

Cultivating Our Garden

By Arthur H. Beattie

EDITOR'S NOTE: When Dr. Arthur H. Beattie, professor of Romance Languages and Director of The University of Arizona's Honors Program, addressed the initiation banquet of Gamma Sigma Delta, honorary society for agriculture, many staff members came to us suggesting that the beauty of prose and thought in this address should be brought to the readers of **PROGRESSIVE AGRICULTURE**. Reading a copy of Dr. Beattie's talk convinced us this should be done. With his permission, the talk is being divided into portions, to be published in a series of issues. Also, some of the talk is being omitted. We hope readers of the talk will enjoy it as much as did those who first heard it.

Few stories of the modern world have been so widely read as Voltaire's *Candide* which first appeared at Geneva, Switzerland, in 1759. Although promptly condemned and ordered to be burned, the little work enjoyed a fantastic success, and was actually reprinted more than 40 times in the remaining 19 years of its author's life. It can be read merely as a hilarious parody of novels of adventure, filled with satirical sallies against the pretensions of the minor German nobility, against the military spirit, against the Jesuit order, against the Spanish Inquisition, against the injustice of kings and courts, and against a host of social evils.

But *Candide* is essentially a refutation of the so-called "optimism" of the philosophy of Leibniz. It has the forthrightness and inevitability of a mathematical demonstration. It is a clear and relentless proof, by the process of reduction to the absurd, of the falsity of the Leibnizian doctrine that "All's for the best in the best of all possible worlds."

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study and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of lettuce and cantaloup plants in utilizing nutrients, either native or applied, under varying moisture level conditions. In short, are these plants cleaning up their mangers or are they being pre-

"Que Sera, Sera"

There is, of course, no more depressing and no more demeaning concept of man and his fate than to believe that whatever happens is part of a divine plan, and that it is therefore vain to seek in any way to modify the course of events. "All's for the best in the best of all possible worlds," or, in Alexander Pope's phrasing, "Whatever is, is right," may have an appeal for the privileged few in an aristocratic society, eager to preserve for their own advantage the *status quo*, but such a doctrine fosters the perpetuation of all the evils in that society. Voltaire is too much a reformer ever to accept the notion that disease, poverty, discrimination, prejudice, persecution, and war must be passively accepted as a necessary and divinely created part of our condition.

Dr. Pangloss, the ponderously stupid professor satirized by Voltaire, continues to the end, after an unbelievable series of tragic misfortunes, to repeat, with only slight conviction we may be sure, that "All's for the best in the best of all possible worlds." *Candide*, who has found some degree of security and peace on the small plot of ground he now works with his companions, cannot agree.

One of his company sets forth the reasonable and honest claim that the only way we can make life endurable is to keep busy and not seek to fathom its meaning. And *Candide*, to silence once and for all the parroting of his meaningless formula by the pedantic Dr. Pangloss, provides the closing line of the tale: "All that is very well, but we must cultivate our garden."

What is it to cultivate our garden? It is to strive to retain the beauty of our physical environment, to protect and to improve this world we live in; it is also to work with others to the

vented from doing so by a grower who is ill advised, or who unknowingly handled the growing procedures for his crop improperly

If we are to expect the greatest efficiency from our crops, that is, the greatest yield for the fewest dollars spent, every effort must be made to have all cultural factors in careful adjustment and balance.

end that their life as well as ours may be enriched, that their burden of griefs and sufferings may be lightened, and that we may take at least a step toward a better order in our community, our state, our nation, and the world in the hope that future generations may conquer some of the physical and moral scourges which plague us today; it is, finally, to cultivate that inner garden of our mind and spirit so that we may grow, until the end of life, in knowledge, in understanding, and in the appreciation of beauty.

To Cultivate the Best

To cultivate our garden is, then, to preserve and to embellish our physical environment — and preservation is by far the more urgent task. Our ancestors came into an America of such rich natural resources that they could fell forests, drain ponds, break the sod of the prairies, reduce mountains to slag heaps, and fill the air with the fumes of smelters and the smoke of factory chimneys, with little or no thought of ultimate consequences.

This is no longer true today, as we all recognize. Undoubtedly some of you in this room have contributed to the production in Arizona of the world's finest long-staple cotton. Those persons, I am sure, are among the first to recognize that we cannot continue year after year to sink wells deeper and deeper in order to irrigate the cotton fields where nature in her wisdom recognized that the readily available water supply could take care of only such plants as prickly pear and bur sage that had learned to adapt themselves to the peculiar rigors of an arid climate.

We cannot long continue to mine water reserves deposited in deep beds of sand and gravel geologic ages ago, and which therefore cannot be replaced. Such cities as Tucson will go the way of some of the great Roman cities of North Africa when a very slight change in climate diminished their water supply and reduced them

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PRICE SUPPORTS are a favorite topic of politicians, especially during election campaigns, when the "con" exceeds the "pro." Many Americans, therefore, have the opinion government subsidies are an "evil" existing only in this nation. The truth, of course, is that price supports in one form or another are relatively common throughout the Free World. In France for example, the government subsidizes most wineries, up to 85% of their output.

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to impressive ruins of broken columns and crumbling arches, unless new means of furnishing this area with abundant water are found, and neighboring fields of cotton and lettuce will give way to a desert at first contaminated with the noxious weeds our cultivation has introduced until at last a natural balance will be restored.

And ultimately archeologists may come to explore the ruins of the culture of Tucson in the second half of the twentieth century as we poke about the ruins of the Hohokam or the Cliff Dwellers. They will find as the most enduring remains of our community the vaults of banks which they may well take to be the vestiges of temples dedicated to a strange, mysterious cult whose rites involved hiding behind the laminated steel doors of reinforced concrete caverns immeasurable representations of our major God who seems to have been symbolized by a double barred S. In the desolation of the desert, it will still be possible to trace the outline of the buildings of the university.

They may well seem to constitute the palace of an idle and dissolute aristocracy ruling over a population of several hundred thousand common people who dwelt in small houses of baked clay and blocks made of sand and a powdered residue of burned calcareous material which by then would have almost totally disappeared. This Student Union where we are meeting might well still be recognizable as a center of feasting and riotous entertainment for that privileged ruling class.

We Have Abused Nature

Of course this is wild fancy, beyond the certain knowledge of any man, to seek to imagine a remote future when ours will be a forgotten civilization. But though I may deal facetiously with the problem of the rapid exhaustion of irreplaceable sources of underground water, I do not wish in any way to suggest that the problem itself is a laughing matter. Nature offered our pioneer ancestors unparalleled riches, much of which we have squandered thoughtlessly.

By destroying woodlands to create farms and to provide lumber for the construction of towns and cities, we have fostered erosion, contributed to floods, and appreciably changed the climate of vast areas of our country. By draining marshlands we have seriously upset nature's balance. We took over broad stretches of the prairies where the lush grass brushed the bellies of browsing buffalo so that



ARIZONA IS HORSE COUNTRY, and typical of many county and 4-H fairs this fall are scenes such as this, the lineup of winners in the horse judging contest. This group participated in the Pinal County 4-H fair in 1962.

we might grow more wheat to swell the surplus for which we seek at great expense to find storage space, and in many instances we have impoverished the soil and made possible the blinding, choking clouds of dust that during dry cycles cover a large part of our continent.

We are beginning to realize that perhaps our greatest need today, if we are to cultivate our garden in such a way as to promote the fullest and richest life for all, is to restore to their primitive state, so far as that may be possible, wastelands that we had in our folly sought to convert to what we considered productive uses. To keep America prosperous, to retain a favorable climate, to protect our cities from destruction by floods, to save our soil (as well as our culture) from being too soon gone with the wind, and to permit our teeming population to grow in health, and to develop spiritually amid the great natural beauty America lavishly provided for us, we must indeed practice conservation in those areas we have not yet despoiled, and do what we can to restore forests, prairie grasslands, lakes, and even marshes.

It is a wonderful thing to make the desert bloom, and this we must strive to do where, in the process, we will not be hurting ourselves and generations yet to come. But it is an imperative matter in many instances to let the desert bloom in its own way with the gold of palo verde flowers to enrich our spirit, and the winecups of cactus blossoms to quench our thirst for beauty.

Cities Need Beauty, Too

But of course to make our physical environment conducive to good living, it is not enough to practice con-

servation and even to seek to reforest denuded hills, to clothe the dustbowl again with grass, and to encourage streams to flow all year with clean water on which depends all life, whether that of man or of his distant cousins it pleases us to call the lower animals because they lack the higher capacity for destruction which we alone possess. We must also seek to make the towns and cities in which our culture of today is concentrated more beautiful and better adapted to serve all the needs of our complex nature, and to bring beauty to the highway tentacles that they stretch out one to another and which tend to acquire very quickly along their edges all the nauseating aspects of city slums and factory districts.

Tucson's most distinguished writer, Joseph Wood Krutch, has coined the term "Sloburbia" to describe the formless blobs of suburban growth which surround our cities as their central districts fall into decay. These ugly, cancerous growths, marked by a tawdry succession of hamburger stands, used car lots, garish shopping centers, junk yards, bars, and motels, standing in their stark ugliness under the light of day, and bathed by night in a neon glow which seems borrowed from Dante's Inferno, now stretch in an almost unbroken sequence from Los Angeles to San Francisco, and threaten to fill up the empty spaces between Tucson and Phoenix.

To put into practice the lesson of *Candide*, we must seek to bring some degree of beauty and order into our cities, and to conquer the hideous disease represented by Sloburbia.

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