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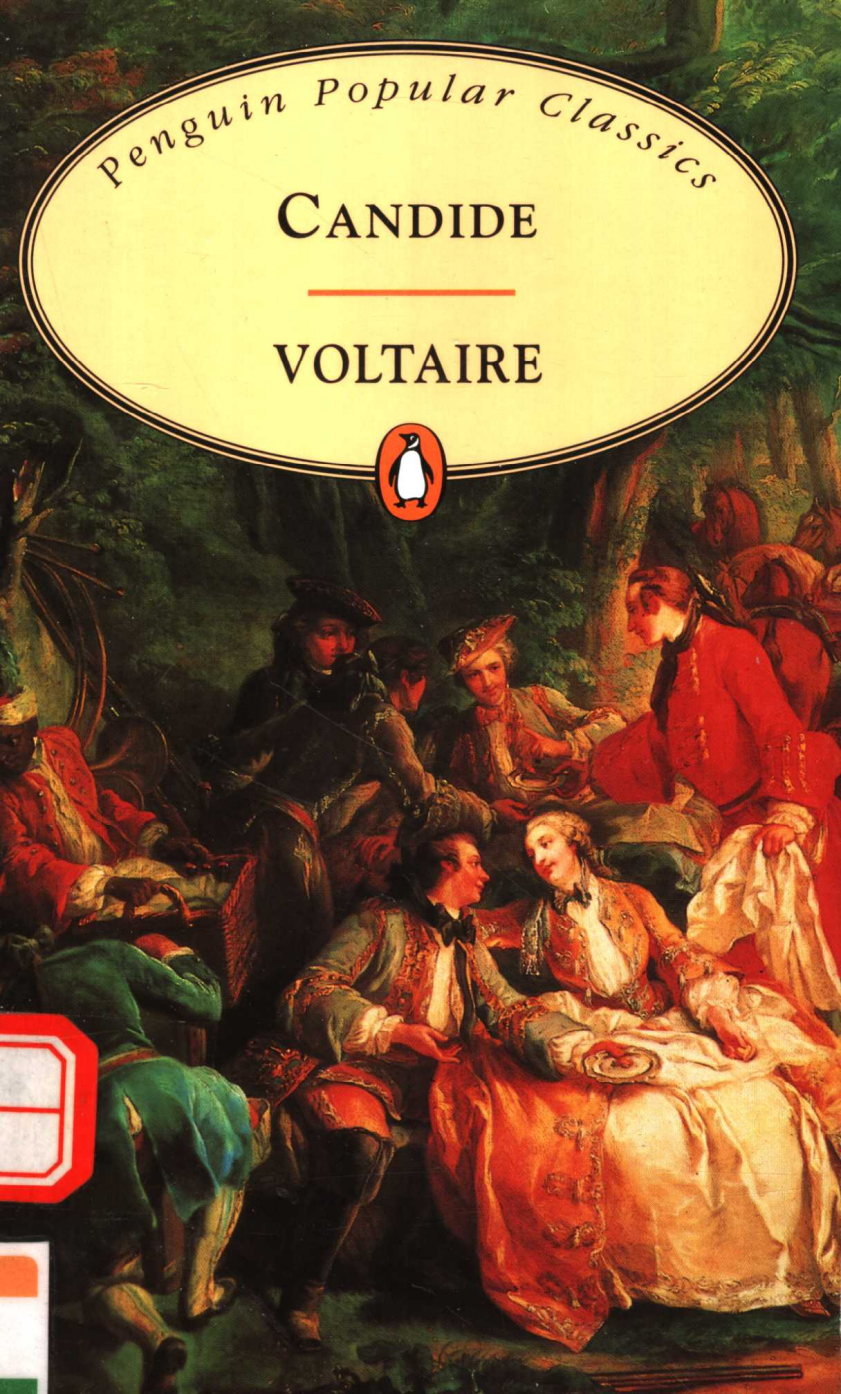
CANDIDE

VOLTAIRE



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Published by the Penguin Group
Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England
Penguin Putnam Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2
Penguin Books India (P) Ltd, 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park,
New Delhi - 110 017, India
Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, Cnr Rosedale and Airborne Roads, Albany, Auckland,
New Zealand
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

www.penguin.com

First published 1759
Published in Penguin Popular Classics 1997
Reprinted in the present form 2001
1

Printed in England by Cox & Wyman Ltd, Reading, Berkshire

PENGUIN POPULAR CLASSICS

CANDIDE

BY VOLTAIRE

VOLTAIRE (1694–1778). Highly respected French Enlightenment writer, famous in the eighteenth century as a philosopher, satirist, historian, letter-writer, critic, dramatist, novelist and poet.

François Marie Arouet, who later adopted the name of Voltaire, was born in 1694. He was the son of a notary and was educated at a Jesuit school in Paris. Determined on a literary career, he gained an introduction to the intellectual life of Paris and soon became known as a writer of satires and odes. However, in 1717–18 he served a six-month term of imprisonment in the Bastille, as punishment for his satire on the Regent, and between 1726 and 1729 he was exiled to England. His epic poem *La Henriade* was published in 1724, and exulted him to a place by Homer and Virgil in the eyes of his contemporaries. His *Philosophic Letters* (1733) are a harsh indictment of the French system of government, in opposition to the freer reign he discovered in England, and were shocking enough not to be allowed on sale anywhere in France. He spent the next fifteen years at the country seat of Madame de Châtelet and here he wrote his most popular tragedies and also *Zadig*, a philosophical Eastern tale, which contained many of his wittiest and cleverest ideas. After Madame de Châtelet's death, he visited the court of Frederick the Great, where he completed his important historical work *Essay on Customs* and began his *Philosophic Dictionary*, which was not published until 1764. In 1759 he published his best-known work, *Candide*, a cunning satire which pretends to espouse the theory that 'all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds', then skilfully and hilariously destroys it. He triumphantly returned to Paris, from where he had been exiled for so long, and died in 1778 at the age of eighty-four.

Candide is undoubtedly Voltaire's masterpiece. A brilliant satire of the misplaced optimism and ignorance prevalent around him, this timeless story still retains its relevance and biting wit.

CONTENTS

Chapter		
I.	The Castle of Thunder-ten-Tronckh	*page* 1
II.	Running the Gauntlet	4
III.	Escape into Holland	6
IV.	Pangloss on the Pox	9
V.	The Death of the Anabaptist	12
VI.	An Auto-da-fé	15
VII.	Cunégonde Re-found	16
VIII.	Cunégonde's Story	19
IX.	Deaths of the Jew and the Inquisitor	22
X.	Embarkation for the New World	24
XI.	The Old Woman's Story—1	26
XII.	The Old Woman's Story—2	29
XIII.	The Governor of Buenos Aires	33
XIV.	Flight to Paraguay	35
XV.	The Jesuit Baron	39
XVI.	The Girls and the Monkeys	41
XVII.	El Dorado—1	45
XVIII.	El Dorado—2	48
XIX.	The Dutch Shipmaster	54
XX.	Martin the Manichæan	59
XXI.	The Nature of Mankind	62
XXII.	A Rich Stranger in Paris	64
XXIII.	'To Encourage the Others'	75
XXIV.	Paquette and Friar Giroflée	77
XXV.	Senator Pococurante	81
XXVI.	Supper with Six Kings	87
XXVII.	Voyage to Constantinople	91
XXVIII.	The Galley-slaves' Stories	95
XXIX.	Cunégonde Found Again	98
XXX.	Philosophy on the Propontis	99

CANDIDE, OR OPTIMISM

CHAPTER I

THE CASTLE OF THUNDER-TEN-TRONCKH

ONCE upon a time, in the province of Westphalia, at the castle of his lordship the Baron von Thunder-ten-Tronckh, there lived a boy of very sweet disposition. His mind could be read in his face. He was fairly intelligent, yet his general outlook was one of utter simplicity. Probably this was why he acquired the name of Candide.

The older servants of the household suspected that he was the son of his lordship's sister, the reputed father being a neighbouring landowner. The sister had refused to marry him, although he was an agreeable and worthy man, because his coat-of-arms had only seventy-one quarterings—the others having disappeared in the storms of time.

The Baron was one of the most powerful noblemen in Westphalia; as was evidenced by the fact that his castle had a great gate and windows, and its hall was hung with tapestry. The dogs that ran about his farms could at a pinch be mustered into a pack for hunting, at which his stablemen served as whippers-in. His grand chaplain was the village parson. Everyone called him 'My Lord', and laughed at his anecdotes.

Her ladyship the Baroness weighed about twenty-five stone. This contributed greatly to her prestige, which was enhanced by the dignity with which she did the honours of the house. The daughter, whose name was Cunégonde,

was seventeen years old, fresh complexioned, plump, and attractive. The son of the house had the reputation of being 'a chip of the old block'.

The family had a household oracle, a tutor named Pangloss. Young Candide absorbed his teachings with the open-hearted simplicity of his age and nature. These teachings were metaphysico-theologo-cosmolonigological. Pangloss could prove to everybody's satisfaction that there is no effect without a cause: furthermore, that in this best of all possible worlds the Baron's castle was the finest of castles, and the Baroness the finest of all possible baronesses.

'It is demonstrable', Pangloss would say, 'that things cannot be other than they are. For, since everything is made for a purpose, everything must be for the best possible purpose. Noses, you observe, were made to support spectacles: consequently, we have spectacles. Legs, it is plain, were created to wear breeches, and are supplied with them. Stone was made to be quarried, and built into castles: that is why his lordship has such a fine castle—for the greatest baron in the province must of necessity also be the best housed. Pigs were made to be eaten: so we eat pork all the year round. It follows that those who say that *everything is good* are talking foolishly: what they should say is that *everything is for the best.*'[1]

Candide listened attentively to all this, and believed it. For his part, he thought Mistress Cunégonde extremely beautiful, though he never had the courage to tell her so. He concluded that, next to the happiness of being born a Baron von Thunder-ten-Tronckh, the second degree of happiness was to be Mistress Cunégonde; the third, to see

[1] In the French, '*tout est bien*' and '*tout est au mieux*'. This is the only passage in which Voltaire seems to indicate that there is any contradiction between the two phrases. Elsewhere Pangloss uses both as expressions of his doctrine, apparently almost interchangeably.

her every day; and the fourth, to be taught by Dr. Pangloss, the greatest philosopher in the province, and, therefore, in the whole world.

One day Cunégonde was walking near the castle, in the little copse which was known as 'the park', when through the bushes she saw Dr. Pangloss giving a lesson in applied physics to her mother's maid, a pretty and obliging little brunette. Having an inborn passion for natural science, Cunégonde, without betraying her presence, watched the Doctor's repeated demonstrations. She had no difficulty in understanding his 'sufficing reason'—a phrase that he often used—or the sequence of causes and effects. She returned home in a state of pensive agitation, filled with a desire for knowledge and reflecting that she herself might well become young Candide's 'sufficing reason'—and vice versa.

On her way back to the castle, she met Candide. She blushed, and greeted him in a faltering voice. Candide blushed too, and spoke without knowing what he said.

Next day, as they were leaving the table after dinner, Cunégonde and Candide found themselves behind a screen. Cunégonde dropped her handkerchief, and Candide picked it up. She artlessly seized his hand, and the youth artlessly kissed hers—with remarkable warmth, intensity and grace. Their lips met, their eyes sparkled, their knees trembled, their hands strayed . . .

Baron von Thunder-ten-Tronckh, who happened to pass by the screen, observed this interplay of cause and effect. He drove Candide out of the castle, with vigorous kicks from behind. Cunégonde fainted, and on coming to was smacked by the Baroness. There was consternation in the finest and best of all possible castles.

CHAPTER II

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

EXPELLED from his earthly paradise, Candide wandered blindly and in tears, casting his eyes towards Heaven, or back towards the finest of castles, where lay the loveliest of barons' daughters. He lay down to sleep in a furrow; it was snowing heavily.

Next day, numb with cold, he dragged himself to the nearest village, which was called Valdberghofftrarbkdik-dorff. Penniless and faint with hunger and fatigue, he loitered gloomily at the door of an inn.

He was observed by two men dressed in blue. 'Comrade,' said one of these, 'yonder is a well-made young fellow—of the right height, too.' They came up to Candide, and politely invited him to dine with them. 'Gentlemen,' said Candide, 'I am much honoured, but I have not the money for my share.'

'My dear young gentleman,' said one of the blue-coats, 'persons of your build and quality never pay for anything. Let me see, now, I reckon you would be five feet five inches high?'

'Yes, sirs, that is exactly my height', Candide bowed.

'Well, then, young gentleman, pray sit down with us. We will not only pay your reckoning, but will never suffer a man like you to want money. Men were born to assist one another.'

'You are perfectly right', said Candide. 'That is what Dr. Pangloss always says. I now see clearly that everything is for the best.'

His companions pressed several crowns upon him. He accepted, offering in exchange an I.O.U., which they

declined to take. 'You are, I'll be bound, a man of loyalty and devotion?' said one of them.

'Yes, indeed, Mistress Cunégonde has all my ——'

'No, no, what we mean is, are you not loyally devoted to the King of Bulgaria?'

'Why, not at all, since I have never seen him.'

'But 'tis the most charming of kings! Come, we must drink to his health.' Candide drank to the toast.

'That's all that is required', he was then informed. 'You are now a mainstay, defender and hero of the Bulgarian people. Your fortune is made, you are on the high road to glory.'

Thereupon the two blue-coats put Candide in irons, and led him off to their regiment. He was taught to right turn, left turn, draw his rammer, return his rammer, present, fire, double quick march, and received thirty strokes with a cane. Next day he drilled a little less badly, and received only twenty strokes. On the third day he earned the admiration of his comrades by receiving only ten.

Candide was bewildered, and could not see how he was a hero. One fine spring day he decided to go for a walk—not to any place in particular—acting on the principle that human beings, like animals, have the right to use their legs as they wish. He had gone less than two leagues when he was overtaken by four other heroes, six feet tall, who tied him up and carried him to a prison cell.

At the court-martial, Candide was asked whether he preferred to run the gauntlet thirty-six times through the whole regiment, or to have his skull split by a dozen bullets. It was no use his saying that he didn't want either. He had to choose; so he exercised that divine gift known as 'Free Will' by choosing to run the gauntlet thirty-six times.

He performed two of these canters. Since the regiment numbered two thousand men, this meant four thousand

rammer blows, which laid his muscles and nerves bare from the neck to the rump.

As they were getting ready for the third lap, Candide gave up, and asked them, as a favour, to blow his brains out. The favour was granted. His eyes were bandaged, and he was told to kneel down.

At this moment the King of Bulgaria happened to pass by, and asked what the culprit had done. Being told, and being a monarch of genius, he realized that Candide was simply an unworldly young metaphysician, and pardoned him—for which act of clemency this king will no doubt be celebrated in all the newspapers and for all time.

A worthy surgeon healed Candide's wounds in three weeks, with salves originally prescribed by Dioscorides. By the time he had some of his skin back, and was able to walk, the King of Bulgaria was at war with the King of Abaria.

CHAPTER III

ESCAPE INTO HOLLAND

THE two armies were unrivalled for smartness of drill and turn-out, excellence of equipment and soundness of tactical disposition. Their trumpets, fifes, hautboys, drums and cannon made a music never heard in hell itself.

To start with, the artillery laid low about six thousand men on either side. After that, musket fire rid this best of all possible worlds of some nine to ten thousand of the scum of its surface. Finally, the bayonet was 'sufficing reason' for the deaths of some thousands more. The total number of deaths may have been about thirty thousand.

Candide shuddered, as a philosopher well might, and did his best to hide himself during the heroic butchery. At length—whilst, on the orders of the two kings, the *Te Deum*

was being sung in both camps—he decided to go and continue his meditations on the nature of cause and effect in some other part of the world.

Passing over heaps of dead and dying, he came to a neighbouring village. It was in ashes, having been an Abarian village and therefore burnt, in accordance with the laws of war, by the Bulgarians. Old men mangled by bayonets watched their wives dying with gashes in their throats, clasping their children to their blood-stained breasts. Amongst the dying were girls who had been used to satisfy a number of heroes' natural needs, and had afterwards been disembowelled. Other women, half burnt alive, begged to be put out of their pain. The ground was covered with brains, arms and legs.

As fast as he could, Candide made off to another village. This one was Bulgarian, and the Abarian heroes had treated it in the same way.

Treading upon quivering limbs and rubble, Candide at length emerged from the theatre of war. His thoughts were still full of Mistress Cunégonde.

He had a small quantity of food in his haversack; but this had given out by the time he reached Holland. He had heard, however, that all the people of this country were rich, and expected to be as well treated there as he had been in the Baron's castle, up to the moment when Cunégonde's beauty had caused his expulsion.

He begged from several substantial-looking citizens, who told him that if he continued in this occupation he would be sent to a house of correction, to teach him how to live properly. At length he spoke to a man who, as it happened, had just been addressing a large gathering for over an hour on the subject of charity. The orator eyed him askance, and inquired: 'What brought you hither? Are you for the good cause?'

'Indeed, sir,' Candide answered shyly, 'I conceive that there can be no effect without a cause. Everything is bound upon a chain of necessity, and is arranged for the best. It was necessary that I should be driven from the presence of Mistress Cunégonde, and should run the gauntlet. Now it is necessary for me to beg my bread, until I can earn it. All this could not have been otherwise.'

'Hark ye, friend, do you hold the Pope to be anti-Christ?'

'I have never heard anyone say so. But whether he be or no, I am hungry.'

'Thou dost not deserve to eat. Hence, scoundrel! Away, wretch! Come not near me, for thy life!'

The orator's wife had been looking out of a window overhead. Seeing a man who doubted whether the Pope was anti-Christ, she emptied a chamberpot upon his head—an example of the excesses to which women are driven by religious zeal.

A man who had never been baptized, a kindly Anabaptist named James, witnessed this cruel and ignominious treatment of a fellow-man—a poor creature with two legs and a soul—and took Candide to his house, cleaned him up and gave him food and beer. Afterwards he gave him two florins, and even offered to teach him the trade of weaving Persian textiles—which, as it happens, are also manufactured in Holland.

Candide fell at James's feet, and exclaimed: 'My master Pangloss was in the right. Everything in this world is for the best. 'Tis plainly so, for I am much more affected by your generosity than I was by the harshness of the gentleman in the black cloak and his wife.'

CHAPTER IV

PANGLOSS ON THE POX

NEXT day, whilst out for a walk, Candide met a beggar covered with sores. The man's eyes were sunk in his head, the end of his nose eaten away, his mouth awry, his teeth black. He spoke in a husky whisper, coughed violently, and seemed to spit out a tooth at every spasm.

Candide felt even more pity than revulsion. He gave the horrible mendicant the two florins he had received from the Anabaptist; and then recoiled in dismay, as the apparition, gazing at him, burst into tears and fell on his neck.

'Alas,' said the poor creature, 'don't you know your poor Pangloss?'

'What, can it be you, my dear master—and in so fearful a plight? What disaster has befallen you? Why have you left the finest of castles? What is become of Mistress Cunégonde, that pearl amongst young ladies, that masterpiece of nature?'

'I am utterly spent', said Pangloss. Candide led him to the Anabaptist's stable, where he brought him something to eat. When Pangloss was feeling better, Candide resumed his questions: 'And now, pray, what of Cunégonde?'

'She is dead.'

Candide fainted. His friend rubbed his forehead with some stale vinegar which happened to be in the stable, and he reopened his eyes. 'Cunégonde dead! Ah, where is the best of worlds now? But of what illness did she die? Was it for grief upon seeing her father kick me out of the castle?'

'Bulgarian soldiers ravished her, and afterwards ripped open her belly. Her father sought to defend her, and they broke his skull. The Baroness was cut in pieces. My poor

pupil was treated in exactly the same way as his sister. As for the castle, not one stone stands upon another. Not a barn remains, not a sheep, not a duck, not a tree.

'But we have had our revenge; for the Abarians have done the same in a neighbouring barony, which belonged to a Bulgarian lord.'

Candide fainted again. When he once more came to his senses, he inquired what causes and effects, what 'sufficing reason' had reduced Pangloss to his present piteous condition.

'Alas,' said Pangloss, 'it was love; love, the comfort of the human race, preserver of the universe, the soul of all feeling creatures; the tender passion of love.'

'Ah me,' said Candide, 'I too have known this love, sovereign of hearts, soul of our souls. All it brought me was one kiss, and a score of kicks on the backside. But how could so fair a cause produce in you so foul an effect?'

'Well, my dear Candide, you will remember Paquette, that pretty wench who waited on our august Baroness. In her arms I tasted those pleasures of paradise that produced the hellish torments with which you see me devoured. She suffered from an infection, and is perhaps now dead of it. She had it as a gift of a learned Franciscan friar, who derived it from the very fountain-head, since he had it of an old countess, who had it of a captain of horse, who had it of a marchioness, who had it of a page, who had it of a Jesuit, who, while yet a novice, had it in a direct line from one of the fellow-adventurers of Christopher Columbus.

'For my part, I shall give it to nobody, for I am dying.'

'Ah, Pangloss, what a sorry genealogy is that which you have described! Surely the devil was the root of it.'

'Not at all', replied the great man. 'It was a thing unavoidable, a necessary ingredient in the best of worlds; for if Columbus had not caught in an American isle this disease

which poisons the spring of generation, and often even stops it, and is thus in itself evidently contrary to the great aim of nature, we should have neither chocolate nor cochineal.

'It is also to be observed that hitherto this malady is, like religious controversy, peculiar to our continent. The Turks, Indians, Persians, Chinese, Siamese and Japanese are not yet acquainted with it. There is, however, no doubt a sufficing reason why they, in their turn, should make its acquaintance within a few centuries.

'In the meantime, it is making amazing progress amongst us, and especially amongst those great and glorious armies that determine the fate of nations. One may safely affirm that, when two armies of 30,000 men each meet in battle, about 20,000 on either side have the pox.'

'That is all very interesting,' said Candide; 'but we must have you cured.'

'But how? I have not a penny, my friend, and nowhere on the surface of the globe can a man be bled or clystered without paying, or being paid for by another.'

Candide thereupon threw himself upon the mercy of the charitable Anabaptist James, and painted to him so striking a picture of his friend's condition that the good man at once took Dr. Pangloss into his house and paid for treatment for him. The result was that Pangloss lost only one eye and one ear. Since he wrote a good hand and was an excellent arithmetician, James made him his bookkeeper.

Two months later, James had to go on business to Lisbon, and took the two philosophers with him.

On the voyage, Pangloss explained to James the perfection of the scheme of things. James disagreed: 'Men must have deviated somewhat from their original innocence', he said. 'They were not born wolves, but they are become wolves. God did not give them twenty-four

pounders nor bayonets, but they have made these things for their own destruction. I might also speak of bankruptcies, and the law which seizes upon the property of bankrupts solely in order to keep it from the creditors.'

'All that had to be', replied the one-eyed doctor. 'Private ills make up the general good. It therefore follows that, the more numerous the private ills, the greater the general good.'

As he spoke, the sky was darkening and a high wind was rising. The ship, which was now within sight of Lisbon harbour, was struck by a terrible storm.

CHAPTER V

THE DEATH OF THE ANABAPTIST

HALF of the passengers were so weak—torn by the abominable pangs that the rolling of a vessel shoots through the body's nerves and humours, which seem to clash together—that they could pay no heed to the danger. The other half screamed or prayed. The sails were in shreds, the mast broken, the ship gashed open. All efforts were useless, since no orders could be heard or given.

The Anabaptist, who was on deck trying to help, was knocked down by a frantic sailor, who himself was carried overboard, head first, by the force of his blow. His breeches caught on a broken mast, from which he dangled until James helped him back on board. James, in turn, was precipitated overboard by his effort, and fell into the sea in full view of the sailor, who calmly left him to drown.

Candide came on deck at this moment, and, seeing his benefactor going under for the third time, wanted to jump