

## Pendennis

—BY—  
William Makepeace  
Thackeray.  
BORN 1811. DIED 1863.

## A Classic in a Page

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Throughout this novel, and becoming more and more so, Thackeray's attitude toward Pendennis is that of a fond father who sees his boy's faults quite clearly, confesses to himself shrewdly that he is far luckier than he deserves to be, and appreciates the fact that among his friends there are much finer fellows than he is—and loves him perhaps all the better for having no illusions about him.

Nothing could exemplify Thackeray's compelling art better than the fact that he makes his readers join him in this. We feel that it is an almost injustice that the license of the fiction writer should not have been involved to give the prize to Warrington, that wholly fine, noble fellow, yet he would not have Pendennis lose it. And that Warrington should not win, however disappointing it may be, is rigorously correct. It is life—in which the prizes go often to the beloved rather than to the victor, though they be the true heroes.

"Vanity Fair," "Henry Esmond," and "Pendennis" are the great three novels of Thackeray, though in "The Newcomes" he drew what probably is his finest character, Colonel Newcome, is, however, a simple character—massively proportioned like a heroic bronze. Pendennis is Youth—wicked, noble, glorious, weak, selfish, generous, with pinions that beat toward Heaven and feet that founder in unbridled hills.

The plot might be taken out of the novel and still leave it almost unchanged. The doom that gathers like a black storm overhead is dissipated with bewildering swiftness of hail and summer lightning. Everyday human life is the real plot—and none could wish a more fascinating one; but Pendennis is an exciting fellow. He will not sit in a hammock with one and prattle amusingly for a sleepy summer hour. He demands one's whole time and a great deal of it.

Mr. John Pendennis was a little, quiet old gentleman, wretchedly mild and gentle, who had amassed a very modest competency by combining the vocations of apothecary and surgeon in a humble little shop graced by the sign of a gilt pestle. When the time came when he could retire he gladly and completely forgot that he had ever sold brown paper plasters, and realized his life-dream of becoming a gentleman.

He bought a little estate in the village of Clavering, and he called Fairloaks. It was separated by a little river from what was left of the plantations and woods of the great Clavering family's park.

Here Mr. Pendennis installed his young wife, who had been Miss Helen Thistlewood, a very distant and very poor relative and dependent of the noble house of Fairloaks. The disappearance of the Pendennis of the pestle shop and the Clavering of the plantations and woods of the great Clavering family's park.

By the time little Arthur Pendennis was 8 years old all these and still other Pendennises of the past were as real to the family as the gilt pestle. His mother, Mrs. Pendennis, was a very different person from the old Mrs. Pendennis, of the pestle shop. She was a very different person from the old Mrs. Pendennis, of the pestle shop. She was a very different person from the old Mrs. Pendennis, of the pestle shop.

The young fellows loved to walk with him, for he touched his hat to everybody and every other man he knew was a lord. If there was any questions about etiquette, pedigree or precedence Pendennis was the man to whom everybody appealed.

His coat, his white gloves, his whiskers, his very cane, were perfect. Seeing him from a distance one would take him to be thirty. It was only those inspection that revealed the crows' feet around the somewhat dimming eyes of his handsome mottled face and the entirely artificial character of his fine head of brown hair.

Major Pendennis was much prouder of his brother the Squire of Fairloaks, than he ever had been of his brother the medical practitioner, of Bath, and he was delighted beyond measure to behold his nephew growing up in such complete forgetfulness of the shop that everybody in Clavering called him the Prince of Fairloaks.

His little court encouraged him in his royal temper. His mother was one of those affectionate, selfless creatures who are made to give their all to others. She spoke and thought of her husband with an awful reverence. The major was a very Bayard among majors to her. She worshipped the prince with an ardor that he accepted coolly as prince and not as a lord, and that he wouldn't dream of bullying at school any longer, but should have it all holidays in the future. The major was for his going back. But Pen adroitly conveyed to his mother a hint as to what a wild, dangerous place Greyfriars was and

the timid soul at once acceded to his desire. Pen got a very good mare and rode her excellently well across country. He became a very good judge of claret. He did not neglect his studies altogether, for Mr. Smirke, the curate, ambled over from Clavering daily on a sober-minded pony and read the poets with him.

Pen zealously avoided all books that might by chance fall into a school course, but he devoured all others and his mind became of a gloomy Byronic cast. He broke out in the poet's corner of the County Chronicle with tremendous verses on assize meetings, tears, love and politics. He wrote tragedies in which everybody was killed.

One day he rode into Chatteris to deliver a fiery poem for the next week's paper, and in the stableyard of the grand black tandem with scarlet wheels, whose owner was habited in scarlet, green and white glory that made it difficult to say whether he was a prizefighter on a holiday or a coachman in gala dress. In this splendid creature, Pendennis recognized a colleague of his Greyfriars days—young Foker, who could scarcely read in school and had been notorious both for his lack of cleanliness and his stupidity. But young Foker's father was stupendously rich from breeding that famous ale honorably known as Foker's Entire. He had married Lady Agnes, sister of the eminent and penniless Earl of Roslinwood, to one of whose daughters young Foker had been engaged since his childhood.

This kindly scion of ale brewers and earls was half fellow well met with everybody. He called his noble and assuming simplicity with which he addressed the famous cock heaver who had whipped the Shorshire One. He dined Pen by giving an order for a dinner of turtle and champagne. Foker's father was wound up with a visit to the play, where the wonderful Fotheringay was performing in "The Stranger."

In the grand scene all the house was affected. Foker wept piteously into a huge yellow silk handkerchief. As for Pen, the whole theater reeled before his sight. It was something overwhelming, maddening, delicious. He rode home in a whirl and with the first touch of dawn he awoke to a huge yellow silk handkerchief. He had breakfast before he was off again on the mare and riding madly to Chatteris.

There Foker did him the inestimable favor of introducing him to the Fotheringay's father, Captain Costigan, "once of the Fighting Hundred and Third" and a Costigan of Costigantown. The captain was attired in extremely shabby garments and wore a very dirty and broken glove. He wore a high stock, stained and scarred. His dress coat was buttoned up tightly where there were buttons and his once handsome face was coppery from much smoking.

In the brief morning of life Costigan had been the delight of regimental messes and had the honor of singing at the tables of the most illustrious generals and commanders in chief. He had been a doubtful patrimony with speed and drank many times more than was good for him. After retiring hastily from the army he kept aloft in mysterious ways, ready to meet with any man and indorse any man's note, and always ready to weep at the pathos of his own sentimental songs which he sang admirably.

The captain was much impressed with the grandeur of the Prince of Fairloaks and the lavish way in which that royal heir spent money. To Pen's wild delight he invited him to his home, where he had the honor of meeting the peerless Fotheringay face to face. She looked even more handsome off the stage than on, indeed, she was one of the beauties of her day; and later when she made her grand success in London the whole town lay at her feet.

Small wonder, then, that Pen's heart nearly choked him and that his knees trembled under him. He scarcely heard her speak, so overwhelmed was the poor lad with love and confusion. The Fotheringay looked at the rosy, freckled, frank, good-natured face of the honest blue eyes and the innocent confusion of the lad and mentioned in a rich, deep, melancholy voice that the weather was very fine. Subsequently she added to the conversation by announcing that it was a bit warm.

The truth was that Miss Costigan was invincibly stupid, but poor Pen rode home that night saying aloud to the sky and the trees: "How beautiful she is! How simple and how tender! How well she talked. Emily!"

Now the mare had her work cut out for her to carry her young master daily to Chatteris at her best speed. Night after night Pen spent watching breathlessly for the appearance of Emily on the stage. Hour after hour he spent listening to Captain Costigan's tales of his royal highness the Duke of Kent and paying for the old toper's whisky. He wrote verses, sonnets, epics to his love, Miss Costigan, whose invincible stupidity made her invincibly good-natured, received them with a kind smile and after Pen's departure would say: "Poor lad, they're very good, but what they're all about I'm sure I don't know."

"Put them with thy brother letters, Milly darling," said Costigan with a wink. "Sir Poldoody's poems was nothin' to this." And Milly would look them up while debating whether she should have mutton chops or broiled kidneys for luncheon.

Of course Pen's infatuation for the actress could not long remain a secret. All Chatteris was talking of it and soon Helen's kindest friends hastened to tell her of it, not forgetting to put the worst possible construction on it. Old Dr. Portman came to the house and upbraided him in his mother's fearful presence. When Pen saved

about her goodness and declared that the Costigans were fully as good as the Pendennises, having been kings in Ireland the old doctor burst out: "Why, you don't mean to say that you want to marry her?"

On that Pen put on his most princely air and asked vehemently: "What else, Dr. Portman, could be my desire?" whereupon Helen threw herself on her son's shoulder in an excess of joy and cried: "I told you, Doctor, that he was not—not what you thought he was!"

Utterly routed, the doctor could only gasp, "Send for Major Pendennis, ma'am!" That poor old buck received the news with horror. He thought how people would laugh at him were his nephew to marry a tragedy queen. He groined at going to the country in the height of the London season. Ruefully he wrote off refusals to the Marquis of Steyne and Lord Deuceace and all the other noble ones who had invited him to their festivities. He ordered his valet to pack his belongings and resigned himself piteously to matrimony.

He arrived barely in time, for Pen and almost with his mother over. The wise old man of the world wasted no time with the love-lorn youngster. Like an old campaigner he sallied at once against the key position, which that weak and maudlin fortress, the castle Costigan.

Though he shuddered at the sight and odor of that alcoholic soldier, he bluffed declared himself a comrade-in-arms with him and soon managed to convey the information that Pendennis was but a poverty-stricken Prince, who would have nothing at all till his mother died and then only five hundred a year.

Captain Costigan arose in honor and wrath and called down the impositions of heaven on the impostor who had trifled with the affection of his innocent child. He also challenged the despondency, he went into his whisky and water. Finally he permitted the major to redeem a small note which was out against him, in return for which favor he gave up all of Pen's letters and all the flaming verses that he supported at the charity of an old lady who might be cross about it would not make them very well off. So she wrote Arthur Pendennis a little note that made him ride distractedly through sleepless nights and deem that he should die.

But he did not; and at last, major thankfully saw his martyrdom at an end and returned to his beloved club. Pen wrote tragedies more burning than ever, cultivated more Byronic gloom and talked of his bright love to Mr. Smirke until the curate, who feebly confessed to him that he loved passionately; and on Pen's laughingly asking her name said that it was Helen's mother; which made the Prince of Fairloaks roar out most indignantly and sent the poor curate around the house in some disgust. His majesty now decided to go to Oxbridge, where Harry Foker and reading for their degrees. The widow dispatched him there in his savings and soon Pendennis of Fairloaks was the leader in all that classical place of learning and life. His rooms were the finest, his wines were the best, his friends were voted by eager admirers and his costumes copied by all the college dandies.

All declared that he was easily the best man in the university; but some how another man carried off the Greek prize and a rival won the Latin hexameter prize, and at the last poor Pen got nothing but a minor declaration prize, which his mother valued at and cherished as the finest thing ever won in a college.

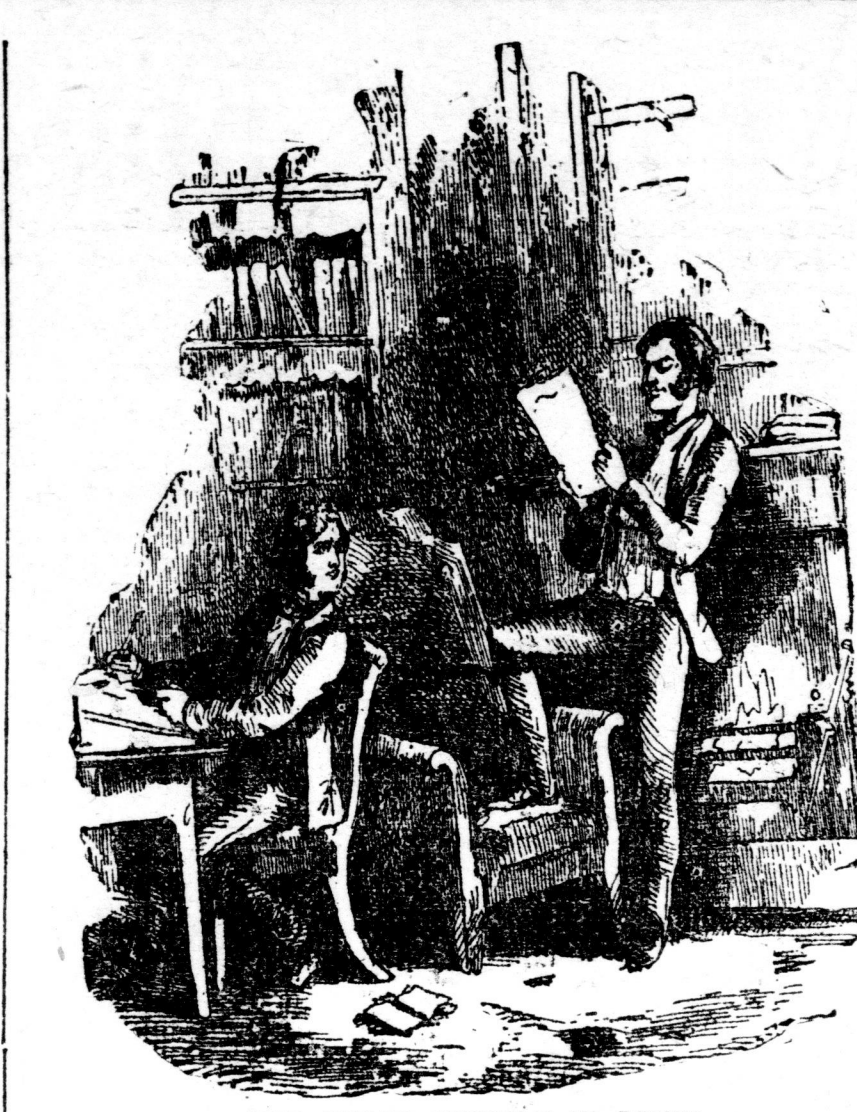
All the young nobles and spend-thrifts at Oxbridge belonged to Pen's set. Honest Harry Foker, who was presently "sent down" because of a little dinner that he gave in college in which a prize-fighting guest operated on a proctor who came to investigate, Pen before he left: "It's not me, Pen, but I don't care. As long as people drink beer I don't care. But you're going too fast, my boy. You can't keep up the pace, I tell you."

Presently Foker's prediction came true. One day the crash came. Pen's allowance had long since been spent, he was openly besieged right and left, tradesmen down to realize that he had spent more than £1,000 in his two years, and still owed £700. In the midst of his troubles the lists came out and Pendennis found that he had been "mucked."

He fled from Oxbridge and went to London to see the major. That gentleman, who had been vastly delighted with the fine acquaintanceships his nephew had made at Oxbridge, received him with pleasure that changed to trembling indignation when he learned the truth, and he stalked away, regretting that his engagements would not permit him to see much of Pen during his stay in London.

Pen's stay in London. Poor Pendennis skulked about London after writing to his mother such a letter as prodigals have had to write ever since there were mothers and prodigals. The gentle soul who received it did not care one-half so much about the great sum of money he had lost as he did about the loss of the degree as she did to know that her son, of whose wild career in Oxbridge she had learned from many sources, was coming back to her, repentant.

And as to the money, why, wasn't all of Pen's father's money his? Hadn't he a right to spend it? Besides, the problem of raising the cash was not at all a difficult one, for Helen's eyes were not the only ones that wept over Pen's penitent letter. "You know, mama," said the owner



PEN HEARS HIMSELF IN PRINT.

of the other pair of eyes (and remarkably fine ones they were), "I have been living with you all my life, and if I had had to go to school to have cost me a great deal. So I am sure that the £500 that are in my bank belong to me, and I shall be very angry if you do not take them."

Mrs. Pendennis embraced the owner of the fine eyes and wept again and called her "dearest Laura." Who was this dearest Laura who is introduced thus unexpectedly at this financially opportune moment?

Once upon a time, long before Miss Helen Thistlewood ever imagined that she would marry an elderly little gentleman with a bald head, there was a young gentleman of Cambridge University who was as poor as she was. His name was the Rev. Frank Bell, and he was waiting for a living. Before it fell in they were separated, and finally he went away to a colony, where he married years afterward. There he and his wife died after a long and happy life, and he left a heart to offer, but what there was he very kindly laid at her feet.

Vastly surprised and vastly offended was the Prince of Fairloaks when he learned that his mother had been so sent. Yet who can escape fate? Warrington came back to find Pen recovering, and in the next few weeks he had ample opportunity to look at Laura, and the results that were not at all conducive to his peace of mind.

Before long he knew that Laura would give his whole life and soul to win that prize which Arthur rejected. But it might not be. Fate had ruled otherwise.

Laura could not but contrast Warrington's many accomplishments, his enthusiasm, his simplicity and freshness of mind, with Pen's dandy, snooty, and manner of his faded sneer. Warrington's very uncountess there was a greater refinement than in Pen's fiery. Her kind eyes dwelt oftener and oftener on his strong, true face.

When Pen, from his delirium of love for little Fanny Bolton, had vanished with his fever, but when he discovered by chance that his mother had turned the girl away and suppressed the letters that she had written to him—most harmless little letters, though they showed out of his son's allowance, dropped out of his world and began life broken and dejected before his race had well started.

Pendennis, with his wild ambitions, his Byronic poses and his lust of life, came into his existence like a laughing sun. He listened to Pen's rapturous descriptions of his loves, and smiled down at nature to see the heart broken fellow, who declared that he was world-worn and weary, plunge into every kind of pleasure that offered itself with the zest of a boy fresh from school.

Despite the good resolutions of the Prince of Fairloaks, he could not settle down to reading law, but had to postpone it from day to day because his social engagements were too pressing. Thus at last the day came when his money was at an end again, and George Warrington gave him a lecture "You can't go on sponging upon a woman," said he. "How do you think that I live?"

Then he let Pen into a secret. He was writing for the papers, and he knew of an opening for the Prince of Fairloaks. That gentleman at once rose from the slough of despair and soared again in his native blue. He would be a poet. He would make up for his past idleness. Warrington called him a young goose and laughed at him, not unkindly, and with some sadness.

Pen plunged into the profession of letters with the same enthusiasm with which he plunged into love and fun. To tell the truth, he had a good bit of catching the moods and whims of his readers. It was not many months before his mother and Laura were deluged by receiving papers and magazines that contained articles signed by him. In a little while Pen began to send remittances home, and to feel himself a very fair fellow indeed.

For all his hard work Pen still managed to indulge himself in the pleasures of the life that he loved. He went from receptions by great ladies to back taverns where Costigan and his kind sang songs and had "goes" of brandy and water. The old warrior was pensioned now, his daughter hav-

ing married old Sir Charles Mirabel, and he entertained the company by purely fictitious accounts of the love that his son-in-law bore for him.

Warrington, who belonged to one of the oldest families in England, was as simple and jovial with all these poor folk as if he were plain Tom Jones, the lawyer's clerk; but Pendennis, the son of the apothecary, was always the Prince of Fairloaks. He could never forget his grand manners, though Warrington used to jeer at him good-humoredly and remind him of the gallipots from which the family income had sprung.

Pen was beginning to prosper. He had written a novel, and it had brought him reputation and money. Old Major Pendennis had the pleasure of hearing his nephew discussed in the circles of the nobility, and quite naturally all his old affection for the heir of the house of Pendennis was awakened again.

The old fellow was mightily perturbed when the news reached him at the country house of the noble Marquis of Steyne that his nephew was diving from fever in London. The major posted in all haste back to the town and arrived at the temple almost simultaneously with Pendennis and Laura.

Those two ladies bridled up and were deeply shocked when they found an exceedingly pretty young girl at their darling's bedside. The better a woman is the quicker she seems to be to think the worst of another, and even in the midst of their grief over their boy, these two good women showed poor Fanny Bolton the door first of all.

That poor girl crept away, weeping, and waited in the entry for the doctor, who comforted her as best he could. He, too, had his own ideas about the relations that had brought about the presence at the handsome young sinner's bedside. Yet all these virtuous ones were quite wrong.

It was only one of Pen's romantic love affairs; but this time that experienced gentleman did not dream of marrying Fanny Bolton, the daughter of the porter of the Temple, as he had dreamed of marrying the daughter of Captain Costigan. No. He had merely fluttered around the candle, and fallen in love with the old-time impetuous; and then he had realized that his only honorable course for him was to retreat. He had been on the eve of fleeing from London for the summer when his illness seized him.

But Mrs. Pendennis wept over her boy's tears of shame and agony for his illness, which had been so long, and sorrow for his sin. His lay delirium, and Warrington was away, having started on his vacation before Pen's last love affair. So there was no one to explain matters to the simple woman.

Perhaps it would have been as well for Warrington had he remained absent. Yet who can escape fate? Warrington came back to find Pen recovering, and in the next few weeks he had ample opportunity to look at Laura, and the results that were not at all conducive to his peace of mind.

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Next week's one-page classic will be "Foul Play," by Charles Reade.