

Flash for Freedom! Study Guide

Flash for Freedom! by George MacDonald Fraser

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Contents

Flash for Freedom! Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2.....	6
Chapter 3.....	8
Chapters 4-5.....	10
Chapter 6.....	13
Chapters 7-8.....	15
Chapter 9.....	17
Chapter 10.....	19
Chapter 11.....	21
Chapter 12.....	24
Chapter 13.....	26
Chapter 14.....	28
Characters.....	31
Objects/Places.....	40
Themes.....	44
Style.....	47
Quotes.....	50
Topics for Discussion.....	54



Plot Summary

Flash for Freedom is, the third installment of the "Flashman Papers" supposedly discovered late in the 20th century and published by George MacDonald Fraser, detailing Flashy's fantastic career. This volume is about Flashy's involvement in the international slave trading of the late 1840s.

Fresh home from revolutionary Europe and soon to be a father for the first time, Harry Flashman believes that he has the qualities of character needed in a politician and allows his scheming father-in-law, John Morrison, to showcase him. The event goes bad when Flashy tries to seduce beautiful Fanny Locke and nearly kills an old army colleague who charges him with cheating at cards. Seeing an opportunity to get Flashy out of Elspeth's life, Morrison signs him aboard Balliol College, a slave ship.

Under the crazy and cruel, Latin epigram-quoting Capt. Spring, Flashy voyages from France to Dahomey to Roatan. As supercargo, he is responsible for housing, feeding, and exercising the slaves. Approaching Cuba with only a handful of slaves aboard, they are interdicted by the U.S. Navy and Flashy assumes the identity of an undercover British officer who had died in his arms, and convinces the Navy that he has vital information that can end the slave trade. Flashy is rushed to Washington, DC, where he insists he must divulge his information first to the Admiralty.

Returning to New Orleans, Flashy escapes the Navy's clutches to a whorehouse before being shanghaied into the Underground Railroad to escort an important runaway to Canada, gets himself condemned to slavery by seducing a plantation owner's wife, and escapes a sealed slave wagon with a wily runaway named Cassy. During this period, Flashy shows cruelty as a slave driver and learns much about the institution as Cassy lays out plans for him to pretend to sell her to get traveling money. Knowing the law is on their heels, they get as far as Portsmouth, OH, before being uncovered, and dramatically flee across the frozen river. In Portsmouth, they are taken in by abolitionists and personally defended by Abraham Lincoln, who Flashy earlier meets in Washington. Lincoln insists that it is Flashy's duty to return to New Orleans to testify. During the hearing, Flashy testifies "scrupulously" and blusters much, and the verdict, amazingly, goes in Capt. Spring's favor. Flashy blackmails Spring into conveying him home to England and is surprised to hear his real name being used again.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Figuring that if Gladstone and his ilk can be politicians, Harry ("Flashy") Flashman considers standing for Parliament. Arriving in England just ahead of the wave of royal refugees fleeing revolutionary Europe, Flashy listens to his skinflint father-in-law, John Morrison, bemoan the coming of violence to Britain. Eight years earlier, stationed in Paisley, Scotland, Flashy seduces and marries Elspeth. Eight years later, she is finally pregnant, and refuses to have sex, for fear of harming Harry Albert Victor - about whose paternity Flashy has doubts. Flashy is confident nothing will happen when the Chartists march and goads his anxious in-laws. A soaking rain breaks up the crowd.

Morrison decides that having an MP in the family makes good business sense, and Flashy sees it as a quiet life. By age 26, Flashy has seen enough horror. He demands £2,000 a year in upkeep from Morrison and settles for £750, when Elspeth intervenes, delighted at the thought of grand soirées and servants. When Elspeth again turns him down for sex, Flashy gets back into the swing of regular whoring. Weeks later, Morrison announces that they must meet some "men in the know" in Wiltshire.

Settling in Cleeve House in Seend, Flashy quickly sees that Morrison's rich banker friend, Locke, and this dreary household are not for him, except the host's sister, willowy, blond, voluptuous, friendly Fanny. Other "know-alls" in attendance are Lord George Bentnick and the pathetic, greasy Benjamin D'Israeli. Political talk at dinner keeps Flashy away from Fanny, but he prepares a picnic for a ride to Salisbury Plain. She is flirtatious but keeps Flashy at length and, upon their return, introduces Flashy to her fiancé, Henry Duberly and Bryant, Flashy's acquaintance, whom he bullies as of old. Vexed, Flashy schemes to "bring the lady to the stick." At dinner, the politicians debate Ireland and reform and then retire to boring entertainments until Bentnick suggests cards.

Fanny takes Flashy to her side as a guide and does well as the low-stakes game begins light-heartedly. As Bryant heckles Flashy and pushes the stakes higher, the atmosphere grows tense. Suddenly, Bryant demands that Flashy be searched, and Flashy finds three cards in his pocket. In old age, Flashy would know how to handle charges of cheating, but at age 26 he panics, appealing to the others. When Bryant departs, Flashy chases him, determined to have his honor back, spins him around, and smashes him in the face, sending him down the stairs and fracturing his skull. He may be dead.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Flashy's return to England is set in the context of the Revolution of 1848, that shakes the European Continent. The chance of it crossing the English Channel greatly upsets Flashy's miserly Scottish father-in-law, John Morrison, who is unusually prominent in this novel. Morrison's daughter Elspeth is pregnant, and Flashy doubts he is the

biological father. He recites his usual suspicions that beautify Elspeth is as randy as he, and he demonstrates his own condition throughout the novel.

Morrison decides that having a politician in the family could be useful and introduces Flashy to prominent Tory friends. Bit parts of this sort by historical figures is expected in a Flashman novel, but they are less juicy than usual, except for Fanny Locke. Lust is Flashy's downfall. He is attracted to Fanny and frustrated by her. Fanny's bland fiancée is accompanied by an old army acquaintance of Flashy's, and they fall to sniping as of old. This carries over into a game of vingt-et-un - twenty-one—which, Flashy explains to readers unfamiliar is like baccarat, blackjack, or pontoon, and then fills several pages describing strategies and showing a friendly game in the process of growing tense. The old army acquaintance attaches to another female player and grows belligerent.

Having at one point stood in contact with Flashy, Bryant now charges him with cheating, and Flashy innocently turns out his pockets — to reveal three cards. Bryant plays to the horrified crowd and then strides away. To save face, Flashy goes after him, spins him around, and injures him, perhaps fatally.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

While Bryant lies in a coma, Flashy has visions of the gallows. With Flashy's political hopes gone and prison possible, Morrison gives him money and arranges with Captain John Charity Spring to get him out of England. At first glance, Flashy sees that he is a terrible man, under whom he will voyage as a supercargo to America and back. Spring spouts Latin epigrams as he leads Flashy to the wharf and across the English Channel to his clipper, Balliol College, anchored off the coast of France. Seasick for days, Flashy is filled with self-pity and rage. Flashy rejects gruel from the steward, Looney, and sexual favors from the cabin boy. Mr. Comber, the third mate, Flashy's bunkmate, seems civil, cultivated, and self-confident.

Captain Spring assigns Flashy to a watch and shows him to a roomy hold lined with half-decks, which from a protruding chain and bracelets shows Flashy that this is a slaver. Spring makes clear that Flashy is along for the voyage and will follow orders. He will earn good money and be safe, because Balliol College is fast needing to survive. In order to return to Elspeth and get even with Morrison, Flashy sets to work with Kirk and a Norwegian clerk, who reminisce about the good old days when slaving had been done openly. As they check off junk to be traded for slaves, Looney enters, becomes the butt of jokes, and to get even urinates on sacks of gruel. Spring catches him, flogs him unconscious, tells Flashy to don a jacket, and host the officers at tea. As they go back to work, Sullivan confides that Spring is mad but the best skipper on the coast. Flashy should keep silent when Spring quotes Latin.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 is rather rich in references to Frederick Marryat's sea stories, which Flashy's schoolmates at Rugby used to enjoy. Describing the sleep barque on which Morrison gets him enrolled, to get him out of harm's way over Bryant, Flashy uses the acronym "P.O.S.H," standing for "Port Out, Starboard Home," meaning that passengers in those room always enjoys the morning sun in their cabin.

Chapter 2 also introduces Capt. Spring and begins providing information about the "Middle Passage" or Atlantic slave trade. The details of the horror are graphically portrayed in the chapters ahead. Flashy is amazed at how profitable the slave trade remains in the late 1840s. An endnote gives useful particulars on how loopholes in international law allow the outlawed practice to continue. Additional legal information comes out in Chapter 14.

It is revealed that like Flashy, Spring ends his academic career by being expelled, and he resents "herding with the carrion of the sea" instead of doing scholarship." Fraser mercifully translates Spring's many Latin aphorisms and epigrams into English in

footnotes and occasionally indicates the source. Flashy retains only one Latin quotation, beaten into him as punishment while at Rugby School. Spring takes the opportunity to criticize modern education.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Balliol College is a floating asylum, but the crew is quick and efficient. Flashy longs for Elspeth and loathes Morrison during dull days of sailing, but finds life tolerable. They bypass the Guinea Coast, which is played out for slaving nowadays; fast ships slip in and out of river mouths, where they pick up large quantities of slaves gathered for them by native chiefs. The Navy cannot keep up patrolling. Flashy is surprised at pious white people who condemn the slave traders without blaming the blacks who sell them. He is also upset at whites who say nothing about those who enslave white women and children in mills, factories, and mines, and keep them in conditions that no plantation owner would permit.

Spring works with King Gezo of Dahomey and calls at the less populated rivers and lagoons on the Bight of Benin. They set up camp in a hellish place and the officers debate how to squeeze six hundred adult slaves into the hold, arguing the financial aspects of overcrowding and disease, with Spring berating Comber's humanitarianism. Flashy jumps at the chance to get away from the ship, when included in the expedition upriver to "palaver" with King Gezo, but worries that they are going so heavily armed.

As they paddle off, the "slave train" comes out of the jungle, hundreds of naked black bodies yoked in pairs at the neck and herded by black overseers. The upstream jungle is a stifling, silent green tent. After 3-4 hours, they beach and camouflage the canoe and follow a raised path paved with the thousands of human corpses sacrificed each year. They smell Apokoto long before they see it. Flashy is surprised to see a stone building inside the stockade, but is told the stones are skulls of those executed there. Spring seems impatient at the delay, but none of the crew seems worried.

Suddenly, utter silence falls and lingers before masked shamans come to purify the area and determine where to locate the king's stool. A drum beats and the crowd takes up the rhythm, and two long columns of swaying, glistening, lithe female warriors marches in. Spring tells Flashy excitedly that these are Amazons, the cream of the Dahomeyan army and wants him to use his linguistic skills to realize his long-held goal of buying half a dozen. That will show the smug scholars at Balliol.

In the Amazons' wake comes a rotund figure waddling under a striped umbrella, ugly, massive, with yellow eyes and teeth, and a croaking voice. While talking with town elders, Gezo orders the Amazons to chop into pieces someone who has displeased him—obviously for the visitors' edification—before calling Spring closer and offering lunch. Flashy is flirting with the turbaned, sullen-faced Amazon commander when Gezo screams. Spring has just asked to buy six Amazons and orders Flashy to demonstrate the power of the Colt pistols he offers in exchange. The Amazons growl at the deal but obey Gezo.



The new slaves are marched hurriedly out of Apokoto, leaving behind the cabin boy as a white slave. As Spring stops fearfully to listen for pursuers, Kinnie takes an arrow in the throat and the rest run for their lives. Amazons swarm as the landing party reaches the canoe. Comber is pulled aboard half-dead, but Kirk is too slow and is captured. Comber wastes his breath pleading to rescue Kirk. Spring laments losing his prize.

Chapter 3 Analysis

In Chapter 3, Flashy points out the hypocrisy of English abolitionists preaching about white injustice when the slaves who are rounded up in Africa and sold to the whites suffer and are enslaved at the hands of fellow blacks. He soon sees it carried out. A linguist, Flashy remarks on the "queer Coast lingo which passes for a language from Gambia to the Cape," and quotes a fair amount of it without help to the reader. As he often does, Flashy imagines his hated master at school, Dr. Arnold picturing what various Rugby alumni might be doing—and coming to Flashy working as a pirate. Arnold would not care that Flashy has been shanghaied.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Amazons. Their place in history and myth dates from the ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, and there are many misconceptions (like them amputating one breast so as not to interfere with archery) that survive into the mid-19th century. Flashy and Spring discuss the etymology from "Medusa" (not coincidentally, certainly, Flashy's nickname for his mother-in-law) in the name these fierce women give themselves Mazangu ("fair ones"). After a long excursus on the myth, it is noted that an Amazon slave would draw an enormous price in New Orleans.

Flashy is shocked when Spring gives the King of Dahomey the squirrely cabin boy as a white slave - after in the last chapter concluding that humans are always humans and act badly. It has been suggested that the boy is a male prostitute on long voyages, and no one misses him when he is gone. The crew members who go ashore to meet the King are all excited sexually by the beautiful Amazons, while Spring is excited only at the prospect of bring back an anthropological exhibit and gaining academic stature.

Flashy is horrified when Kirk runs too slowly back to the canoe and is captured, stripped, and probably castrated. Seeing it stops Flashy from thinking fondly of the Amazon commander, who moments earlier he had flattered himself to think she fancies him, stabs Comber rather than him. As the story develops, this proves a pivotal move, for Comber is not what he seems and, dying, becomes the key to Flashy's escape from the U.S. Navy. When Flashy at the end of the novel is running for his life, he is less sanguine than when Comber is holding onto the stern and slowing the canoe down. Flashy admits he is tempted to smash Comber's fingers and let him drown.



Chapters 4-5

Chapters 4-5 Summary

Dr. Murphy gives Comber no chance of survival and Mrs. Spring nurses him. The rest of the crew stows the human cargo quickly to be underway before Gezo launches another attack. Sanchez brings word that Gezo does not want to lose Spring's business. Kirk is alive but unrecognizable as human. Flashy's duties increase with two mates lost. Spring and Murphy select the best 600 captives, who could easily revolt and tear them limb-from-limb. Residents of the Coast seem always resigned to slavery. Those selected are herded to branding and sizing and dispatched to the gangplanks, strictly segregated by sex. Flashy quickly learns to stow them economically and then shackle their right ankles. When the tallest slaves have been processed on the deck, the next tallest are processed to the lower shelf, and finally the shortest to the top shelf. Flashy is no abolitionist but finds the sight, sound, and stench abominable. The crew is exhausted by the end, but Spring insists on a final inspection and orders the hold hosed down. Flashy would have let them all go back to the jungle. When he mentions to Sullivan what a hellish scene this is, Sullivan tells him about a captain who has no time to drown 300 slaves to prevent being caught, so he burns the boat down around them. Spring loses neither ships nor cargo. He outruns officials or, if becalmed, outfights them.

As Balliol College drifts out to sea, Flashy spots the white sails of a sloop, and, while his bowels do the polka, Spring shows no concern. The sloop sets on an intercept course, is approaching faster, and even wastes shots, before Spring issues the precise volley of orders that puts them quickly out of range. Later, Flashy is assured this happens because Spring knows the winds along the coast so perfectly. The first few days bring constant seasickness to the slaves, who are forced to eat to keep up their strength (and value), and to "dance" every day for half an hour. Within a few days, the slaves enjoy capering about. Some croon and compete with one another. Aft, Murphy checks the crew for venereal diseases; Spring orders the men to get every woman slave pregnant, decently, in their cabins. This increases their value in Cuba, for the white genes will supposedly make the children smarter. Flashy claims the liveliest dancer, who proves a sexual disappointment, merely lying still. She is too stupid for him to learn the language from her. He dubs her Lady Caroline Lamb and offends Spring by teaching her a line from Horace.

Smooth sailing leaves time for loafing and daydreaming about England. On the seventh day out, Flashy is called to Comber's deathbed, something he has done often and has pat, optimistic answers about God, hell, and judgment. He sees Comber as "Bible-reared" and fearful, particularly about lust. Shifting his focus, Comber asks if Flashy opposes slavery, thanks God, and entrusts to him proof of his assignment by the Board of Trade to spy on the smugglers. Furthermore, Comber has copied Spring's logs, revealing his financiers—including Morrison. Flashy promises solemnly not to let Comber's work die, truly caring about the information's use for his own good. After reporting the death, Flashy sews the documents inside his clothing, water-tight.



Comber's funeral is put off a day, as Spring refuses to consign a white man to the sea after exciting the sharks by tossing over a black corpse. Looney receives a beating for fetching a Brazilian flag for the service. Thereafter, Looney turns sullen and equates Spring with the Devil. As they enter the Caribbean, the crew becomes restless and gun drills are conducted daily. The weather grows hotter, the stench from the slave hold worsens, and the point comes when slave mutinies occur. Balliol College, however, sails into Roatan off the northeast coast of Honduras, the slavers' bustling clearing house. Flashy most remembers hearing news that gold has been struck in California.

At Roatan they offload all 600 slaves worth \$9 per pound. No money or paper change hands. The slaves will be smuggled into the U.S. and sold for three times more. Spring holds back Lady Caroline Lamb for continued English lessons; which will make her valuable on future voyages, and acquires a dozen partly-white girls destined for New Orleans brothels. Spring orders the slave deck scoured and rinsed and heads for Cuba. Balliol College is caught between American warships and goes to battle stations, with Flashy instinctively diving for cover. On deck is chaos as the brig lines up for the kill. Spring orders the slave women attached to a heavy chain to eliminate evidence. Armed, Flashy runs through the slave deck and comes up to see Spring murder Sullivan. Flashy easily convinces Looney to kill the Devil and uses his officer's voice to free the women as he is rehearsing his survival plan.

Chapters 4-5 Analysis

Marryat's sea stories continue to figure in the narrative as Flashy begins to contemplate his near-total ignorance of ship handling and even basic nautical jargon. This theme will pick up when in Washington, DC, pretending to be a naval officer, he is asked some specific nautical questions and it is noted that he does not behave like a typical sailor in basic ways. As Balliol College makes its escape from the coast of Africa, Spring belittles the Royal Navy as a waste of taxpayers' money.

After clinging to life for several days, Comber feels himself dying and summons Flashy to his side. Flashy has been in this situation many times and anticipates the good Christian's anguished questions. While Comber drones on, Flashy wonders about what and to whom he will talk as death approaches. Neither his mother nor father is a likely option, and he never considers Elspeth worth more than a good sexual romp. Comber like many men in their generation talks to his mother. Flashy runs through the highlights of his love life for possibilities. When Comber dies and Spring loses his temper at the funeral, Flashy wishes divinity students could see how the offices for the dead are conducted on shipboard. Looney's second public beating makes something snap in his head and a visceral hatred of Spring to grow. Note Looney's closeness to Sullivan. These combine to turn Looney murderous. First mention of the California gold rush is made, in passing, in Chapter 4.

Comber's deathbed confession that he works undercover for the Royal Navy and has collected incriminating information on Spring at first suggest to Flashy only that he can blackmail his father-in-law (the ship's part owner), but in Chapter 5, a more immediate



use is found for it. Balliol College concludes her trans-Atlantic voyage and takes on a few slaves to carry to Cuba. She is caught in a fierce battle with the U.S. Navy. Spring orders the slaves hooked to a length of anchor chain for quick disposal of evidence, but postpones executing the order. Spring and Sullivan argue over something, and Spring kills Sullivan. Flashy is spared having to risk shooting Spring by Looney's easy recruitment, and turns on his authoritarian officer's voice to order the slaves released. He is about to become Comber.

Going forward, note the precise terms used for black slaves, depending on how much white blood they have in their ancestry. Any black blood, of course, makes them black and subject to antebellum legal penalties, but the slavers believe white blood makes the slaves more intelligent and fetches a higher price. "Quadroons" have one white grandparent and three black. "Mustees" are a mix of a quadroon and a white. Anyone light-complected is referred to as "yellow."



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Flashy generally likes Americans and knows how to use the right airs on them. Waiting until the crew is out of hearing, he asks to see the commander on an urgent matter, claiming to be Lt. Comber, R.N. Taken aboard the USS Cormorant, he informs young Captain Abraham Fairbrother about his mission and presents Comber's evidence. Sure that this will wipe out slavery, zealous Fairbrother plans to rush Flashy to Washington while Balliol College goes to New Orleans for the trial. Flashy is happy with this outcome but reminds himself that someone in Washington may know him or Comber and, not being Navy, he must watch his tongue. During the voyage, Fairbrother comes to Flashy with a delicate problem: Lady Caroline Lamb is naked in his cabin. Flashy is amused at Fairbrother's naiveté.

From Baltimore they ride to Washington and at the Department of the Navy, Flashy faces an admiral and the argumentative Mr. Moultrie. Flashy insists that he has consigned copies of his report to agents in Whydah and Roatan, whose names he dare not mention, and must deliver the full report first to London. Premature disclosure could endanger prosecution. There will certainly be political scandal in England and America. Flashy tells his story again to the British Ambassador and at dinner regales guests with stories.

Among the dinner guests is young Abraham Lincoln, a fellow sardonic scoundrel, who quips about Washington society and the dangers of education, describes blacks as a "nuisance," much as he had been while suffering from chicken pox, needing special consideration and compassion but not worship. It is an emotionally divisive issue, with people of principle and conscience on each side. When the topic turns to California, Lincoln believes that those who sell supplies and equipment to the gold diggers are alone destined to get rich. During the formal entertainment, Lincoln takes Flashy aside to ask a series of naval questions that stump him. Try as he may to evade, Flashy fails, but Lincoln does not intend to reveal him. It is not his business. As Fairbrother takes Flashy back to New Orleans, Flashy plots his escape once there, confident from past harrowing escapes that this should be simple.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Chapter 6 takes up Flashy's interrogation in Washington, DC, with an excursus on the fledgling city and a swipe at George Washington, the typical aristocrat who gives no thought to the misery in which he might make people live. Talking with naval officials, Flashy begins the prevarications that will last throughout the novel. He rightly insists that he must report first to his British superiors and assures American officials that they will be given all relevant information. Flashy has, of course, no intention of going to the Admiralty. He will use selective material to blackmail his father-in-law only. At the end of



the novel, when he testifies at the adjudication, Flashy is careful to stay consistent with this position.

The chapter's highlight is Flashy's meeting with Abraham Lincoln and his depiction of aspects of the young Congressman's thinking before he gains worldwide prominence. Flashy notes that by the early 20th century, it seems shocking that Lincoln would consider African slaves a nuisance and wish they could just go back to Africa. Lincoln makes an interesting analogy of slavery to chicken pox, applying it to himself self-deprecatingly. Lincoln talks about how entrepreneurs alone will grow rich on the California gold rush, a second reference to the growing phenomenon.

Flashy and Lincoln instantly hit it off and agree they are both adroit scoundrels. Note that Lincoln suspects Flashy's story because he observes in Flashy none of the sailor's drilled-in responses. Even as he says he is merely curious, he presses his questions when Flashy tries to deflect them. Reading descriptions of "club-hauling," it is clear that Flashy gets lucky when he claims to need at least a ship's model to explain the complex maneuver (not that he could have then); he does less well likening the "long-splicing" or ropes to to "splicing the mainbrace"—a euphemism for authorized drinking aboard ship. Lincoln reappears in Chapter 13 and plays another round of cat-and-mouse with Flashy, ending with the same questions, which Flashy has had no opportunity to look up.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

As they near Louisiana, Flashy packs his wardrobe, including a fine plum broadcloth coat and antiques inherited from grandfather Paget, which he hopes not to have to pawn. Rowed ashore to the teeming Algiers wharf, he promptly vanishes, decides against boarding a departing ship immediately, so hires a rower to cross the Mississippi to the vibrant Vieux Carré (French Quarter). There he outfits himself in Southern style, has business cards printed in the name of Count Rudi von Starnberg, and following the advice of the Italian soldier of fortune Avitabile, whom he meets in Peshawar, prepares to wheedle free room and board from one of the city's many madames. His cover story is that he is seeking to return his lost and fallen sister home.

After four false starts, Flashy meets painted and bejeweled Susie Willinck, who he seduces within 45 minutes. Susie lodges him—and wears him out sexually—for almost a week, taking good care of him and growing so dangerously fond of him that she is relieved when he decides to move on. She insists on advancing him fare home and sends him away with a kiss. Before he can reach the Aglesey Queen, he is stopped by multiple armed assailants, who he assumes are U.S. Navy agents because they address him as Comber. They drag him through the city maze, insisting that he is the last person on earth they would want to harm. They lead him, blindfolded and apprehensive to a house and present him to a benevolent-looking bald man, who eventually identifies himself only as Crixus.

In his well-appointed library, Crixus apologizes for the treatment, but says he has been looking forward to meeting for days. He knows where Flashy has been staying and had been ready to come visit. Crixus is not part of the U.S. Government but has high-placed friends. His analysis of Flashy's trip to Washington and need to get "dangerous" information to England is correct—if Flashy were, indeed, Comber. Hearing that the Navy is watching for him and would find diplomatic ways of detaining him through Balliol College's trial, Flashy decides to stay in character as Comber. Crixus tells Flashy about the Underground Railroad, an "organisation for saving souls," an army fighting the "blasphemous iniquity" of slavery.

Having heard of Comber's risks aboard Balliol College, Crixus requests Flashy's services in escorting an extraordinary slave, George Randolph, to Canada. Randolph speaking openly abroad is more vital to abolition than the late Nat Turner. The danger of keeping Randolph in New Orleans grows daily, and there are no white agents of Flashy's caliber to escort him, ostensibly as part of a "coffle" (chained caravan) of slaves. Crixus explains that the steamboat to Pittsburgh is the fastest route to England, offers to send Comber's report confidentially to London ahead of him, and finally threatens, reluctantly, to turn him over to the Navy. This bit of blackmail works, for the risk seems less, and Flashy accepts, gallantly.



With vigorous handshakes and much God-blessing, Crixus takes Flashy downstairs to meet Randolph, a tall, slim, arrogant man with a white man's face. Flashy instantly labels him "uppity" and is taken aback when Randolph is not instantly pleased with him as an escort. Crixus assures him that Flashy is a proven fighter and understands the importance of this mission. Randolph is uncomfortable being put in chains for the charade, but Flashy orders him to play his part. As they leave, Crixus admits that Randolph can be difficult, but he is a delicate genius whose intelligence has intensified the suffering of slavery. Trying to fall asleep that night, Flashy decides to run and leave Randolph to shift for himself. A genius should be able to do so.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Chapters 7 and 8 show Flashy back in New Orleans, still posing as Lt. Comber and needing to escape the clutches of the U.S. Navy. He begins a series of impersonations that never seem to succeed as well as the guise of Comber. Posing as an Austrian count goes particularly badly. Hard up for money, Flashy pulls a page from an old colleague's book and charms Madame Susie Willinck into taking him into her bordello for nearly a week, gratis. Much space is devoted to Flashy's honest but compassionate description of kind-hearted but hardly naïve Susie, who knows that she is being used but enjoys it. When she talks about all men being alike, it establishes a theme picked up later by the bitter runaway slave Cassy. Knowing his own nature, Flashy can deny neither woman's charge.

Heading for the Anglesey Queen and a pleasant voyage home, Flashy is seized on the street by armed strangers. The writing nearly produces claustrophobia, and the feeling recurs when Flashy is bundled off to slavery in chapters 10 and 11. He is delivered to a mystery man, who only at the end of their conversation identifies himself by the code name Crixus, which is the name of one of Spartacus' lieutenants in the great slave rebellion in Roman times. Having heard of Lt. Comber's risks aboard Balliol College, Crixus plucks Flashy off the street and lays it on thickly about the holy work of freeing slaves, referring to martyrs for the cause and nearly summoning the Second Coming of Christ. Flashy has already made it clear he cannot support abolitionism as a philosophy, but here he cannot turn the zealous Crixus down. Flashy is called upon to escort to freedom a runaway slave more vital to the movement than even the late Nat Turner. Chapter 8 begins to show and Chapter 9 continues grandly that George Randolph is a thoroughly unlikeable person. Lincoln might dub him a nuisance. It is not the kind of person with whom Flashy gets along well.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The steamship *Sultana* is like a plush hotel afloat. Flashy's cover story is that he is a former blackbirder now trading slaves on the river. Randolph is chained in the midst of six supposed slaves, all Crixus employees. Flashy, going by the name of James K. Prescott, does his best to look like Simon Legree. The slaves are stowed in steerage on the main deck, while Flashy enjoys a stateroom on the "Texas" (third) deck. He is to deliver the coffle to Caleb Cape in Cincinnati and thereafter be free. On the first night, despite Crixus' pleadings, Rudolph protests the food they are given and later demands of the slave overseer straw for bedding. Flashy is summoned, after a rich meal and the services of an energetic prostitute, to deal with the overseer. Flashy insists that Rudolph for both their sakes play his assigned role, as the overseer laments slaves who are not properly beaten into submission. Rudolph refuses to be placated, even when Flashy threatens to have him flogged. He considers selling him for a good price and going his own way, but dares not double-cross Crixus and get his organization on his tail. Flashy agrees with Lincoln: educated blacks are surely a nuisance.

The voyage to Natchez is generally enjoyable, but there the unexpected happens. Randolph spies a Georgian, Peter Omohundro, come aboard, who could identify him. Flashy believes the chances of him coming down to the first level are remote—unless Randolph acts up and attracts attention. Flashy promises to be alert. Rudolph has a hidden key in case he needs to throw off his shackles and flee. Rattled, Flashy has Omohundro pointed out and learns he is aboard for only a day. Flashy watches him carefully during dinner and a raucous after-dinner poker party and panics when plantation owner Bradlee invites him to view his prime slaves. Omohundro cannot resist a look. Flashy breaks away as subtly as possible, but cannot head them off. He is petrified, debating whether to tell Randolph and risk his reaction. The danger seems past until the overseer suggests he look at the Englishman's prime coffle, who are being ruined by coddling. One talks like a Balliol College professor. As they walk over, Flashy hesitates. Randolph stands up as ordered, blinking, and Omohundro is shouting his amazement when Randolph attacks him like a cat, calls for Flashy's help, stumbles to the rail, is shot, and falls beneath the huge wheel blades. Flashy dashes to the other side, jumps into the water, and swims away.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 takes up the voyage of the *Sultana*, with Flashy imitating Simon Legree, the arch-villain in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. At first glance, this would seem an anachronism, since Stowe's stories begins serialization after 1848, and the novel appears later still. However, Flashy writes his memoirs in the 20th century, when Lincoln's supposed attribution of the Civil War to Stowe has become legendary and the sentimental novel has become a popular stage play, making Simon Legree a



household word. Endnote 39 claims "there can be little doubt" that Stowe is inspired by Flashy and Cassy's crossing of the frozen Ohio River. This is one of Fraser's more clever historical inventions.

The chapter also contains much colorful description of the Mississippi River in 1848, and its various cultural types, including the gold miners passing through. Cleverly, Flashy (or Fraser) works "Mark Twain," the pen name of the River's great storyteller, into the description of pilots taking depth soundings in a treacherous stretch of water. It also describes life on a riverboat—dismal in steerage and luxurious on the "Texas" (third) level, skipping up and downstairs to dramatize the differences in food and lodging, and using cultured runaway slave George Randolph to dramatize them. While Randolph lacks the common sense to act the role required to bring him to freedom (it is no surprise that he has twice failed before), no one has sympathy for his—or slaves' in general—plight. The theme is amplified, more compassionately, in the story of Cassy later in the novel. At the end of Chapter 9, Randolph appears to have met a horrible death and Flashy flees the scene, his perennial favorite tactic.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Flashy swims three-quarters of a mile to Mississippi and hides in the willows. One day, he happens by a store when he hears Jim Bakewell talk about quitting as John Mandeville's driver in the middle of picking season to head to California. Flashy walks to Greystones, an impressive cotton plantation with a fine colonial house, and offers his services, under the name of Tom Arnold. Flashy finds driving the hundred slaves pleasant work, venting his anger at America on them, and John is pleased with the results. Flashy observes how wife Annie relishes hurting John and often hears from John over drinks about their five-year marriage and active sex life. Flashy realizes that John gets nothing from her. John remarks that he has noticed how Flashy looks at her but does not mind, for it is natural.

Flashy is not initially tempted by this haughty woman and sticks to his work, figuring that in 2-3 months he will have enough money to head north. As picking season ends, Flashy grows bored and towards Christmas longs for Elspeth and the baby he has not seen. Above all, he wants to get even with Morrison. When Annie orders the flogging of the slave girl Hermia with whom Flashy has been sleeping—and then her replacement—Flashy goes to the house to confront her. John is on one of his frequent overnight business trips. Flashy's impertinence angers Annie, but Flashy pursues and berates the "vicious brat" until he realizes that she desires him. When Flashy makes his move, Annie runs to her bedroom and returns naked except for spurred riding boots, which she applies while riding him, and then dismisses him.

When John next goes away, Flashy returns to the bedroom, perplexed at this woman who welcomes sex but refuses to be sociable afterwards. Annie scoffs at the danger. During the third visit, John comes home unexpectedly and catches them. Not many men run faster with their pants around his ankles than Flashy, but someone knocks him out. Flashy comes to with his hands tied and head bleeding. Men are struggling to constrain John, who threatens crucifixion or gutting. Luke Johnson drags Flashy into a room, shuts the door, warns him to lie still, and asks how Annie is in bed.

John enters, glaring and growling, is dragged off Flashy when he attacks him, and only slowly listens to advise about how to proceed. Flashy hears only snippets of the plan before it is announced: he is to be taken to a remote and inescapable plantation in Alabama and enslaved for life. The men throw Flashy into a cupboard to contemplate the horror of white men doing this to another white man, and then gag him, clamp irons on his ankles, and throw him in an enclosed cart. A woman advises him to "wait and hope."



Chapter 10 Analysis

The California gold rush, mentioned twice earlier, helps Flashy out as he grows desperate for work, allowing him to show up at John Mandeville's plantation when the man is desperate for a "driver." Flashy has no idea what the job entails, but finds it as satisfying as bullying "fags" at Rugby School (The term is used without the modern connotation, to denote underclassmen who are forced to perform menial tasks for an upperclassman in British schools). Flashy is a bit surprised to find himself not sexually attracted to the remote Annette Mandeville, about whom he forms strong opinions during her husband's drunken bragging sessions. He assumes from her cold demeanor when they pass one another that the feeling is mutual. He learns that it is not when she whips the slave girls Flashy is bedding. Puzzled by Annie's coldness after sex, Flashy recalls Narreeman, his "Afghan lotus-blossom" and bloody Queen Ranavalona on Madagascar, as the only other women who do not enjoy chatting with him. He rationalizes that Annie is uneducated.

Flashy foolishly makes a habit of visiting Annie during John's frequent business trips and one day is caught with his pants down. He accepts that if he caught someone doing this to Elspeth, he would perhaps want to kill him, but cannot conceive that any white man would consign a fellow white man to a life of slavery. Having recalled Ranavalona from Flashman's Lady, it is odd that Flashy does not mention having stood on the auction block and personally experiencing the utter degradation of slavery. At any rate, he is hauled off, half out of his mind at the thought of what lies ahead—conditions he has seen close up aboard Balliol College and helped create with his whip at Greystones—but as always he cannot care for anything beyond his own hide. The girl who tries to comfort him becomes vitally important in the pages ahead.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Cassy saves Flashy from madness, advising him against wasting his energy and lulling him to sleep. When he awakens, Flashy finds that Cassy has untied his hands, but his feet are hobbled and Flashy weeps. Cassy tells him it will not seem so bad after a while; nothing ever does. Flashy is too preoccupied to contemplate sex as Cassy scoffs at his claim to be white and tells of three times running away and being caught and whipped. Cassy has learned a lot about slavery in the fine house where she grows up before being dragged off to submit to any white man that comes along. Flashy will soon understand.

George Hiscoe and Tom Little laugh at Flashy's pleas and bribes at feeding time, and Cassy's silence angers Flashy as they bump along. At sunset, as they stop, Cassy extracts a promise never to abandon her and then orders him to make love to her. Flashy rolls off when threatened with buckshot, as Cassy flirts with the gawking guards, slips out of the cart, and promises to please Tom, who sends George discreetly out of sight. Soon Cassy cries out that Tom has hurt himself and shoots George dead as he comes running. Still naked, Cassy releases Flashy, who sees that she has knifed Tom to death. As Flashy praises her, Cassy recoils from having killed for the first time.

Flashy and Cassy have a week before the wagon is missed and \$15 between them. When Flashy will not risk robbing anyone, Cassy reminds him that if caught he will be hanged and she burned alive. He considers pimping her before she presents her plan. Documentation on being sold in 1843 to Fitzroy Howard and lashed for \$1 when she flees him give Flashy, posing as Howard, the right to sell her to buy passage north. Cassy will escape the buyer and rejoin Flashy, whose crimes she will detail if he abandons her.

When Flashy praises the plan, Cassy tells him of the horrors she faces on the block, stripped, fondled, and humiliated. She had been raised in a happy family with her mother caring for the master's orphaned children as her own. When their father dies, however, the "brothers" sell her into slavery to become a New Orleans whore at age 13. She runs away and they send her back for ten lashes, naked in public. Flashy changes the subject to the rosy future. He is amazed at her mood shifts and begins to lust for her. Cassy recalls talk on the plantation about the Underground Railroad and a book showing a ship flying the Union Jack. She identifies Britain with freedom.

Flashy and Cassy see no one on the roads until they stop at a small crossroads village, where Flashy asks directions from a yokel. He is suspicious about Flashy driving Tom Little's wagon, but accepts that they are cousins. They hurry on to Memphis, a mud hole after rains. Cassy hides out as Flashy determines when the next slave auction is (that afternoon) and the next departing steamboat (late that night). The old man in the ticket office is deaf, but eventually tells him about the Missouri. Flashy then rents a cheap



room and tells Cassy that between the time she is sold and she runs away to him, he will purchase wardrobes for both. He is uncomfortable when she calls him her refuge and protector.

Registering Cassy for sale presents none of the questioning Flashy fears, and the red-headed, cigar-chomping, whiskey-drinking, fast-talking auctioneer is anxious to get to work. Cassy is the third sales item. As she teases the crowd that is hooting for her to strip, Cassy drives the price steadily upward to \$3,400, of which Flashy keeps over \$3,000 after fees. He hurries to his purchases, sends a slave to buy tickets, and returns to the apartment to sew Comber's papers into his new pants, and worries about what might be happening to Cassy. She arrives, soaked and bleeding, but the rain will keep the bloodhounds off her trail. She is too panicked to help Flashy wash and dress her, and only when he promises that she will call no man "massa" again does she regain her wits. They go immediately to their stateroom aboard Missouri, where Cassy sleeps and Flashy drinks and worries. After she wakes up and eats, Cassy blesses Flashy for being the first white man ever to keep his word to her, and Flashy takes improper advantage of her gratitude.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Flashy's confinement with Cassy reveals many sordid details about slavery. Cassy is a complex and attractive character, swinging in mood between premeditated murder (involving commanding Flashy to have sex with her) to panic at the thought of being burned alive. She is indignant at having to assume most of the risk. After Cassy depicts for Flashy as best she can the humiliation of being stripped in public—asking how he would feel, being stripped in front of giggling women—she cooperates fully in bringing the highest price possible for herself, first acting demure, then turning flirtatious, striking poses for the hooting men. Cassy's controlled behavior contrasts sharply, of course, with George Randolph's.

The greatest irony comes when Cassy realizes that the slave papers she has preserved to remind herself of her goal of freedom and, once free, never to forget the past, prove the key to getting up river. Flashy's frustrated conversation with the deaf ticket salesman and his hurried decision to send a slave for the tickets rather than go himself prove costly. The specter of bloodhounds as the most feared aspect of runaway slaves' lives is being established by repetition. It will burst out vividly in Chapter 12. Note how the prospect of never having to call anyone "massa" (master) again galvanizes Cassy's will and spirit.

Note also how, early in the chapter, Cassy laughs at Flashy's insistence that he is not a slave but a white man until she examines his fingernails. The folklore about a physical difference between races is usually brought up by whites. Her laughter suggests that all slave children talk about being white, but drop the line by age ten. Flashy goes out of his way to make Cassy into an Egyptian and, thus, more acceptable to his prejudices. Recall that in Chapter 10, he regularly has sex with slave girls, who he generally

despises and routinely mistreats. Seemingly safe on the riverboat, Flashy makes his move on Cassy and finds her willing and even enthusiastic.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Flashy and Cassy make love most of the next day, paying no attention to the world outside. They dress for dinner but take it in the stateroom talking about Cassy's future, which she insists will be free of males, and her gratitude to Flashy. He is surprised when she lumps him with all other men for lust, selfishness, and cruelty, but also credits his surprising moments of kindness. Next morning, Flashy learns that they have missed the connection to Louisville and are heading to St. Louis—still in slave territory. The travelers are barely on speaking terms during their layover in St. Louis, when Flashy sees a fresh bill in the Governor's name offering a \$100 reward for Tom Arnold and Cassiopeia, dead or alive. The physical descriptions are accurate.

Cassy gasps and explains that the Ohio River is the boundary between slave and free states, but they are not safe until Kentucky and Virginia are left behind. Ohio law forbids aiding runaways, who are daily run down and shot by roving bands of slave catchers. The winter weather may shut down river traffic before they near Pittsburgh. In a week, Cassy declares, she will be either free or dead. They board the *Bostona*, by nightfall are headed up the Ohio, and as they pass Cincinnati, Cassy is relieved. Soon, however, the captain announces that they cannot make Portsmouth. Congressman Albert J. Smith fumes that he must get there to meet Lincoln for an abolitionist rally. Flashy is relieved that he will not have to face Lincoln.

As soon as they debark at Fisher's Landing, KY, Cassy senses evil, wants to go back, and strikes out towards Portsmouth, desperate to catch a ferry. In the tavern, Cassy feels evil more profoundly, just as a pack of well-armed, tough-acting men enter, leaving their barking dogs tied up outside. Flashy overhears talk about hunting some slave and breaking up a meeting across the river. As Flashy and Cassy move casually towards the door, the ringleader, Buck Robinson, points out that no ferry is running, asks their names, and believes that they appear on a new wanted poster from Memphis. Buck shuts up when Flashy points a gun at his belly and forces the posse to lie down. He is shaking too hard to collect their weapons, hands his Colt to Cassy, and tries to bolt. The dogs slow him, he hears a shot, and Cassy races past him, heading for the river. As Flashy begs her not to go out on the ice, Cassy plunges ahead, keeping her footing, while he slips into the freezing water. Cassy pulls him out, only to have to drag him along as he is shot in the buttock. Making their way through a gawking clump of citizens, they learn that the meeting is in Judge Payne's house, nearby.

Buck's voice is loud behind them as Flashy and Cassy invade the stately foyer and beg to see Lincoln. When Lincoln appears, Flashy stumbles through pseudonyms to remind him of Comber and begs protection for a runaway slave girl. Ugly Mrs. Payne orders the door locked, but Buck and his crew are already inside, demanding that their legal warrant for Cassy's arrest be honored. Lincoln stiffens and confronts Buck, arguing the about forced entry, harboring fugitives, and due process. Lincoln laughs at the idea that



brute force can be justice and declares that as a "who's-yar" he has put down better men than Buck. Long before Gettysburg, Flashy knows that Lincoln is a great orator. After a few tense minutes, the slave-chasers back down.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Flashy blames not only the deaf ticket agent for putting them on the wrong steamship but also his raging hormones for realizing too late that they must transfer before the junction with the Ohio River, and Cassy, feeling endangered in Missouri, a slave state, turns frosty after a heated argument. Flashy describes lively St. Louis before suddenly turning somber and quoting the arrest poster that is freshly displayed. The telegraph has sped the news of the twin murders with fearful swiftness.

Fortunately, he has purchased a gun while wandering the teeming streets, for when winter weather forces them ashore at Fisher's Landing, KY, Flashy and Cassy are confronted by a posse that has their description from Memphis. Flashy's inclination is to run and he is on his way to abandoning Cassy when she races past him. Their hazardous crossing of the frozen Ohio River forms, according to Endnote 39, the basis for the scene in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, if not for the whole of Stowe's famous novel. This is, of course, another of Fraser's bits of historical invention. Cassy's strength and determination carry the day. Dunked in the icy water and shot in the rear, Flashy is ready to give up. Compare Cassy's reaction to his, back in Africa, when poor Comby clings to the canoe and begs that they rescue captured Kirk.

Flashy is too confused and panicky when they reach Judge Payne's house to recall the name under which he earlier meets Lincoln. He does, however, get out a plea for his companion. Buck the slave-hunter reviews his legal rights in Ohio, but backs down when Lincoln rejects the might-is-right argument and stands fast as a fellow "who's-har" (Hoosier—resident of Illinois). Endnote 40 offers a popular etymology but doubts its authenticity. In Chapter 13, Lincoln will rationally dissect what he has done, but in the heat of passion, he stands firm for what is right rather than what is strictly legal. To Flashy's ears, it is as great a speech as the later Gettysburg Address.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Flashy is barely operated on for his painful wound before they are moved to the house of some "red-hot abolitionists," lest Buck deliver a warrant. When the others have gone, Lincoln sits beside Flashy to hear an explanation of how a respectable British officer has become a fugitive slave stealer, and Flashy tells the truth, as always omitting the "spicy bits." Lincoln accepts the story as substantially true precisely because it is so unbelievable, and vows that Cassy will never wear chains again. When Flashy tries to butter him up, Lincoln runs through the laws both have broken, and would do it again, because conscience is higher than law and slavery must be fought. Buck's attitude provokes him.

When Flashy talks of heading home as soon as possible, Lincoln insists that he testify first in New Orleans. No one will link Lt. Comber with the misdeeds on the Mississippi. Lincoln will arrange for a U.S. Marshal to accompany him. Flashy is angry, seeing no good outcome for himself and is sad to part with Cassy. Their goodbye is chaperoned by Mrs. Payne, who disapproves of their long, passionate kiss. The trip to New Orleans is uneventful. There, Capt. Baily takes charge, reminds Flashy of his duty and explains how the U.S. is really two nations divided over slavery, where many a blind eye is turned. If what Flashy said Captain Spring to have been up to is true, he should be indicted, but the U.S. cannot afford an international incident and Lincoln has vouched for him. After his statement, Flashy may go home.

Contrary to Flashy's opinion, Baily says that his testimony is the key to winning the preliminary adjudication that allows the master and crew of Balliol College to come to trial. Spring is "no ordinary blackbird;" there is a lot of money and influence behind him, and if Balliol College is Mexican-owned as the lone surviving document suggests, another international crisis must be avoided. The physical evidence of shackles will not hold up; slaves must have been found aboard. Adjudication sessions in New Orleans are wild affairs, and Spring's lawyer, Marcellus Anderson, is sharp-minded and quick to bribe. He does not yet know that Flashy (Comber) will testify in two days.

Amiable Baily keeps Flashy from running and introduces him to the taciturn prosecutor, Clitheroe, and quiet assistant, Dunne, who inexplicably allows Anderson to talk with Flashy. Spring is furious at Flashy's clever ruse, but willing to keep quiet if the testimony is inconclusive. Flashy sees no way out for himself and that day is one of the few blank periods in his memory. As he has in past crises, Flashy must bluff, shift, and lie.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Lincoln, who is heading home after a single term in Congress, having just broken diverse federal and state laws in shielding Cassy, demands that Flashy—under



whatever name he is or has been operating—account for how he has come to this point. Flashy essentially tells the truth, as he usually does, minus the "juicy" parts, whenever he lacks time to make up a good story. When Flashy finishes, Lincoln gives him time to consider whether he has left anything out, suggests a few outlandish scenarios, recalls the story of a Southerner who denies moving the Mississippi River, and concludes that because it is outlandish, the tale is probably in substance true. He then reiterates that they are both scoundrels—the quality that Flashy earlier believes binds them—and remarks that those who are not regularly caught and punished for their misdeeds risk not being saved.

Flashy is not pleased that Lincoln, who has risked much and given Flashy the benefit of the doubt, insists that it is his duty to testify in New Orleans and arranges safe transit. They do not see one another for 15 years, when Flashy undertakes a mission to save the Union. Cassy, too, departs, taking all their money. They scandalize Mrs. Payne by their goodbye kiss, which Flashy wishes had been all-out lovemaking. He has grown used to this difficult young woman.

The trip to New Orleans is so uneventful that Flashy glosses over it, concentrating instead on preparations for the trial. Characters describe for this foreigner how slavery divides the nation and how some things—like Flashy's felonious deeds on the Mississippi—can slip through administrative cracks if he cooperates. He sees no way in which he can end up well, but is unable physically to escape. He runs mentally through some of his most deadly experiences as he puffs himself up to "bluff, shift and lie" for the sake of his own neck and England's honor. The final chapter details the hearing for the fate of Balliol College.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The adjudication room resembles a lecture theater in its layout. Seated beside Baily, Flashy is surprised to see behind them two pretty, giggling "yellow girls" in New Orleans finery, who have the audience's attention. Anderson and Spring sit at one table, Clitheroe and Dunne at another, all facing the sharp-faced adjudicator, who is flanked on either side by an assessor. The clerk reads the specifications and charges being brought in Fairbrother's name. These include piracy for firing on a U.S. Navy vessel and attempting to dispose of evidence by drowning slaves. Anderson objects that neither the vessel nor her captain is American. Clitheroe cites precedents for dealing with a suspected slave ship. After long wrangling about procedure, the hearing begins. Flashy had not known that the defendant must show his innocence in these cases.

Anderson states that the plaintiff must show 1) Balliol College is at least partially American-owned, 2) carrying slaves bound for the U.S., and 3) she resists a U.S. warship while committing such "illicit carriage." Everything rests on the second point. Clitheroe produces Fairbrother's sworn deposition, which to Flashy's ear is truthful. It claims that Lt. Comber can testify to Spring's intention to drown the evidence. Anderson laments the captain's absence, having returned to sea duty, which means that he cannot be cross-examined. Anderson admits that "coloured people" are found aboard and that shackles are found, but the two have not be correlated.

Spring testifies under oath that he carries a "general cargo" from Africa to Roatan, largely palm oil, and is heading for Havana when he is intercepted without justification and resists. They are boarded, arrested, and taken to New Orleans in chains, and both Spring and the owners are suffering economic loss. He emphatically denies carrying slaves in contravention to U.S. law. He claims any U.S. vessel would defy a British naval order of the kind he had been given. The spectators' applause has to be silenced. When Clitheroe questions Mrs. Spring's destruction of the paperwork, Spring replies that it is standard operating procedure when attacked by pirates, who might alter documents. He retains certified proof of Mexican registry. Clitheroe turns to the slave shelves, which seem odd for a cargo of palm oil. Spring says the shelves are convenient and had not been rigged for slaves when Balliol College is seized. When questioned about the dozen women found aboard, Spring claims never to have denied that they are slaves. This surprises the adjudicator, but orders Anderson to proceed rather than acting on his motion to dismiss charges.

Anderson examines former slaves Drusilla and Messalina, two of the tarts Flashy recalls from the ship. Both speak English and are both American-born slaves. In Roatan they had been slaves and whores. They point out Spring as the one who takes them aboard and Flashy, who is kind to them. They had been heading for Havana, to be brought by another ship to New Orleans to work in Miss Rivers' whorehouse. Now working as free persons there. The adjudicator has given up on keeping order among the all-male



spectators. Anderson points out that the Enactment of 1820 specifies piracy involves with transporting and enslaving non-slaves; these girls do not qualify. When Clitheroe objects that Drusilla and Messalina have been carefully chosen for this, the adjudicator has no sympathy for failing to call more witnesses.

Clitheroe protests vainly and calls Comber to testify. Terrified, Flashy invents credentials, but before he can tell about Balliol College's voyage from Africa, Anderson objects to the leading question. Another court might deal with that, but this one must focus on the situation when the U.S. Navy intervenes. Pursuing this course would leave American vessels vulnerable to British law. Flashy testifies that the slaves found aboard had not generally been chained but were during the attack, probably to prevent their escape. Sullivan had done it before being killed during a violent argument with Spring. When Clitheroe reads from Fairbrother's affidavit, Flashy's contention that Spring is an "inhuman beast," Anderson objects, and the adjudicator—obviously well-bribed—agrees: Flashy's current words matter rather than some statement. Flashy declares that he has only now learned that American law differentiates between American- and foreign-born slaves, and he cannot say where the other girls are born. He vividly recalls that Lady Caroline Lamb had not been chained by Sullivan.

Clitheroe demands to know why Flashy's tone, attitude, and story differs from what they had believed he would say. They do not want scruples—they want truth. Flashy blusters: as in Washington, so, too, is he in New Orleans reluctant to divulge anything before his British superiors hear it. That could undo all the work he has done. During an adjournment, Flashy furiously attacks Clitheroe and Dunne for mishandling the simple case. Hearing that U.S. Protection is removed from him, Flashy demands to be handed over to the British ambassador. Back in court, the adjudicator finds that Fairbrother lacks probable cause, frees the Balliol College, and suggests the owners sue for damages. A mixed commission court may want to take up the question of the trans-Atlantic voyage. Spring intends to sail that night.

Left alone, Flashy again fears U.S. Navy retribution. Suddenly, an escape plan comes to him. He runs to Spring's side and asks for passage back to England or France. He will pay for it by surrendering Comber's stolen evidence. Seeing the advantage, Spring lets his anger cool and agrees. Flashy finds it odd to be called by his own name.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The final chapter describes the adjudication over the Balliol College. Fairbrother, according to Endnote 44, is taking a considerable personal risk in bringing charges and seeking the ship's confiscation. Flashy admits that Fairbrother's written testimony is true, but his reassignment to sea duty makes cross-examination impossible, allowing the defense to narrow the scope of what is allowed. The audience is strongly on Spring's side, and the adjudicator has little luck in preventing raucous outbursts of cheering. Flashy eventually decides that the adjudicator is well-bribed by Spring.



Plenty of legal precedents are cited, including the Enactment of 1820, better known as the "Missouri Compromise." Flashy claims ignorance of U.S. law and custom to avoid making any statements that might harm Spring—and thus land him in the defendants' docket. Bluster once again serves Flashy as a defensive weapon, as he returns to his position in Washington: he must report first to his superiors. When the trial ends, Flashy sees that re-boarding the loathsome Balliol College is his best bet at getting home, and he succeeds in blackmailing Spring into accepting him. The editor appends a copy of Morrison's obituary. The death means that Flashy's hopes of revenge are gone.



Characters

Harry Flashman

The 26-year-old narrator and chief character in the novel, "Flashy" is fresh home from Germany and a skirmish with Otto von Bismarck and Lola Montez, and has seen first-hand the bloody revolutions on the Continent. His beautiful but brainless wife, Elspeth, is pregnant after eight years of marriage and frustrates Flashy by refusing to have sex, lest the baby be harmed. Believing that he has all the qualities of character needed in a politician - lies, dissembles, toadies, and turns tail, but some difficulty interfering in others' lives, Flashy allows himself to be talked into standing for Parliament. Surprisingly his father-in-law, John Morrison, agrees and arranges to showcase him. During the meeting, Flashy tries unsuccessfully to seduce beautiful Fanny Locke and resumes an old army dispute with Bryant, whose taunting and charge of cheating at cards so enrage Flashy that he punches and nearly kills Bryant.

Seeing an opportunity to get Flashy out of Elspeth's life, Morrison signs him aboard Balliol College, a slave ship. Flashy is supercargo for a voyage to Dahomey and across the Atlantic to Roatan. Approaching Cuba with only a handful of slaves aboard, they are interdicted by the U.S. Navy and boarded. Flashy assumes the identity of an undercover British officer who had died in his arms, and convinces the Navy that he has vital information that can end the slave trade. Flashy is rushed to Washington, DC, where he insists he must divulge his information first to the Admiralty.

Returning to New Orleans, Flashy escapes the Navy's clutches only to be enlisted into the Underground Railroad to escort an important runaway to Canada (unsuccessfully), gets himself condemned to slavery by seducing a plantation owner's wife, and escapes with a wily runaway named Cassy. Getting as far as Portsmouth, OH, they are defended by Abraham Lincoln, who Flashy earlier met in Washington, and is sent back to New Orleans to testify. The trial amazingly goes in Capt. Spring's favor and Flashy convinces the angry master to take him to Europe in exchange for the stolen documentation he possesses.

In the course of the novel, Flashy poses as 1) Lt. Beauchamp Millward Comber, R.N., after the Balliol College's capture, during questioning in Washington, DC, and during the adjudication hearing; 2) Count Rudi von Starnberg, an old cutthroat acquaintance from Austria; 3) James K. Prescott, doing his best to look like Simon Legree aboard the riverboat Sultana; 4) Tom Arnold as a slave driver at Mandeville's Greystones plantation; 5) Fitzroy Howard, runaway slave Cassy's deeded owner, when he sells her in Memphis, TN. By the time Flashy meets Lincoln a second time in Portsmouth, he is uncertain what to call himself. Having testified "scrupulously" and blustered much, Flashy convinces Spring to convey him home to England and is surprised to hear his real name being used again.



John Charity Spring

The master of the Balliol College, a slave ship owned in part by narrator Harry Flashman's father-in-law John Morrison, Spring is a large, square man, with cold eyes, a hooked nose, and a scar across his forehead that reddens when he is angry. He had studied the classics at Oriel College, Oxford, before being expelled. He habitually quotes Horace, Lucan, Sallust, Seneca (particularly), Thucydides, and resents "herding with the carrion of the sea" rather than doing scholarship. Running slaves from Africa to the Americas, however, earns him £20,000 per voyage. He insists on holding divine services on Sundays, blasting prayers at God, demanding blessings and guidance, and hosts afternoon tea parties with his equally-insane wife.

Spring has a nose for tribal warfare and maintains arrangements with many African chiefs, most notably King Gezo of Dahomey, from whom he has long wanted to purchase some of his elite Amazons bodyguards, as an academic exercise, to prove Herodotus correct if geographically misplaced. As 600 slaves are readied to board Balliol College, Spring leads an expedition to meet the King and secures a half dozen Amazons in exchange for six pistols and a white slave. While fleeing the rest of the Amazons, most of the shore party is killed or captured.

Spring's knowledge of the coastal winds and a superbly trained crew get the Balliol College out of a scrape with the British Navy, and the crossing to Roatan is uneventful. Sailing for Cuba with a half dozen slave girls, however, Spring is intercepted by the U.S. Navy and offers armed resistance. As the ship is shot to pieces, Spring orders the evidence of slaving drowned, argues with and kills Sullivan, but is then shot point-blank by Looney, who considers him the Devil. Spring's wife throws all paperwork overboard. "No ordinary blackbirder," Spring is quickly treated medically and granted bail, and hires cagey Marcellus Anderson to represent him at the adjudication hearing. Spring is angry, seeing Flashy, pretending to be Lt. Comber, testifying against him, but Anderson prevails, and when Flashy promises to turn over Comber's stolen evidence in exchange for a ride to Europe, agrees that this makes sense.

Cassy

A runaway slave who helps narrator Harry Flashman escape from a slave wagon bound for an inescapable Mississippi plantation, Cassy (Cassiopeia) has three times run away from her master, Jacob Forster of the Blue Mountain Spring Plantation in Tippah County, MS. Speaking like a "New Orleans Frenchy," with golden skin and the delicate face found on Egyptian statues, and a tall body suggesting a graceful Siamese cat, Cassy becomes sexually attractive to Flashy, but only after her quick thinking and action rescue them from their immediate predicament. When Flashy is first thrown into the wagon, bound, gagged, handcuffed, and struggling mightily, Cassy comforts him, urges him to hope, and lulls him to sleep. Next day, she assures him that escape is impossible and that the horrors of slavery eventually seem not so bad.



Once she is convinced that Flashy is a white man, Cassy sees a way out. Before a meal stop, Cassy orders Flashy to have sex with her in order for the guards to order them apart and entertain ideas of being pleased themselves. Teasing them, Cassy stabs one and shoots the others, and then, having secured Flashy's solemn promise not to abandon her before she is safe in Canada, proposes catching a river boat to Pittsburgh. To pay the passage, she allows herself to be auctioned off, stripping suggestively to drive the price up, and then runs away from the buyer. Dressed as a fine lady and living with Flashy (disguised as Tom Arnold) in luxury, Cassy panics when they learn that the river boat is bound not for Louisville, KY, but St. Louis, MO. In St. Louis, they learn that there is a \$100 bounty on their heads. Cassy's hopes are rising when the Bostona enters the Ohio River, but plunge when they get stuck in ice short of Portsmouth and are put ashore on the Kentucky shore. She feels evil lurking.

When slave-hunters confront them, Cassy outruns Flashy to the river and ignores his pleas not to go out on the shifting ice. She is surefooted until he falls through, so stops, and rescues him. When Flashy is shot in the buttocks and ready to give up, Cassy half-drags him into Ohio, where they receive sanctuary. Cassy takes their shared money when she continues on to Canada, after shocking the Judge's wife by giving him a long passionate kiss on the mouth.

Cassy may well be the novel's most attractive character. She helps Flashy understand—to the extent a white, male snob can understand—the degradation and horror of slavery. The white boys whom her mother raises when they are orphaned sell Cassy into slavery to become a teenage whore, and she is stripped naked and lashed in front of cheering, leering men when caught. She has read about the Underground Railroad to Canada and looks to Britain as a beacon of freedom. Flashy is the first white man who has ever kept his word to her and, although she understands his nature, deems this true kindness. She is confident that her life, unencumbered by a husband, will be rich.

Abraham Lincoln

A historical character, Lincoln is destined to be President of the United States when narrator Harry Flashman next meets him. In this novel, Flashy describes Lincoln as "an unusually tall man, with the ugliest face you ever saw, deep dark eye sockets and a chin like a coffin," and adds, "just why I liked him I couldn't say; I suppose in his way he had the makings of as big a scoundrel as I am myself."

Lincoln and Flashy meet twice, first at a Washington, DC, diplomatic dinner given by the British ambassador after Flashy, posing as Lt. Beauchamp Millward Comber, R.N., has been unfruitfully interrogated by the U.S. Navy Department. Lincoln offers many quips and opinions on slavery, blacks being a "nuisance," much as he had been while suffering from chicken pox, needing special consideration and compassion but not worship. It is an emotionally divisive issue, with people of principle and conscience on each side. When the topic turns to California, Lincoln believes that those who sell supplies and equipment to the gold diggers are alone destined to get rich. During the formal entertainment, Lincoln takes Flashy aside to ask a series of naval questions that



stump him. Try as he may to evade, Flashy fails, but Lincoln does not intend to reveal him. It is not his business.

The second meeting, in Portsmouth, OH, comes as Lincoln is in town for an abolitionist meeting en route home after completing his congressional term. Flashy is wounded while fleeing slave-catchers in a dash across the frozen Ohio River with the runaway Cassy. Lincoln confronts the bounty hunters, arguing the law with their leader and refusing to surrender the refugees. When all have gone, Lincoln demands to know what has transpired since Washington, and insists that Flashy—whatever his true identity—return to New Orleans and testify in the matter of the slave ship *Balliol College*. He arranges for a U.S. Marshal to conduct Flashy there safely.

Lord George Bentinck

A historical character, Bentinck is "one of the foremost sporting figures of his day," handsome, aggressive, and respected as the leader of the Tories in Parliament. He dies shortly after meeting narrator Harry Flashman at Cleeve House and is succeeded as Tory leader by Benjamin D'Israeli.

Marcellus Anderson

Capt. John Charity Spring's defense lawyer in New Orleans, Anderson is in narrator Harry Flashman's eyes a perfect "Mr Pickwick" character (from the Charles Dickens book), round-face, portly, and bespectacled and reminiscent of Robin Hood's Friar Tuck. Anderson gains access to Flashy before the hearing and suggests that if Flashy's testimony gets his client indicted, Flashy will stand trial too; if Spring is acquitted, all will be forgotten. In court, Anderson anticipates the plaintiff's lawyers' every move and excludes sufficient evidence to prevent the *Balliol College* from being confiscated by the U.S. Government.

Bryant

Once, a fellow subaltern with narrator Harry Flashman in Lord Cardigan's elite regiment, Bryant appears at Cleeve House with Henry Duberle, fiancé of Fanny Locke, who Flashy has been trying to seduce. He seeks revenge on Flashy from having run off without paying him for seeing that an opponent's pistol in a duel is not loaded. Currently in the least-prestigious 18th Irish, Bryant sneaks cards into Flashy's pocket during a friendly game of *vingt-et-un* and then charges him with cheating. Flashy's punch nearly kills Bryant, who piously forgives him. The attack forces Flashy to leave England.

Clitheroe and Dunne

The plaintiff's lawyer in the case against Capt. John Charity Spring, Clitheroe has an aristocratic beak and long silver hair, and speaks over narrator Harry Flashman's head



in a Washingtonian manner. He wants only "decisive corroboration" for his case. His assistant, Dunne, a quiet, dark fellow, says little but allows defense counsel, Marcellus Anderson, access to Flashy before the hearing. During the hearing, Clitheroe produces two witnesses to slavery aboard the captured vessel, but being American-born and previously enslaved, they do not meet the standards for determining piracy. Clitheroe is outmaneuvered and forced to withdraw the complaint, after giving Flashy some uncomfortable moments on the witness stand.

Beauchamp Millward Comber

The civil, cultivated, self-confident, grizzled Third Mate aboard Balliol College, Comber intercedes with profit-hungry Capt. John Charity Spring for more human conditions for the slaves. Stabbed with an Amazon's spear while escaping from the village of Apokoto, Comber barely makes it aboard the fleeing canoe and pleads for shipmate Kirk, who is not fast enough and whose cries of pain under torture have already begun. Dr. Murphy gives Comber no chance of survival.

As death approaches, Comber calls for Harry Flashman, prattles about the usual deathbed concerns of earnest Christians, and, assured that Flashy is an abolitionist, reveals his true identity as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy assigned to spy on slave traders. He has recorded and sealed up detailed data on Spring. When Comber dies, singing Danny Boy, Flashy hides the documents on his person and later impersonates Comber when the U.S. Navy captures Balliol College.

Crixus

Using a pseudonym adopted from Spartacus' fellow slave rebel leader in Roman times, Crixus is a benign-looking but zealous "soldier of Christ" in the cause of abolition. Crixus has his men seize narrator Harry Flashman from the streets of New Orleans, as Flashy prepares to slip onto a ship bound for England. The men insist they will not harm him and deliver him to Crixus' well-appointed library blindfolded. Flashy keeps carefully in character as Lt. Comber, R.N., as Crixus talks passionately about the Underground Railroad, the martyrs who have suffered taking slaves from all over the South to safety and freedom in Canada, and the need for Flashy, an unknown face, to escort the important but pugnacious slave George Randolph there.

Benjamin D'Israeli

A historical character, D'Israeli is destined to be Prime Minister of Great Britain. During this novel, Harry Flashman calls him a "cocky little sheeny" and never spells his surname "Disraeli" as the politician had adopted. Flashy describes D'Israeli's "extravagant dress and speech" and alludes to his writing novels.



Drusilla and Messalina

Two of the slave girls who narrowly escape death by drowning when narrator Harry Flashman orders them unshackled from an anchor chain as the U.S. Navy prepares to board Balliol College, Drusilla and Messalina are called to testify at the ship's adjudication hearing. Both speak English and are both American-born slaves. In Roatan they had been slaves and whores. They point out Spring as the one who takes them aboard and Flashy, who is kind to them. They had been heading for Havana, to be brought by another ship to New Orleans to work in Miss Rivers' whorehouse. They are now working as free persons there.

Abraham Fairbrother

The young commander of USS Cormorant, Fairbrother swallows Harry Flashman's convincing and inspiring story about being Lt. Beauchamp Millward Comber, R.N., when captured aboard Balliol College. A "genuine Northern nigger-lover," Fairbrother races Flashy to Washington, DC, to report to the bigwigs. Fairbrother is a virtuous, decent soul and brainless, which serves Flashy's purposes admirably. A dedicated "Bible-thumping" zealot, Fairbrother is horrified when Lady Caroline Lamb, Flashy's usual bedmate on the slaver, visits Fairbrother's cabin naked. He seeks Flashy's advice but doubts prayer will work. In the morning, Flashy sees in Fairbrother's blushing and avoidance, evidence that he has lost his virginity. The trial is delayed until Fairbrother cannot avoid returning to sea duty, but he risks swearing out charges against Spring and leaves a written deposition that the defense effectively quashes.

Elsbeth Morrison Flashman

Narrator Harry Flashman's beautiful but brainless wife, Elspeth in this novel is pregnant, after eight years of marriage, carrying future Bishop Harry Albert Victor Flashman. Flashy suspects that he is not the biological father, for they have an open relationship and Elspeth is sexually insatiable and just as immoral as he, but fails to realize that she is transgressing. She frustrates Flashy by refusing to have sex, lest the baby be harmed.

King Gezo

An historical character, Gezo is the King of Dahomey with whom Capt. Spring of the Balliol College deals for slaves. Dahomey Amazons form the elite of King Gezo's army, and when he sells six of them for pistols and a white slave, the other Amazons spontaneously mutiny to follow and butcher most of the landing party. Flashy describes Gezo as "bitter ugly, even by nigger standards," with "a face that would have shamed a gorilla," marked by tiny yellow eyes and large yellow teeth.



William Ewart Gladstone

A historical character, Gladstone plays a bit part in the novel, inspiring narrator Harry Flashman's brief flirtation with politics by Gladstone's mediocrity. Flashy describes Gladstone as looking like "an unemployed undertaker's mute."

Lady Caroline Lamb

A tall slave aboard Balliol College with whom narrator Harry Flashman has sex as they cross the Atlantic and to whom he tries to impart a few English and Latin phrases. Lady Caroline Lamb is named for the late British novelist who had been Lord Byron's lover. Spring has a cotton dress made for Lady Caroline Lamb, lest his wife be startled to see her naked going to or from Flashy's berth. She prefers to be naked as she is educated, "one way or the other." When the slaves are sold in Roatan, Captain Spring retains Lady Caroline Lamb, hoping that Flashy can teach her enough English to serve as translator on future voyages.

Fanny Locke

A historical character, blond, voluptuous, with "swinging hip and a knowing eye," Frances Isabella Locke is friendly when narrator Harry Flashman meets her early in the story at bland Cleve House. Her older brother is a "middle-aged moneybags of a banker" with a "face like a three-day corpse." He hosts the meeting at which Flashy's political career is supposed to be launched. During a picnic at Runaway Down, Fanny kisses "like a novice French whore," but always slips out of Flashy's clutches. Fanny Locke later becomes famous as Mrs. Fanny Duberly, a "Victorian heroine, campaigner, and 'army wife' extraordinary." Flashy meets her again in the Crimea, as told in Flashman to the Charge.

Looney

Sometimes called Sammy Snivels, Looney is the steward aboard the slave ship Balliol College. Captain John Charity Spring publicly flogs Looney for urinating on the slaves' provisions in retaliation for mockery and beats him senseless when Looney fetches a Brazilian flag for Combers' funeral. Thereafter, Looney becomes sullen and curses Spring as the Devil. During the battle with the U.S. Navy off Cuba, Spring kills Looney's only friend aboard and narrator Harry Flashman uses this to convince Looney to empty a pistol in Spring's back. He does, but Spring survives.

John and Annette Mandeville

The owners of the Greystones cotton plantation in Mississippi, John is a broad, bull-necked 50-year-old man with a coarse red face and heavy whiskers. He hires narrator



Harry Flashman (under the alias Tom Arnold) for \$30 a month to replace gold-hungry Jim Bakewell at the height of picking season. His imperious, spoiled, and petulant wife, Annie, is a tiny, well-shaped woman half John's age with an unattractively sharp chin, tight lips, and cold, disdainful gray eyes. After months of avoiding one another and looking at one another with contempt, Flashy and Annie end up in bed together, she wearing boots and spurs. It happens several more times while John is away on business before they are caught. Wishing to crucify or disembowel Flashy, John instead sends him off to Alabama as a slave.

John Morrison (Lord Paisley)

Narrator Harry Flashman's Scottish father-in-law, Morrison is described as an abominable miser but astute businessman. A prosperous mill owner, he grows rich after moving south and becoming known in London. As the novel starts, Morrison is pushing for a title and nearly "puking with fear" at thought of revolution like the one going on in Europe. Flashy describes Mrs. Morrison as his "Medusa-in-law." They and two unmarried sisters live with Flashy, Elspeth, and Flashy's ex-politician father. Morrison takes Flashy to meet important politicians to launch him on a political career, but a fight over cards suggest that he get out of the country. Morrison signs Flashy aboard the slave ship Balliol College, which he partly owns. Flashy spends most of the novel yearning to get back to England and reveal Morrison's part in slaving. The editor appends a note, saying that Lord Paisley dies suddenly in January 1859 in his daughter's London home. He had been knighted in November.

Peter Omohundro

A big, scar-faced, heavily-whiskered slave dealer from Savannah, GA, Omohundro boards the riverboat Sultana at Natchez, TN, and runaway slave George Randolph panics, sure Omohundro will recognize and turn in Randolph. Omohundro spends his one day aboard gossiping with Arkansas planters and not until after dinner does he raise Harry Flashman's fears. An Arkansas planter, Bradlee, invites him to view his slaves, even though Omohundro claims not to be in the market. Omohundro recognizes Randolph, who attacks and fights ferociously before being shot and falling overboard beneath the Sultana's side wheel. He is wrongly presumed dead.

George Randolph

An "uppity" runaway slave who Harry Flashman is cajoled and threatened into transporting from New Orleans to Cincinnati, Randolph is an extraordinary, well-educated man, whose voice is deemed more important to the abolitionist movement than even the late Nat Turner. As the danger of keeping Randolph in New Orleans grows daily, Flashy is to take him, ostensibly as part of a "coffle" (chained caravan) of slaves, a role that galls Randolph, and he proves an extraordinarily bad actor. Underground Railroad coordinator Crixus knows that Randolph can be difficult, but says



he is a delicate genius whose intelligence has intensified the suffering of being a slave. Flashy's inclination is to run and leave Randolph to shift for himself. Uncovered by a Georgian who knows his past, Randolph fights, is shot, and tumbles overboard under the Sultana's massive side wheel. Flashy assumes that Randolph is dead, but later learns he survives and makes it to Canada.

Buck Robinson

The rough leader of a band of slave-chasers, Buck confronts Harry Flashman and runaway slave Cassy in a Kentucky inn across the frozen Ohio River from Portsmouth, OH. Producing a wanted poster from Memphis, AL, Buck falls silent when Flashy points a gun at his belly and orders the posse to lie down. The fugitives bolt, separately, and Buck and his men pursue them across the ice floes, wounding Flashy in the buttock. They continue their pursuit into the home of Judge Payne, and Buck argues with Abraham Lincoln the legalities of his case. Buck finally backs down and leaves, threatening to return with a court order.

Susie Willinck

The painted and bejeweled New Orleans madame with whom narrator Harry Flashman hides during his escape from U.S. Naval authorities, Susie is "jollier and nicer—and randier" than she looks, and nearly wears Flashy out during the better part of a week that he spends in her establishment. Suzie is happy when Flashy leaves, fearing that she will become too emotionally attached. Susie advances money for his passage home to England, but Flashy is captured by thugs, beginning his adventures on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Susie is one of the few women about whom Flashy has no hard feelings, and believes she harbors none towards him.



Objects/Places

Apokoto

The African town in which Capt. John Charity Spring's trading party meets King Gezo, several hours upstream from the coast, Apokoto is smelled long before it is seen. It consists of a huge stockade with round, beehive-shaped grass lodges. Everything is sodden except the central square. The community center is a great building constructed of human skulls. After having many times before refused to sell Spring any of his Amazon bodyguards, Gezo sells six, and their sisters rush after the crew to rescue them in a bloody battle. Crewman Kirk is returned to Apokoto for skilled tortures that keep him alive but render him impossible to identify as human.

Balliol College

A barque, built in Baltimore, MD, but ostensibly owned and registered in Mexico, and mastered by Captain John Charity Spring, a British subject, Balliol College is anchored off the coast of France when Spring brings narrator Harry Flashman across the English Channel and installs her as supercargo. Flashy has nearly murdered someone and needs to be out of the country. His father-in-law is part owner of Balliol College. Spring gives the sleek vessel this name because his father and brothers attended this detestable institution. Soon Flashy discovers that Balliol College is fitted for carrying slaves and demands to be let off, but is turned down.

The ship sails to Dahomey in Africa with a choice crew that includes Kirk, an oldish veteran of the sunken Black Joke; an alcoholic Irish doctor, Murphy, whose main task is supervising the branding of slaves; First Mate Mr. Sullivan, a raw-boned Yankee, youngish, hard-case New Englander who tells Flashy that Spring is mad but the best skipper on any coast; Second Mate Kinnie; Third Mate Mr. Comber, civil, cultivated, self-confident, and grizzled; Steward Sammy Snivels, usually called Looney; an unnamed "little ferret" of a cabin boy, who offers Flashy sexual favors; and an unnamed Norwegian clerk.

During a visit to King Gezo, Kirk and Kinnie are killed; Comber is mortally wounded; the cabin boy is left behind as a white slave, but 600 slaves are brought aboard and chained. The Atlantic crossing is largely uneventful, and after discharging the "merchandise" at Roatan, Balliol College is heading for Cuba when she is challenged by the U.S. Navy. Spring kills Sullivan; Looney shoots Spring; Flashy orders the slaves released and assumes Comber's identity when speaking to the U.S. Navy. Technicalities eventually get the ship released.



Chartists

A working-class movement in Great Britain, pushing for civil rights, the Chartists demonstrate on the Kennington Commons on 10 May 1848 in far fewer numbers than the gentry fear. Foreign agitators embarrass the Chartists. A drenching rain dampens the occasion. When a "Frog agitator" calls the English cowards, a butcher's boy thrashes him and is carried away as a hero. Flashy three times signs the petition that goes to Parliament.

Cleeve House

The "fairish establishment" in Seend, England, to which John Morrison takes his son-in-law, narrator Harry Flashman, hoping to launch him on a political career. Cleeve House is too "Methodist" for Flashy's taste, except for the willowy, blond, voluptuous, friendly Fanny Locke. Flashy and Fanny spend the second day at a picnic in Runaway Down, where she many times frustrates him. Flashy gets into an argument over cards with an old army colleague, who plants cards in his pocket and then calls him a cheat. When Flashy smashes his accuser in the face and nearly kills him, Morrison arranges for Flashy to leave England aboard the slave ship Balliol College.

Middle Passage

A euphemism for the slave trade (another one that narrator Harry Flashman uses is the "blackbird trade"), Middle Passage transports kidnapped Africans to the Americas. The first leg of the passage is the carrying to Africa of cheap goods to use in the sales, and the third passage is the return to England carrying American merchandise. Balliol College relies on speed to outrun any government patrols on the lookout for illegal cargo. Flashy points out the hypocrisy of English abolitionists preaching about white injustice when the slaves are rounded up in Africa and sold to the whites by fellow blacks.

New Orleans, LA

The bustling port city serving as seaport linking the Mississippi River with the Caribbean, New Orleans makes heavy use of slave trade in filling the warehouses of the French Quarter. The captured slaver Balliol College is escorted to New Orleans (pronounced, narrator Harry Flashman says: Awlins by natives and Nawlins by outsiders). Flashy describes the approach from the sea, with the French Quarter (Vieux Carré) to starboard and Algiers, across the Mississippi to port. When he returns from Washington, DC, Flashy anxious to escape the clutches of the U.S. Navy. Rowed ashore to Algiers, he quickly loses himself in the crowd and flees to the vibrant Quarter as a "tropical Paris" where the French have been civilized, his third most favorite city after London and magical Calcutta.



Flashy spends most of a week with Madame Susie Willinck in her fancy whorehouse before trying to board a ship bound for England. He is intercepted by agents of "Crixus," the local head of the Underground Railroad, and drafted to accompany an important runaway slave, George Randolph upriver to safety. That mission falls apart, and after many misadventures (mostly felonies) under various pseudonyms, Flashy is returned to New Orleans to testify. He blusters his way out of trouble and talks Capt. Spring into carrying him to Europe about the newly-freed Balliol College.

Portsmouth, OH

The town on the north shore of the Ohio River beyond which the riverboat *Bostona* cannot move in icy conditions, Portsmouth happens to be hosting an abolitionist rally in the home of Judge Payne when Harry Flashman and runaway slave Cassy rush in, muddy, bleeding, and pursued by slave-chasers from the Kentucky side of the river. Flashy pleads for Abraham Lincoln, one of the scheduled orators whom he has earlier met in Washington, DC, to come to their aid. Lincoln does and then demands that Flashy not only explain what he has been doing but also to return to New Orleans to testify in the Balliol College matter. After Portsmouth, Flashy and Cassy never see one another again.

Sultana

A large, fast, side wheel steamer, *Sultana* is selected by Underground Railroad manager Crixus to take runaway slave George Randolph from New Orleans in the company of five other supposed slaves and under the supervision of Harry Flashman (under the alias of James K. Prescott). At the time it holds the record for a New Orleans-Louisville passage of 5.5 days. Flashy lives on the plush "texas" (third) level, while the slaves ride in steerage at the water level. When Georgian Peter Omohundro boards at Natchez, TN, Randolph panics, knowing that he can identify him, and when *Sultana's* slave supervisor suggests that Omohundro view Flashy's slaves while he is on the main deck, Randolph fights violently and is shot while contemplating diving overboard. Because he is sucked under the 30-foot wheel, Flashy assumes that Randolph is dead, but he survives.

Underground Railroad

To the slavers among whom narrator Harry Flashman has recently sailed, the Underground Railroad is "a secret society for stealing slaves, and helping them to escape" to Canada, but to the zealous New Orleans organizer known as Crixus, it is an "organisation for saving souls," an army fighting the "blasphemous iniquity" of slavery. Having heard of the British Lt. Comber's risks aboard Balliol College, Crixus asks Flashy's services in escorting an extraordinary slave, George Randolph, to Canada. Randolph speaking openly in Canada or England is more vital to abolition than the late Nat Turner and has twice failed to escape.



Washington, DC

The capital of the United States, Washington is, to narrator Harry Flashman's mind, an odd and uncomfortable place, clearly envisaged as the finest city in the world, but in 1848 still in a state of primitive development. The roads are muddy and the houses half-completed. Flashy notes that when he sees it again during the Civil War he still dislikes it—"as sticky as Calcutta or Madras in summer."

In 1848, Flashy is brought to D.C. to share with the Navy Department information pertaining to the confiscation of the alleged slave ship *Balliol College*. Posing as Lt. Comber, Royal Navy, Flashy insists that he must reveal the full truth first to his own admiralty. At a dinner party before leaving Washington, Flashy meets Congressman Abraham Lincoln, and the two scoundrels instantly like one another. Lincoln detects Flashy's disguise but promises to say nothing. When they meet again in Portsmouth, OH, Lincoln insists that Flashy return to New Orleans to testify, and arranges a U.S. Marshal to accompany him. During the hearing, Flashy struggles not to contradict what he said in Washington, and again blusters that he must report fully first to his admiralty.



Themes

Slavery

Slavery is the primary focus of *Flash for Freedom!* and is examined from all angles. For slave owners and transporters, it is an amoral matter of commerce. Slaves are commodities, bringing some much per pound, cared for only in order not to lose profit, and dealt with as "talking cattle." Abolitionists in Britain decry white people exploiting and degrading black people, but do not condemn the exploitation of women and children in factories and mines. Narrator Harry Flashman finds this hypocritical, and also notes that slavery would dry up if black chieftains in Africa stopped capturing and delivering people to the white dealers.

Still, Flashy is not anxious to be part of the system and tries to escape Balliol College when he discovers the barque is a slave ship. Unable, he applies himself to his job as supercargo, learning to squeeze the maximum number of tortured black bodies into the limited space and forcing them to eat and exercise to prevent costly deaths. Later in the novel, he prides himself in his success brandishing a whip as a slave driver in the cotton fields, recalling the joys of tormenting underclassmen in school.

Twice, Flashy encounters impassioned abolitionists, in the dying Combers and the mysterious Crixus, leader of the Underground Railroad in New Orleans. What Flashy thinks of as "a secret society for stealing slaves, and helping them to escape" to Canada, is to the zealot an "organisation for saving souls," and an army fighting the "blasphemous iniquity" of slavery. Flashy goes along with its program because he has no other choice and watches for an opportunity to escape. When John Mandeville fiendishly claps Flashy in irons and ships him to a plantation rather than killing him outright for seducing his wife, Flashy know what awaits him and quakes for his own hide. He still does not identify with the basic inequity of any human being experiencing this. Cassy tries to put Flashy into the slave's shoes as best she can, by asking how he would feel stripped naked and ogled by a crowd of women. He does not answer.

When he meets Abraham Lincoln, Flashy finds an attitude as practical as the slavers'. Blacks are a nuisance. The best thing for white America would be to ship them back to Africa. If this is impossible, the powerful and sincere emotions on both sides of the debate will likely bring disaster to the nation. In New Orleans, Flashy is shown that slavery has already turned America into two nations.

Religion

Religion always plays a part in the Flashman novels, with the narrator maintaining a cynical, detached view. When in mortal danger, Flashy is as likely as anyone to turn to pleas for divine mercy, but also to blasphemies and curses. Flashy bemusedly notes in passing that his son, as yet unborn in this novel, grows up to be of all things, a bishop.



Religion in *Flash for Freedom!* Concentrates on two characters. Capt. John Charity Spring does nothing to live up to his middle name, one of the three classical theological virtues. He is cruel and calculating, but never misses leading divine services on Sundays aboard his slave ship, Balliol College, with his crazy wife accompanying hymns on her accordion. Spring's prayers for guidance and deliverance are diatribes directed at God. When Combers dies during the voyage, Spring violently beats the man who he sends for a British flag to cover the body during the solemnities for bringing a Brazilian banner, and curses, prayerbook in hand, as he awaits the Union Jack. Flashy remarks to the reader, tongue-in-cheek, that it would do seminarians good to see how the office for the dead is performed on this ship.

Combers is the novel's brief moment religion. At age 26, Flashy has already many times sat with men dying on the battlefield and has developed a script for dealing with their concerns. He admits to believing in God but does not accept that God would allow a hell or, if he does, imprisoning there any but the worst of sinners. He cannot see breaking the Seventh Commandment (which he thinks has to do with coveting one's neighbor's livestock, but realizes in context from Comber's anguish, refers to lust) as justification for going to hell; hell would be too full otherwise, including members of the College of Cardinals. In Combers, Flashy sees the disservice that the Bible does to those who read it.

In Combers and later in the mysterious Crixus, Flashy sees religious fervor turned to practical solutions to social problems. Both subscribe to the premise that abolitionism is a war against the "blasphemous iniquity" of slavery, and the whites who fall trying to help the blacks are true martyrs. Their views reflect the apocalyptic tone of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," written years later during the Civil War.

Sex

Narrator Harry Flashman, looking back over his eighty-some years, never hides from his readers the fact that he is a sexual being to the core. Several times in *Flash for Freedom!* He runs through memories of past lovers, fondly and unapologetically. He readily admits enjoying sex whenever possible, even when it entails physical risk from irate husbands, and caring nothing about the woman's willingness. He believes himself (particularly his whiskers) irresistible and expects to be propositioned.

In this novel, Flashy is often frustrated sexually. Beautiful wife Elspeth is pregnant and unwilling to risk the fetus by allowing intercourse. As he usually does, Flashy resorts to prostitutes. He believes that Elspeth is as promiscuous as he but clings somewhat to the "double standard." He doubts the baby is biologically his, but is proud to claim it has his heir. Flashy's next frustration is Frances Isabella ("Fanny") Locke, a voluptuous blond with "swinging hip and a knowing eye," who is friendly at Cleve House, and even kisses "like a novice French whore," but always slips out of Flashy's clutches.

Months later, in America, Flashy works for a cotton plantation owner and listens to him, late night over whiskey, talk about his exhausting sex life. Flashy realizes this means he



is getting nothing. During John Mandeville's absences, Flashy finds himself seduced by his curiously unappealing wife, Annette, who mounts him wearing nothing but spurred riding boots. They are caught in the act and Flashy is bundled off to slavery. Mandeville's hired hands wonder what Annie is like in bed. Such voyeurism reappears in the slave market in Memphis, as men gawk and hoot over runaway slave Cassy. She hates being viewed as a sexual object, but acts provocatively to drive up the selling price, because the money will help her reach freedom. She asks Flashy to imagine how he would feel naked in front of howling women, but he has no answer.

When Cassy and Flashy have spectacular sex, she observes that he is kind, something no man before has been. Flashy knows he is at heart cruel, but enjoys their time together. Besides Cassy, Flashy's only other satisfying sexual moments come with the aging Madame Susie Willinck. Being beyond her prime, she is rarely called upon by clients and appreciates being wanted. Over-all, sex is treated in Flash for Freedom! as less than the usual Flashy meaningless romp and gallop.



Style

Point of View

Author George MacDonald Fraser uses the octogenarian Harry Flashman, retired as a Brigadier-General from the British Army early in the 20th century, reviewing a long and seemingly illustrious career. Fraser claims to be just a technical editor who also adds historical and cultural endnotes to help the reader. The present novel is the second part of the cache of "Flashman Papers," discovered late in the 20th century by Fraser. It portrays Flashy's unintentional involvement in international slave trade in 1848-49.

Flashy assumes that readers are familiar with his exploits, often skipping forward beyond the 1840s, and reminds them continually of how his reputation as an intrepid hero is at odds with reality. Somehow something always seems to come along to put him in harm's way. Flashy readily admits to crippling fear and following the impulse to flee danger. He also admits that things rarely turn out as well or as badly as one fears.

Because the novel is told as a written memorial, there is no need for changes of perspective between the third person and the first person omniscient, although occasionally for rhetorical purposes, Flashy refers to himself in the third person. Once the dramatic moment passes, he reverts to the first person. Sometimes he slips from past tense narrative to present tense, briefly, for the same reason. Everything is put forth through Flashy's eyes after fermenting in his memory for half a century.

Setting

Flash for Freedom! takes place in the years 1848-49. The action opens in London, as narrator Harry Flashman returns from the Continent and decides to have a go at politics. It shifts to Cleeve House and Runaway Down in the bucolic countryside, and then abruptly across the heaving English Channel to the sleek barque Balliol College, anchored off the coast of France. Flashy's father-in-law has arranged for him to get out of the country after nearly killing someone in a fight over cards.

Balliol College cruises down the coast of Africa to Dahomey on the Bight of Benin. Flashy is part of an ill-fated expedition up Spring's River to Apokoto, with buildings made of human skulls. Back in the lagoon, they hastily board and chain down 600 slaves whose welfare become Flashy's duty as supercargo. Shipboard life is shown in all its horrors and boredom. The human cargo is delivered to Roatan, one of Honduras' "Bay Islands," and the ship continues on towards Cuba with only a half dozen slaves aboard. On the high seas the U.S. Navy interdicts the ship and escorts her to New Orleans.

The rest of the novel occurs on U.S. soil. Flashy, posing as the late British naval Lt. Comber, is rushed to Washington, DC, still a primitive town, for questioning by the Navy Department. At a dinner given by the British ambassador, Flashy meets Abraham Lincoln and has a lengthy, uncomfortable chat. He is returned to New Orleans to testify,



but flees, taking refuge in a whorehouse. Booked for a trip home to England, Flashy is kidnapped to an unknown house, where he is pressed into service in the Underground Railroad. Travel on the Mississippi River is depicted, followed by life on a Mississippi cotton plantation. When Flashy is caught having sex with the owner's wife, he finds himself en route to Alabama in a sealed slave wagon, but escapes with veteran runaway Cassy.

Flashy and Cassy run to Memphis, TN, where they pretend to auction her off to earn passage money to Canada. They catch the wrong river boat and land in St. Louis, colorfully described, and backtrack to Cairo and up the Ohio River, aiming for Pittsburgh, PA. They get as far as Portsmouth, OH—actually the southern shore in Kentucky—before being iced in, and they run across the Ohio River's ice to freedom. Cassy continues on to Canada, while Flashy is escorted to New Orleans to testify. Amazingly, Spring wins his case and agrees to take Flashy back to Europe.

Language and Meaning

Flash for Freedom! is told in British English. The narrator is an octogenarian writing about his life and career early in the 20th century, but the events described take place in 1848-49. The novel is also rich in dialect. Harry Flashman's father-in-law is a rich Scottish capitalist and speaks in brogue. During the scenes in Dahomey on the Bight of Benin, the "queer Coast lingo which passes for a language from Gambia to the Cape" is quoted at length. The cruel and crazy master of Balliol College, studies at Oriel College, Oxford, before being expelled, and habitually quotes snippets of Horace, Lucan, Sallust, Seneca (particularly), and Thucydides in Latin. He makes fun of Flashy for thinking himself educated while being deficient in Latin. During his adjudication hearing in New Orleans, Spring and the prosecutor trade Latin quotes and are asked by the adjudicator to limit themselves to English.

Several times Flashy remarks that the slaves with whom he deals do not speak "Nigger," but a refined, French-influenced dialect. The novel is filled with such racially-charged words. Flashy is more class-conscious than race-conscious, although he subscribes to stereotypes, and is downright sexist. All of this is to be expected in an upper-class Englishman who as an officer has been less than pleased with non-white troops under his command, and pursues every woman of at least marginal attractiveness. Catering to modern sensibilities would be highly anachronistic.

Structure

Flash for Freedom! consists of an "Explanatory Note" by George MacDonald Fraser, who claims to be the editor of the "Flashman Papers" that have come recently to light a half-century after their being written early in the 20th century. The present novel forms the second part of Flashman's personal memoir, covering 1848-49.

The body of the novel consists of fourteen unnumbered and untitled chapters, running in chronological order. The chapters are of widely varying lengths. Forty-four endnotes



explain obscure references in the text, maintaining the fiction that this is an historical memoir rather than a work of historical fiction. Some of these are exceptionally useful to the reader. Two maps help picture where Flashy is along the coastline of Dahomey in the Bight of Benin in Central Africa and along the Mississippi and Ohio rivers in the United States. The volume lacks the excurses on historical figures that are usually appended to Flashman novels.

Three broad divisions in the action suggest themselves. 1) The first few chapters show Flashy in England, toying with entering politics. A fight makes it expedient for him to leave the country, and he is booked as supercargo on a slave ship, Balliol College. 2) Flashy crosses the Atlantic, revolted by the reality of slavery but unable to believe in abolitionism. 3) When the ship is captured by the U.S. Navy off Cuba and towed to New Orleans, Flashy is already pretending to be a British undercover naval officer and wants only to get back to England alive.

This section is protracted and diverse. Before he can leave the U.S., Flashy pretends to be a slave master taking a string of slaves up the Mississippi for sale but is actually working for the Underground Railroad—still unable intellectually to become an abolitionist, but talking the talk. He works as a slave driver on a cotton plantation—swinging the other direction as he enjoys using the whip. He is horrified to experience being enslaved as he is transported towards Alabama. Details about the utter degradation of slavery come out as he runs to freedom with Cassy and is taken in by abolitionists, including Abraham Lincoln. In the end, a travesty of justice sets Spring and his ship free, and Flashy blackmails him into taking him back to Europe.



Quotes

"The main thing was, it would be a quiet life. As you know, in spite of the published catalogue of my career—Victoria Cross, general rank, eleven campaigns, and all that mummery—I've always been an arrant coward and a peaceable soul. Bullying underlings and whipping trollops always excepted, I'm a gentle fellow—which means I'll never do harm to anyone if there's a chance he may harm me in return. The trouble is, no one would believe it to look at me; I've always been big and hearty and looked the kind of chap who'd go three rounds with the town tough if he so much as stepped on my shadow, and from what Tom Hughes has written of me you might imagine I was always ready for devilment. Aye, but as I've grown older I've learned that devilment usually has to be paid for. God knows I've done my share of paying, and even in '48, at the ripe old age of twenty-six, I'd seen enough sorrow, from the Khyber to German dungeons by way of the Borneo jungles and the torture-pits of Madagascar, to convince me that I must never go looking for trouble again. Who'd have thought that old Morrison's plans to seat me at Westminster could have led to ... well, ne'er mind. All in good time." Chapter 1, pgs. 20-21.

"Turn back, sir! We can't leave Kirk behind!"

'Can't we, by G-d?' growls Spring. 'You just watch me, mister, if the b—d can't run, that's his look-out!'

Spoken like a man, captain, thinks I; give me a leader you can trust, any day. And even Comber, his face contorted with pain, could see it was no go; they were swarming on the bank, and had Kirk spreadeagled; we could see them wrenching his clothes off, squealing with laughter, while close by a couple of them had even started kindling a fire. They were smart housewifely lasses those, all right." Chapter 3, pg. 95.

"I looked down at it just before the hatch gratings went on, and it was an indescribable sight. Row upon row of black bodies, packed like cigars in a box, naked and gleaming, the dark mass striped with glittering dots of light where the eyes rolled in the sooty faces. The crying and moaning and whimpering blended into a miserable anthem that I'll never forget, with the clanking of the chains and the rustle of hundreds of incessantly stirring bodies, and the horrible smell of musk and foulness and burned flesh.

My stomach doesn't turn easily, but I was sickened. If it had been left to me, then and there, I'd have let 'em go, the whole boiling of them, back to their lousy jungle. No doubt it's a deplorable weakness in my character, but this kind of raw work was a thought too much for me." Chapter 4, pg. 102.

"What do you want me to do?"

'Take those letters.' His voice was weakening, and I could see blood seeping through his blanket; he must have opened his wound in the exertion. 'Then ... my chest ... there under the canvas shirt ... packet. Copy of Spring's accounts ... last voyage. I took some of them ... completed them this trip. Letters, too ... evidence against him ... and others.'



For God's sake get them to the Admiralty ... or the American Navy people ... oh, dear God!

He fell back, moaning, but by then I was ferreting through his chest, snatching out a slender packet sewn in an oilskin cover. I slipped it and the letters quickly out of sight in my pocket, and bent over his cot." Chapter 4, pg. 116.

"'Sir,' says I, trying to sound furious, with my legs on the point of giving way, 'I fail to understand you. I am a British officer and, I hope, a gentleman...'

'Oh, I don't doubt it,' says he, 'but even that isn't conclusive proof that you're a rascal. You see, Mr Comber, I can't be sure. I just suspect that you're a humbug—but I couldn't for the life of me prove it.' He scratched his ear, grinning like a gargoyle. 'And anyway, it's just none of my business. I guess the truth is I'm a bit of a humbug myself, and feel a kind of duty to other humbugs. Anyway, I'm certainly not fool enough to pass on my ridiculous observations and suspicions to anyone else. I just thought you might be interested to hear about the salt, and the bread, and so forth,' said this amazing fellow. 'Shall we go and listen to them laying it off about the Last Minstrel?'" Chapter 6, pg. 154.

"'You know a lot,' says I. 'Now, look here; I've heard everything but what I want to know. Who are you, and what d'you want with me?'

He looked at me steadily. 'You have heard, I am sure, of the underground railroad.'

Six months earlier I wouldn't have known what he meant, but when you've been in the company of slavers, as I had been, you recognise the phrase. Spring had mentioned it; I'd heard it spoken about, low-voiced, in Susie's brothel.

'It's a secret society for stealing slaves, and helping them to escape, isn't it? To Canada.'

'It is an organisation for saving souls!' snaps he, and once again he didn't look half amiable. 'It is an army that fights the most horrible tyranny of our time—the blasphemous iniquity of black slavery! It is an army without colours, or ranks, or pay—an army of dedicated men and women who labour secretly to release their black brethren from bondage and give them liberty. Yes, we steal slaves! Yes, we run them to free soil. Yes, we die for doing it—like them we are hunted with dogs, and tortured and hanged and shot if we are caught by the brutes who own and trade in human flesh. But we do it gladly, because we are marching in Christ's army, sir, and we will not lay down our weapons until the last shackle is broken, the last branding iron smashed, the last raw-hide whip burned, and the last slave free!'

I gathered he was an abolitionist." Chapter 8, pgs. 173-174.

"'Help! Help me, Prescott! Fight them off!'

Such an appeal, addressed to Flashy, meets a prompt response. I ducked back behind cover just as Omohundro came crashing over the bales, clutching at Randolph's feet.

The quadron kicked free, scrambled on to the rail, and was trying to roll over it when he must have realised that he would fall plumb in the path of the great thirty-foot paddle wheel; he shrieked, rearing up on the rail, the overseer's pistol banged, and I saw Randolph's body arch and his face contort with agony. He fell, outwards, and the huge wheel blades came churning down on him as he hit the water." Chapter 9, pg. 204.



"I couldn't believe what I'd heard—I still find it incredible. That white men—civilised white men, could doom another white man to be dragged away to some vile plantation, herded with niggers, flogged to work like a beast—it couldn't be true, surely? All I'd done was rattle Mandeville's wife—well, if I ever caught a man doing the like to Elspeth, I'd want to kill him, probably, and I could understand Mandeville wanting to as well—but how could he doom me to the living hell of black slavery? It must be their ghastly idea of a joke—it couldn't be true, it just could not be!

But it was. How long I lay in that cupboard I don't know, but it was dark when the door opened and I was dragged out. They had brought my coat, and it was wrapped over my head, and then I felt the horror of fetters being clapped on my ankles. I tried to scream through my gag, and struggled, but they carried me away bodily, muttering and laughing, and presently I was flung on the hard surface of a cart. I heard Luke say, 'Take good care o' that valuable merchandise, Tom Little,' and laughter, and then we were jolting away in the darkness.

I twisted in my bonds, half-crazed with the abomination of it, and then the jacket was pulled away, and in the dimness of the cart a woman's voice said:

'Lie still. there's no use struggling. Believe me, I tried struggling—once. it's no good. You must wait—wait and hope.'" Chapter 10, pgs. 227-228.

"But there was someone there who knew more about raising prices than even he did, and that was Cassy. When she took the block, after a whispered conference with the auctioneer, he went on about how she spoke French, and could embroider and 'tend to growing children or be a lady's maid or governess and play the piano and paint—but it was all sham. He knew what she would be sold for, and the mob kept chorusing 'Shuck her down! Let's get a look at her!' while she stood, very demure, with her hands folded in front of her and her head bowed. She was pale, and I could see the strain in her face, but she knew what to do, and presently when the auctioneer spoke to her she took off her shoes and then let down her hair, very carefully, so it hung down her back almost to her waist.

That wasn't what they wanted, of course; they yelled and stamped and whistled, but the auctioneer got the bidding up to seventeen hundred before he nodded to her, and without a change of expression she shrugged her shoulders out of the dress, let it slip down, and stepped out as bare as a babe. By gad, I was proud of her as she stood there like a pale golden statue, in the dim light under the beams, with the mob goggling and roaring approval; the price ran up to twenty-five hundred dollars in less than a minute." Chapter 11, pgs. 251-252.

"As I overtook her she managed to regain her feet, glaring wildly back beyond me. Her dress was in shreds, her hands were dark with blood, her hair was trailing loose like a witches. But she went reeling on, jumping another channel and staggering across the rugged floe beyond. I set myself for the jump, slipped, and fell full length into the icy water.

It was so bitter that I screamed, and she turned back and came slithering on all fours to the edge. I grabbed her hand, and somehow I managed to scramble out. The yelping of



the dogs was sounding closer, a gun banged, a frightful pain tore through my buttock, and I pitched forward on to the ice. Cassy screamed, a man's voice sounded in a distant roar of triumph, and I felt blood coursing warm down my leg.

'My God, are you hurt?' she cried, and for some idiot reason I had a vision of a tombstone bearing the legend: 'Here lies Harry Flashman, late 11th Hussars, shot in the arse while crossing the Ohio River.' The pain was sickening, but I managed to lurch to my feet, clutching my backside, and Cassy seized my hand, dragging me on." Chapter 12, pgs. 277-278.

"I took him all right, but without giving me a chance to reply he went on.

'It amounts to this, sir. If my client is cleared, as I feel bound to tell you I believe he will be—for we have more shots in our locker than friend Clitheroe dreams of—then we have no interest in directing attention to the antecedents of Lieutenant Comber. If Captain Spring is not cleared—' he shook his head solemnly '—then when the crew of the Balliol College are arraigned for slave-trading and so forth, their number will be greater by one than it is at present.'

He stood up quickly. 'No sir, Mr Dunne will be impatient to speak to you again. When we meet again, at the hearing, it will be as strangers. Until then, I have the honour to bid you a very good day.'" Chapter 13, pg. 305.

'Captain,' says I, 'in God's name, will you give me a passage out of here? You're leaving, on the College, aren't you? For pity's sake, take me with you—out of this blasted—'

'What?' cries he, his scar beginning to jump like St. Vitus dance. 'Take you? Why the devil should I? You—'

'Listen, please, captain,' says I. 'Look, I played up today, didn't I? I could have sworn you to kingdom come, couldn't I? But I didn't—I didn't! I got you off—'

'You got me off!' He tilted back his hat and glared at me. 'You saved your own dirty little neck, you Judas, you! And you've the nerve to come crawling to me?'

'I'll buy my passage!' I pleaded. 'Look, I'm not just begging—I can buy it with something you want.'

'And what would that be?' But he stepped aside with me into a doorway, the pale eyes fixed on me.

'You heard in court—I got Comber's papers—the things he'd filched from you. Well—' I forced myself not to notice the darkening scar in his brow. '—I've still got 'em. Are they price enough?'

His face was like flint. 'Where are they?' he growled.

'In a safe place—a very safe place. Not on me, ' I lied, praying he'd believe it." Chapter 14, pgs. 329-330.

Topics for Discussion

Does the portrait of Abraham Lincoln painted in *Flash for Freedom!* square with what you have learned about him in history? How does Flashy view the Great Emancipator?

How does the use of Latin help define Spring's character and reflect his motivations in life?

How does Flashy, writing in old age, reflect on youth in the incident of his beating Bryant half to death? Was he justified in any way?

How does the long description of Susie Willinck serve the novel? What does it say about Flashy's character?

Beyond mortally wounding Comber so Flashy can take over his identity, how does the visit to Apokoto serve the novel?

What is John Morrison's primary role in the novel? How does his fear of communism play into the opening scenes? Does this contribute to or detract from the developing action?

Does anything Flashy experiences in this novel shake his belief in the rightness of racial discrimination?