo asked one of the officers in what manner they were to pay their **obeisance** to His Majesty; whether it was the custom to fall upon their knees, or to prostrate themselves upon the ground; whether they were to put their hands upon their heads, or behind their backs; whether they were to lick the dust off the floor; in short, what was the ceremony usual on such occasions.

"The custom," said the great officer, "is to embrace the King and kiss him on each cheek."

Candide and Cacambo accordingly threw their arms round His Majesty's neck, who received them in the most gracious manner imaginable, and very politely asked them to **sup** with him.

While supper was preparing, orders were given to show them the city, where they saw public structures that reared their lofty heads to the clouds; the marketplaces decorated with a thousand columns; fountains of spring

Cacambo

Candide's servant and traveling companion

sheep flew

In this fantasy, it is difficult to know if the sheep actually flew in the air or just traveled quickly.

conceive

understand

prodigious

enormous

alighting

getting down

agreeable

suitable

presence-chamber

room where a king receives his guests

obeisance

respects

sup

dine, eat

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water, besides others of rose water, and of **liquors** drawn from the sugarcane, incessantly flowing in the great squares, which were paved with a kind of precious stones that emitted an odor like that of cloves and cinnamon.

Candide asked to see the High Court of justice, the Parliament; but was answered that they had none in that country, being utter strangers to lawsuits. He then inquired if they had any prisons; they replied none. But what gave him at once the greatest surprise and pleasure was the Palace of Sciences, where he saw a gallery two thousand feet long, filled with the various apparatus in mathematics and **natural philosophy**.

After having spent the whole afternoon in seeing only about the thousandth part of the city, they were brought back to the King's palace. Candide sat down at the table with His Majesty, his valet Cacambo, and several ladies of the court. Never was entertainment more elegant, nor could any one possibly show more wit than His Majesty displayed while they were at supper. Cacambo explained all the King's **bons mots** to Candide, and, although they were translated, they still appeared to be bons mots. Of all the things that surprised Candide, this was not the least.

They spent a whole month in this hospitable place, during which time Candide was continually saying to Cacambo, "I **own**, my friend, once more, that the castle where I was born is a mere nothing in comparison to the place where we now are; but still **Miss Cunegund** is not here, and you yourself have doubtless some fair one in Europe for whom you sigh. If we remain here we shall only be as others are; whereas if we return to our own world with only a dozen of El Dorado sheep, loaded with the pebbles of this country, we shall be richer than all the kings in Europe; we shall no longer need to stand in awe of the **Inquisitors**; and we may easily recover Miss Cunegund."

This speech was perfectly agreeable to Cacambo. A fondness for roving, for making a **figure** in their own country, and for boasting of what they had seen in their travels, was so powerful in our two wanderers that they resolved to be no longer happy; and demanded permission of the King to quit the country.

"You are about to do a **rash** and silly action," said the King. "I am sensible my kingdom is an inconsiderable spot; but when people are tolerably at their ease in any place, I should think it would be to their interest to remain there. Most assuredly, I have no right to detain you, or any strangers, against your wills; this is an act of **tyranny** to which our manners and our laws are equally **repugnant**. All men are by nature free; you have therefore an undoubted liberty to depart whenever you please, but you will have many and great difficulties to encounter in passing the frontiers. It is impossible to ascend that rapid river which runs under high and vaulted rocks, and by which you were conveyed hither by a kind of miracle. The mountains by which my kingdom are **hemmed in** on all sides, are ten thousand feet high,

liquors*juice***natural philosophy***the study of nature and the universe***bons mots***clever sayings***own***admit***Miss Cunegund***Candide's cousin and girlfriend, who he had to leave in Buenos Ayres***Inquisitors***people charged with finding religious heretics (often non-Christians). Candide had killed the Grand Inquisitor in Lisbon to free Miss Cunegund. The Inquisition lasted into the 1800s in Portugal.***figure***favorable impression***rash***hasty, not well thought out***tyranny***oppression***repugnant***offensive***hemmed in***surrounded*

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and perfectly perpendicular; they are above **ten leagues** across, and the descent from them is one continued precipice.

"However, since you are determined to leave us, I will immediately give orders to the superintendent of my carriages to **cause** one to be made that will convey you very safely. When they have conducted you to the back of the mountains, nobody can attend you farther; for my subjects have made a vow never to quit the kingdom, and they are too prudent to break it. Ask me whatever else you please."

"All we shall ask of Your Majesty," said Cacambo, "is only a few sheep laden with provisions, pebbles, and the clay of your country."

The King smiled at the request and said, "I cannot imagine what pleasure you Europeans find in our yellow clay; but take away as much of it as you will, and much good may it do you."

He immediately gave orders to his engineers to make a machine to hoist these two extraordinary men out of the kingdom. Three thousand good machinists went to work and finished it in about fifteen days, and it did not cost more than twenty millions **sterling** of that country's money. Candide and Cacambo were placed on this machine, and they took with them two large red sheep, bridled and saddled, to ride upon, when they got on the other side of the mountains; twenty others to serve as **sumpters** for carrying provisions; thirty laden with presents of whatever was most curious in the country, and fifty with gold, diamonds, and other precious stones. The King, at parting with our two adventurers, embraced them with the greatest cordiality.

It was a curious sight to behold the manner of their setting off, and the ingenious method by which they and their sheep were hoisted to the top of the mountains. The machinists and engineers took leave of them as soon as they had conveyed them to a place of safety, and Candide was wholly occupied with the thoughts of presenting his sheep to Miss Cunegund.

"Now," cried he, "thanks to Heaven, we have more than sufficient to pay the **Governor of Buenos Ayres** for Miss Cunegund, if she is **redeemable**. Let us make the best of our way to **Cayenne**, where we will take shipping and then we may at leisure think of what kingdom we shall purchase with our riches."

ten leagues

a distance of about 30 miles

cause

bring about, have

sterling

a unit of currency

sumpters

pack animals

Governor of Buenos Ayres

governor, probably of Buenos Aires in Spanish Argentina, who wanted to marry Miss Cunegund

redeemable

for sale, available. Cacambo did manage to free Miss Cunegund. However, the two were then captured by a pirate and shipped to the Ottoman Empire.

Cayenne

capital of French Guiana

Source: Voltaire, *Candide*, n.d., <http://www.literature.org/authors/voltaire/candide/chapter_18.html> (5/19/11).