

Flashman in the Great Game: From the Flashman Papers 1856-1858 Study Guide

Flashman in the Great Game: From the Flashman Papers 1856-1858 by George MacDonald Fraser

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Plot Summary

Flashman in the Great Game describes Flashy's assignment in India during the Great Mutiny of 1857-58, which took him to palaces, native barracks, embattled garrisons, jungles, and rivers; found him romancing a beautiful but treacherous queen; and forced him numerous times to find a way to narrowly escape death. Despite consistent acts of cowardice, Flashy is knighted and awarded the prestigious Victoria Cross.

Flashy is commissioned by the British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, to determine if India is near mutiny. Avoiding assassination by the Russian Count Ignatieff at Balmoral Castle, Flashy learns little at a stopover in Bombay, other than that Jhansi is a rough place. In Jhansi, Flashy is enthralled by beautiful and intelligent Queen Rani Lakshmibai, hears her just grievances, knows he can do nothing of substance to help her, and bides his time, hoping to seduce her. After succeeding, Flashy is nearly garroted by Ignatieff's hired Thugs, but rescued by his old friend, Ilderim Khan.

Disguised as Makarram Khan, Flashy hides from Ignatieff and the Thugs by enlisting as a sepoy (horse soldier) in Meerut. There he serves as Col. Duff Mason's orderly and is one of five sepoys who obey orders and escape a court-martial over ammunition that allegedly offends religious taboos. Flashy is coming home from a sexual adventure when Meerut explodes in Mutiny.

Flashy makes his way to besieged Cawnpore and helps negotiate with Nana Sahib safe passage down the Ganges. Flashy is one of five survivors of Nana's treachery, which concludes with the massacre at Bibigarh and a bloody reprisal. Flashy goes next to Lucknow, where a safe job as Gen. Havelock's aid leads to a nighttime romp through the woods with a deranged Irishman, Kavanaugh, to guide Gen. Campbell in and raise the siege.

Flashy returns to Jhansi to convince Lakshmibai to surrender. Narrowly escaping Ignatieff again, Flashy thinks he has talked Lakshmibai into surrendering and believes she loves him (as he half-loves her), but she double-crosses him, escapes on her own terms, and locks Flashy, who is again wearing native clothes, in a squalid Gwalior dungeon. She releases him in time for the final battle and dies in Flashy's arms. Knocked out, marked as a rebel, gagged, and tied to the muzzle of a British cannon, Flashy nearly goes insane, trying to get someone's attention. He orders the other condemned men to be freed.

Leaving India, Flashy receives the Victoria Cross, which puffs up his ego, and a copy of a tell-all book about his Schooldays as a bully, which he is sure will destroy his reputation.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Harry Flashman does not mind being no longer invited to Balmoral, where in Queen Victoria's day he often invited. In September of 1856, he is happily retired, enjoying life with his wife and son, socializing, occasionally whoring, and saying nothing that might relieve the beleaguered generals (particularly Lord Cardigan) who are being accused of mismanaging the Crimean War. Elspeth is near hysterics at the prospect of mingling with Royalty, and gets on well with "Vickie." Flashy tells stories from Russia and toadies to Prince Albert. Flashy considers "rogering" the famed Florence Nightingale, but has no opportunity.

After a cheery party, Flashy wants to get Elspeth into bed, but is summoned to the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston ("Pam"), who sits opposite him at Balmoral between old Lord Ellenborough and Wood of the Admiralty. Pam announces that Flashy is back on active duty, but not even the Queen can know. They show Flashy three stale chapattis, traditional tokens of rebellion in India, supposed to foreshadow catastrophe. When Flashy has augmented his written report on the averted Russian invasion of India, Pam asks if he knows a Count Ignatieff, who has paid two disguised visits to Jhansi, brewing insurrection. That rich throne has been annexed only four years, and the old Rani (the Raja's widow) rules unhappily under British tutelage. Flashy's hunch that he is to be sent there is confirmed, leaving him appalled and helpless to object. Out riding the morning before he is to depart, Flashy sees Ignatieff arrive.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 bears the heavy responsibility of establishing the continuity between Flashman in the Great Game and its predecessor, Flashy at the Charge. Many of the characters from that novel, set in the Crimea, southern Russia, and Central Asia return in this novel, so readers unfamiliar with that novel must be given an adequate preparation without boring those who have read it. Fraser does an admirable job. As usual, Flashy delivers a pithy summary of the deadly misadventures that he is about to detail. He specifies that unlike earlier historical events in which he has been swept up through some foolish happenstance, this time he is recruited by the Prime Minister personally. He is aghast that there is nowhere to escape.

Chapter 1 describes life among the Royals at Balmoral, including sketches of bubbly wife Elspeth charming the Queen. Flashy considers a quick liaison with Florence Nightingale, who comes to deplore the instances of venereal disease in the British Army, but has no opportunity. On the night he is recruited, Flashy describes being drunk and horny, and unable to resist his naked wife even if Palmerston has to be kept waiting. Flashy's pride in his sexual achievements, as always, fill this novel, and he



always makes a point of recalling how the beautiful, voluptuous Elspeth is the unique love of his life.

Chapter 1 concludes with Flashy, while out on a ride, seeing Ignatieff arrive at Balmoral. He has described the Russian fiend to "Pam" and his colleagues and learned that Ignatieff has been inciting the Indians to insurrection, concentrating on Jhansi, where Flashy is being sent in three days. The British had thought Ignatieff to be in St. Petersburg and likely to return to India soon. In the following chapter, Flashy is thrown back into contact with Ignatieff on his own turf and nearly loses his life, while at the end of the novel his margin of luck is even thinner.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Ellenborough cannot explain the coincidence of Ignatieff showing up. Flashy wonders if his secret mission is compromised. Ellenborough insists that Flashy remain at Balmoral and do nothing to embarrass the Queen. Before going to court, Flashy warns Elspeth to say nothing about his mission. Flashy greets Ignatieff as an old "comrade-in-arms," and tells stories of his imprisonment. When alone, Flashy bates the poker-faced Ignatieff.

On his last full day at Balmoral, Flashy is paired with Ignatieff on a stag hunting trip. Ignatieff congratulates Flashy on his assignment to India and claims to have learned of it from Elspeth. Shaken, Flashy and his ghillie (guide) plunge into the woods away from Ignatieff and his burly carrier, who might arrange an "accident." After a hard climb, they stop at dusk and the ghillie turns green with belly pain. Certain that the Russians have poisoned him, Flashy runs for help, but within minutes faces the Russians. As Flashy flees downhill, two shots ring out. Flashy slips in mud and sees the approaching moujik felled by a third shot. Hutton of Secret Service suggests that the Russian has suffered a nasty accident and that there can be no scandal. Ellenborough insists that Flashy must deal with Ignatieff in India. No one can substitute for him in Jhansi.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 deepens the sense of dread with which Flashy prepares to go to India. Describing Ignatieff as "a bear-cat for nerve," he wonders whether the Russian diplomat has arrived as claimed as part of a delegation bringing greetings from the new tsar or on mischievous business of his own. Flashy cannot believe that Palmerston could have arranged it, although Pam's sense of humor would lean towards that sort of action. In the Queen's presence, Flashy and Ignatieff behave properly, but once alone renew their deadly macho confrontation begun in Russia and Central Asia. Thrown together with Ignatieff by Prince Albert on a stag hunt, Flashy knows his life is in danger; this amazes him because he is in his native land not barbaric Russia. Ignatieff and the moujik (peasant) carrying his charges indeed confront Flashy, who runs for his life. Flashy is amazed that the man who summons him to meet with Palmerston two nights before is Secret Service and has been watching the "Russian brotherhood" since its arrival. Flashy cannot get out of going to India and rather than risk a diplomatic incident, Ignatieff is left free.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

When Flashy lands in India he sees that civilization has advanced in 16 years. White civilians outnumber military and are prospering. He can gather no scuttlebutt on Jhansi, but resolves to go there quickly, write a report, and get out. The countryside en route seems quiet, but Flashy meets a friend of 15 years, John Nicholson, who foresees sparks fanning into flames, because missionaries are angering the natives and the new Governor-General is too soft with princes and sepoy alike. Flashy continues, thoroughly worried.

Jhansi is a massive fort built on steep rock above a large walled city. The nearby British camp looks feeble by comparison. Flashy finds the political agent, Skene, neither stupid nor scared. He had known nothing about the Russians but has seen a man with a blue/brown eye. The queen is bitter about political arrangements and lacks an army, but is endowed with a population of born fighters who will rally to her. She is proud and hard at court, kind to the poor, revered for her piety, and said to have been sexually wild as a girl. Skene hopes her temper can be controlled.

Skene arranges an audience too hastily for Flashy to snoop around the city. He dresses formally and heads out. The palace stands apart from the crowded city in a park. A Pathan watches Flashy as word of his arrival is passed in and spits on his shadow. To save face before the comely Maharatta women he is admiring, Flashy insults the Pathan, Sher Khan, and announces that he is "Bloody Lance," killer of four Gilzais at Mogala.

Inside the palace is as ornate as Flashy had imagined, but pales before the durbar room. A gong brings everyone to attention before an ivory screen through which Flashy in Urdu offers the Queen a homely portrait of the British Royal Family. Told that no one ever receives a private audience, Flashy suggests that he could help with claims against the Sirkar (British government). Refused, Flashy turns to leave, saying that the second, undelivered packet contains a personal gift to be given only face-to-face. Called back and admitted behind the screen, Flashy is shocked by the beauty of a girl on a silken swing. He gapes at what he thought had been the ladies' maid outside the palace, but she is the Maharani of Jhansi, Lakshmibai.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 brings Flashy to Bombay and quickly on to Jhansi. He remarks on the progress made in the last fifteen years and snoops around Bombay a bit trying to pick up "scuttlebutt" on Jhansi. Noting that the kind of people one wants to learn from frequent whorehouses more often than cathedrals, Flashy kills two birds with one stone but learns nothing useful. Not wishing to give Ignatieff any more time to find him than



necessary, Flashy hurries on. He has spent enough time to get comfortable again speaking Urdu.

En route to Jhansi, Flashy happens upon an acquaintance from fifteen years before in Afghanistan. John Nicholson describes Jhansi as the hardest nut south of the Khyber Pass and attributes the growing native unrest to the misguided actions of Christian missionaries (who dismiss the local religions which the people hold earnestly) and the laxity of the current governor-general to princes and Sepoy alike. Discipline is badly needed. Despite his comments about proselytism, Nicholson drags Flashy to his knees for prayer. Flashy observes tongue-in-cheek that people like Nicholson are always ready to give God his "marching orders" and always take an interest in the salvation of Flashy's soul. He remarks that Nicholson should have prayed more for himself, for he dies in battle at Delhi, while Flashy survives him by 50 years.

Nicholson's information makes Flashy even more nervous as he approaches Jhansi. The physical layout of the fortress, city, and meager British cantonment increases the concern. The political officer is open and sincere, but had not known about Russian activities until informed. He has never seen the reclusive Queen, so he cannot correct Flashy's intuition that she is old and hag-faced. Summoned to court, Flashy admires some lovely Maharatta

women around a palankeen outside the gates. He has to use his earlier reputation to save face before them when Sgt. Sher Khan insults him by spitting on his shadow. The Queen's trusted bodyguard, Sher Khan will reappear at the end of the novel as Flashy's jailer. Having reverted to Urdu, Flashy begins using titles, greetings, ranks, and other phrases. The editor adds footnotes (usually) on first instance, but the reader must then retain them all.

Flashy spends many words describing the opulence of the palace at Jhansi and the beautiful women who inhabit it. He brings two presents for the Queen but withholds the second until he can see her in public. When granted admission behind the ornate purdah screen that shields the Queen from view, the chamberlain running in and out to communicate between Royalty and petitioners, Flashy is speechless on two accounts. First, the Queen is beautiful beyond words (although he rambles quite a few) and she is one of the girls he flirts with outside the gate. Flashy is dumbfounded.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Lakshmibai's bearing and expression leave no doubt she is royal, but Flashy is drawn only to her breasts. She appreciates the bottle of French perfume, but asks why this requires a face-to-face meeting. Pam has given Flashy no guidance or authorized concessions, and Flashy knows that this intelligent, experienced, direct woman has heard it all before. Still, he asks her to let him serve as her advocate. She wants Palmerston to restore her lost revenue to prove good will and laughs he has sent a handsome soldier to placate and "handle" her. When dismissed for the day, Flashy is satisfied to have achieved more than the Sirkar over years, recognizes that Lakshmibai has been flirting, and contemplates riding the swing with her.

While spending the afternoon among the Sepoy troops gaging their attitudes, Flashy meets Ilderim Khan of Mogala, his blood brother from Kabul long ago. Ilderim warns against the Rani's excessive knowledge and fangs and offers Flashy his protection while in Jhansi. Next day, Flashy is again struck by Lakshmibai's beauty and listens to her formal petition read in Persian, knowing it gives him conversation material for two weeks during which he intends to get the Queen horizontal. He knows he must "make haste slowly."

When talk turns to Jhansi, Lakshmibai says earnestly that white sahibs are causing unemployment, destroying trade, and encouraging neighboring princes to move in on her. The British have suppressed the Thugs, but only because they offend Christians. When Flashy mentions the banning of suttee in the context of her being a widow, Lakshmibai takes offense, but he calms her, showing concern and admiration, and controlling his "horniness" in the interests of diplomacy. From contacts with placid British officials and the Sepoys it seems to Flashy that all is well in Jhansi.

Lakshmibai lectures Flashy intensely on how British ways are not the only ways, and native customs ought not to be trampled in the name of so-called civilization. Indians admire British "systems," but do not want them. They are happy without philosophies, sciences, and foreign laws. When Flashy objects that British law is at least fair and cites an innocent man being hung by his thumbs for days, Lakshmibai replies that that known badmash (scoundrel) serves as an example. When Flashy talks of the need for justice, Lakshmibai declares sharply that it is wrong to turn a happy country into Palmerston's world and vows: "Mera Jhansi denge nay - I will not give up my Jhansi!" She laughs at his suggestion that she go to London.

The next morning, two weeks into Flashy's stay, Lakshmibai seems jumpy before challenging him to a fencing bout. She is fast and scores quickly, but then falters and they find themselves in a long, sweet kiss. Pulling away, she asks if Flashy also shoots and ends the durbar. Flashy decides against invading her boudoir but while riding back to camp he knows he has won. Flashy has drunk heavily in celebration when Ilderim



drops in. They are interrupted by a messenger summoning Flashy to Lakshmibai's pavilion in an hour. Overjoyed, Flashy tells Ilderim nothing as he rides off woosily. An orchestra plays on the lower level as Flashy climbs the stairs and gapes at the bangled, "bronze statue" he finds wearing only a flimsy veil. She dances enticingly toward him and teases him awhile before he seizes her and she wraps herself double-jointedly around him. Exhausted, Flashy crawls to the couch, but she is on him again, writing and caressing. Only after his third orgasm does she let him sleep.

Flashy awakens scared and disoriented. Seeing shadows turn into menacing males, Flashy leaps off the couch as a small pick-ax fly through the air. He crashes out onto the veranda, leaps into a tree, crashes to the ground, and lifts a hand just in time to catch a garotte being pulled around his throat. Flashy frees himself by crushing the assassin's testicles, but a second killer has him in an instant. Flashy knows that it takes only five seconds to die this way. Suddenly freed and gulping for air, Flashy sees Ilderim ministering to him and lecturing on loose women. The attackers are Thugs, and the lone survivor is tortured brutally, out of sight, while Flashy refuses to believe that Lakshmibai has set him up. Thugs usually pounce just "for fun and religion."

Ilderim returns with bad news: Thugs have been hunting Flashy for weeks to sacrifice to Kali and inaugurate an era of renewal, paid by a rich, one-eyed sahib. Flashy had best ride fast for the coast and leave India. Flashy feels nauseous at the thought of Ignatieff on his tail, knows he ought to flee, but decides instead to masquerade as a native, as he has before. Ilderim asks that when Flashy emerges to wreak vengeance, he summon him to his side. Flashy has no such brave intent, but keeps silent, asking that Ilderim inform Skene and to tell Lakshmibai if she asks that Flashy has been called away.

Ilderim outfits Flashy in a sowar (horse soldier) uniform complete with Khyber cleaver, puggaree, and a sturdy pony. His beard must grow out and he must remember to behave like a "Peshawar ruffler," swaggering and spitting. Ilderim provides the name of a relative serving in the 3rd Cavalry, Bengal Army, at Meerut garrison and advises him to enlist as Makarram Khan, a Hasanzai of the Black Mountain, most recently a member of the Peshawar police. When Flashy is done with his disguise, he should meet Ilderim in the Bull Temple beyond Joka Bagh.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Lengthy Chapter 4 has the character Ilderim Khan speak happily of the "Great Game," a Kipling-inspired reference to all of the machinations by Russians and Britons in Central Asia. Flashy has described it in earlier volumes and here lays out the Russians' clandestine efforts to win over local chieftains. Flashy spends two weeks trying to seduce Rana Lakshmibai and, incidentally, carrying out his instructions from Lord Palmerston. There is an extended debate over colonialism: Are native people better off with the trappings of so-called civilization than with the customs, religions, and mode of life that has evolved gradually over time, fitting the environment? Flashy and Lakshmibai each sees the other as prejudiced.



The tenor of the chapter is entirely sexual—and sexist. Flashy assures his knowing reader that the Queen's endowments enthrall him (he has an acute and poetic breast fetish), but he must "make haste slowly" (a Latin saying, *festina lente*, from Suetonius not infrequently found in English literature, but somehow odd—if apt—in Flashy's mouth at this moment). Flashy knows that he has nothing of substance to offer Lakshmibai and that she is too wise to be manipulated. She knows that they have sent a handsome officer to make her swoon and forget her just demands, but has the willpower to resist. Flashy refuses to be fooled by her airs and assumes she is like every other woman of any social level, wondering what it would be like to "mount" him—and is certain the Sirkar or Palmerston would give her anything she asked if they got a look at her "black beauty."

Flashy tells readers he is describing Lakshmibai at length because she is mysterious and contrary and historians cannot agree about her. He wants his account to be studied. He also admits to his more prurient readers that if it looks like he is "going soft" on Lakshmibai, the truth is he is soft on all of his "girls," whom he enumerates and characterizes, but he also insists that "it was always the meat that matters." He is certain that adulterous Sir Lancelot pleased women more than noble Sir Galahad.

At the two-week mark, as Flashy prophecies, they finally end up in a clinch after a bout of fencing, which she initiates. Flashy is amused when she announces the durbar is finished for the day and describes himself succinctly as a rutting hog. Ilderim drops in on Flashy as he is celebrating his upcoming victory. Flashy points to his blood brother as proof that Muslims do not abstain from alcohol. Ilderim is moralistic, however, when Flashy sets off on his nearly-fatal tryst, and Flashy curiously displays none of the pique Christian moralists inspire in him.

Flashy describes the pavilion at which they earlier talk politics, in sensual terms of music, fragrance, and lighting, as a teasing "bronze statue" has him "fairly hooting with lust" as a "demented monkey" rides him, causing a "torchlight procession" to march through his loins and explode. These powerful figures of speech are followed, somewhat blasphemously, by the Nunc Demittis.

Flashy goes on to describes two more sexual sessions, the third possible only because he is drunk, and then segues into escaping an assassination attempt. It includes all elements of thuggee religious murders, requiring no exposition. Ilderim is luckily on the scene and tortures out of the sole survivor the facts that set up the next third of the novel. Ignatieff has hired hit men. Always careful about his heroic reputation, Flashy paints disguising himself as a means of smoking Ignatieff out rather than hiding for his own safety. Ilderim suggests the perfect disguise: as a common cavalry soldier and Flashy takes on the identity of a brave fighter whom Ilderim has recently slain.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Living under false pretenses is normal for Flashy and soon he is thinking in Urdu. Gulam Beg, Ilderim's cousin, accepts his story but suspects prior military service, as does his Colonel, who does not care. Flashy takes the oath and is issued uniform and weapons. When he menaces the property clerk who rebukes him for testing the action on his new Enfield musket, Flashy attains a reputation in the troop. He settles well into barrack life, having to guard against the thousands of tiny behavioral details that could give him away and opting to act as surly as possible so people will avoid him. Life is boring as he excels at everything and envies the nearby British officers' comforts. Only the memory of Ignatieff keeps Flashy at Meerut.

Barracks talk shows religious anger running high. Muslims and Hindus both believe that the whites intend to pollute their food and grease new cartridges with cow and pig fat. Flashy is present for a sermon on the Prodigal Son that leaves him embarrassed for church and country. He does not confuse religion with belief in God and knows that arrogant, blind preachers inspire laughter in Muslims and irritation in Hindus. Christian proselytism only gets in the way.

Col. Duff Mason takes Flashy on as his orderly and he enjoys everything except having to deal with Mrs. MacDowall, who drops in to dictate how to run a proper house. Flashy notices that Mrs. Leslie, a plump, pale, red-headed relative of some sort, has her eye on him, but maintains proper behavior. Flashy must report occasionally to barracks, where he hears of riots elsewhere over greased cartridges and nights later, hears officers discussing agitation. When asked, Flashy says he will accept the cartridge if it flies as advertised and recommends the colonel vouch for its cleanliness. Before he can, however, the name Pandy gains fame for calling the sepoys to revolt. Discontent continues to brew. Meanwhile, Mrs. Leslie requests Flashy's services as escort. Knowing what she wants, he maintains his "dignified noble animal pose." Only when assured that he is a white Jew does she let him take her to deserted ruins at Aligaut where friezes depict Hindu sexual positions. Flashy recommends No. 45 and they begin grappling.

By May, the sepoys are sullen, their officers wary, rumors and chapattis are circulating, and the cartridges arrive. Carmichael-Smith orders a firing-parade for 90 skirmishers to demonstrate it. After the Sergeant-Major goes through the drill, three waxed cartridges are offered to each man. As each declines, the Colonel's anger grows. Flashy is the first of five to accept them. Carmichael-Smith court-martials 85 men, sentencing them to ten years hard labor, and orders a depressing punishment parade to humiliate them further. That night, Flashy supervises a dinner for Carmichael-Smith and personally serves drinks in order to eavesdrop on rumors of a jail break. Next morning, Mrs. Leslie is eager to visit Aligaut and wears Flashy out. Riding back at dusk, they see the first fires of the Great Indian Mutiny.



Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter 5's aside to the reader summarizes the many disguises he has affected in his lifetime, the most demanding being officer and gentleman. Particularly because of his language skills, getting into this role is simple until he finds himself in barracks talking about the usual things soldiers do but in a foreign tongue. On the positive side, he has naturally to match cultural norms (e.g., full-throated hocking vs. gentlemanly clearing). On the negative side, he cannot demonstrate knowledge beyond what his character would have or allow himself to be provoked into exhibiting a British officers' scorn towards foreign enlisted men. He finds it hard not to aim at the wicket when a cricket ball rolls up at his feet. The details he offers are both amusing and telling.

In the barracks Flashy learns he had been wrong about the sepoys being content. He analyzes the profoundly religious basis for their discontent, and agrees with Lakshmbai that Christian proselytism is evil and foolish. He relates a stuffy sermon by a chaplain, delivered in English and not so much translated as creatively (and pejoratively) interpreted for non-Christian troops. It is a gem of eisegesis (reading things into the text). His dander up, Flashy complains about those who confuse religion with belief in God and, oddly, claims to be as religious as the next man. The British officers, of course, cannot understand why soldiers would disobey direct orders because of superstitions and are above looking for solutions that might avoid confrontation. With help from agitators, the soldiers cannot perceive that it is not a plot by the whites to pollute them and destroy their religion — majority Muslims and minority Hindus both having food taboos although for different animals. Flashy deals summarily with the court martial and punishment parade. He finds the 85 Sepoys who disobey foolish but also finds the way the British officers handle the situation moronic. Note how "Pandy" is for natives a martyr around whose memory to unite, while for the British it becomes a disrespectful synonym for mutineer.

Flashy is relieved of the burden of barrack life when called to serve as an officer's majordomo. His description of how he fits into the household and the eccentricities of the British elite is charming. In this position, he is able to monitor the growing crisis at two levels. He is also able to try out various sexual positions (probably of the Kama Sutra) with an energetic British woman who is somehow related to the colonel. Note how at first he plays the role expected of a black servant and she allows him to have sex only after he assures her he is not Indian, but a white Jew. Rather amazingly, she accepts this—although clearly he passes in the army for a sowar. Flashy is with her with the rebellion breaks out, and she appears in the next chapter as the focus for his contemplation on innocent suffering, along with some of the women and children, slices of whose home life he sketches during this chapter to add poignancy to what is to come.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Had he not been curious and been thinking clearly, Flashy would have fled to British infantry lines, but instead he rides towards the jail. He is shocked to see natives chase down and tear apart a white soldier. Riding blindly to the Grand Trunk Road, Flashy sees a murderous rabble and many horrible things. The freed prisoners attack British Town. Flashy sees that anyone of suspected loyalty is butchered. Flashy cannot imagine why Hewitt's soldiers are not taking action against this mob hours after the rioting begins. Eventually, Flashy heads for British lines. Viewing the carnage in Courtney's bungalow he vomits and stumbles on to Mason's, where he arms himself with a pistol before finding Mrs. Leslie beheaded, stripped, and mutilated near Mrs. MacDowall's corpse.

Blubbering at horrors beyond anything he has ever seen and filled with a degree of hatred he has never felt, Flashy comes upon a mutineer bragging about killing British families, shoots him in the groin—hoping he will die slowly—and flees this scene out of Dante on the man's horse. Flashy assumes Delhi is safe, but on the road is hailed by two companies of sepoy. They care for his wound and fill him in on how the rebellion is spreading. Declining to join them, Flashy rides until he falls exhausted. Vivid nightmares feature hated schoolmasters and recent fornications. Delirious, Flashy comes to in a hut and learns that Delhi has fallen. Flashy knows that much of the news about sepoy victories is exaggerated but Britons in India are frightfully outnumbered, and he cannot figure which British garrison might be safe. Jhansi seems the best bet. Flashy finds Ilderim who says he local British officials and their families are dead.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Chapter 6 vividly describes the outbreak of violence in Meerut. Flashy admits that had he been his right mind and had he been less curious, he would have fled immediately. The rest of the chapter makes clear that there were no safe havens anywhere in the region, so this would have done little good. He receives a superficial but dizzying head wound early in the action, which affects him throughout the chapter.

Flashy describes brutality beyond anything he has ever seen—and his earlier memoirs make clear he has seen nearly everything imaginable. In the previous chapter, Flashy laughs at the thought he might be recognized as Makarram Khan, while his real fear is being uncovered as a Briton. In this chapter, he is marginally safer as a sowar, but his sentiments are with his people. He cannot imagine that the British Army does not respond more quickly. He expresses abject horror at seeing non-whites savage a white man. Another white man, refusing to believe Flashy is not a native mutineer, inflicts his head wound before being killed by a true mutineer. Flashy then comes upon the gruesome remains a series of British victims whom he has known in recent months.



Most poignant is Mrs. Leslie with whom he has just made love. Flashy is disgusted, angry, and hopes desperately that his recent barrack mates have not committed the atrocities. Hearing a mutineer brag about the women and children he has killed, Flashy aims a bullet into his groin and hopes he dies a slow, agonizing death. Rarely is he this vindictive.

Flashy determines that Jhansi is the best place to go, for there he has friends and the prospects of again bedding the Queen. The head wound leaves his memory fuzzy, so few details of the 250-mile ride are included. Reaching Jhansi, he learns from Ilderim that the British there have been massacred.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Ilderim weeps, telling how Lakshmibai gets Skene to enlarge her personal bodyguard. The Star Fort is taken, the cantonment is burned, and sahibs are butchered. Ilderim is wounded in the defense but escapes. Kala Khan reneges on the surrender, massacring men, women, and children. Flashy doubts that Lakshmibai could kill children but Ilderim says that bedding her has ruined his perspective. Ilderim believes that Cawnpore is the safest destination, and Flashy feels safer with his rough band than alone. Shadman Khan rustles horses and they ride away, Ilderim vowing vengeance. Avoiding roads slows their progress and it grows clear that Cawnpore is under siege as parties of mutineers march toward it. Eight of Ilderim's eleven men desert.

When three horsemen race by, pursued by a motley gang of Sikh riders led by a white man, Flashy shoots the lead fugitive and another's horse stumbles. Flashy announces himself as a British officer, but looks too "pandy" to believe until he convinces Lt. O'Toole about a christening in 1842. The Col. Rowbotham, leader of the "mosstroopers" is the most angry man that Flashy has ever met. He growls at Flashy's story, but listens to details of the Jhansi massacre with strange excitement. At the end, dashing away tears, he offers a vindictive prayer and orders their half-dozen prisoners hanged. The men gleefully bet on which will survive longest and, when the bodies stop twitching, fire countless rounds into them, cheering and swearing.

Cawnpore has been under siege for two weeks and can survive only if reinforcements arrive from Lucknow or Allahabad. Flashy favors riding to Lucknow rather than running the gauntlet, but Rowbotham has arranged a signal with Wheeler to mark their arrival. The mosstroopers heatedly debate the most savory means of setting examples of tens of thousands of natives who dare kill whites. They halt 2-3 miles from Cawnpore and wait until dark, while cannons fire constantly from both sides. At 2 a.m. Rowbotham announces the route to follow under password "Britannia." Realizing it is the precise centenary of Plassy, Flashy shudders. When the rocket goes up at 4 a.m., the riders gallop crouching past pandy gun pits. When Flashy's horse goes down, Ilderim pulls him up behind him but is hit and falls off. Unable to climb back on, Ilderim tells Flashy to escape, but the bridle snaps and Flashy finds himself being dragged in the leatherwork. He is badly bruised when Ilderim catches up, cuts him loose, and throws him bodily over the breastwork. Flashy is handed a musket and told to shoot. Taken inside for treatment, Flashy sees his old comrade, Scud East.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 7 offers the chilling details of the massacre of all British men, women, and children at Jokan Bagh. Flashy notes that Ilderim weeps openly and knows that the reality is far more horrible than the graphic details of women begging for their children's



lives. Ilderim insists that Rani Lakshmbai is behind it, but Flashy can allow no more than that she is helpless to stop it. Ilderim accuses Flashy of having sex with the Queen, and Flashy's hemming and hawing only confirms his suspicions.

Ilderim's Islamic moralism first crops up in Chapter 4, and here again Flashy does not react to it as viscerally as he does to the Christian moralism and pietism that he sees among in Col. Rowbotham, who with his men is filled with indignation at the murder of civilians at Jhansi and not only lynches all of his "pandy" prisoners, but insists they be slowly strangled rather than letting their necks be broken. The Britons bet on who will survive longest and compare past records. Before the ropes are pulled tight, however, Rowbotham offers a windy prayer of retribution, mentioning the condemned only in passing. When the last body stops twitching, the men waste ammunition shooting the corpses and rejoicing. Flashy reflects to himself that "God-fearing" men need such release occasionally. Note that while he has earlier said he is as religious as the next fellow, he excludes himself from the ranks of the God-fearing. When the men are discussing how to execute the rebels after victory in order best to send the signal that natives may not kill white people, Rowbotham piously forbids crucifixion as blasphemous.

Having made his decision to go with Ilderim to Cawnpore, halfway through the chapter, Flashy observes that this nearly delivers his own epitaph. The harrowing dash into the beleaguered fortifications recalls the suicidal Charge of the Light Brigade mentioned in Chapter 1. Flashy thinks about it just before his horse is shot out from under him. He also recalls the prophecy he hears at Balmoral that the British Raj will fall on 23 June 1857—the current date. The final paragraphs suggest what horrible condition Cawnpore is in and introduce a new character, Scud East, with whom Flashy lives under house arrest in Flashman at the Charge. That uneasy relationship and details of Flashy's encounters with Ignatieff are examined in the next chapter.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Flashy gets no recuperation, but is put behind the earthen parapet surrounding ruined barracks in the midst of a vast, flat, plain. Wheeler has 300 fit men vs. 3,000 pandies, and people are dying regularly. If not relieved in three days they will starve. Veterans barely notice the flying bullets and shells that terrify Flashy. He learns that there can be no terms with the Nana Sahib. Realizing he has nowhere to run, Flashy as a senior officer, pretends to be willing to die. When Flashy and Scud East discuss Russia, Flashy does his best to blacken East's reputation, defending him for abandoning him. Toward dawn, orders sound to man the parapets as long lines of pandy horsemen move across the maiden. Wheeler orders them to fire only on his command. Three volleys fail to stop the pandies, but after some hand-to-hand fighting, they fall back to regroup. In the second charge, infantrymen follow. Flashy is fighting for his life when something knocks him out. When he comes to he knows they cannot survive another frontal attack, which, surprisingly, never occurs. As Wheeler advises the lethargic people to pray and prepare for death, Flashy again contemplates escape. East approaches, wanting to clear his conscience, but Flashy maliciously withholds cheap forgiveness, brags of having sex with Valla and Aunt Sara in Russia, and condemns East as a hypocrite.

Chapter 8 Analysis

In Chapter 8, Flashy describes the misery inside the Cawnpore garrison, whose memories he claims will accompany him to his grave. Their only hope is a relief column that is unlikely to arrive in time and those who die of gunfire are luckier than those who die by inches of starvation and disease. Half the fighting men fall fighting off what turns out to be the pandies' last frontal attack. Wheeler keeps a stiff upper lip but recommends everyone prepare their souls for death. East needs to clear his conscience for abandoning Flashy in Russia when they are fleeing Cossacks in Flashman at the Charge. Flashy enjoys watching him agonize and withholds cheap forgiveness, denying that it does any good. He rubs in the fact that he had been regularly having sex with Valla, with whom East had been chastely in love, and throws in her lusty Aunt Sara for extra shock value. East is suitably appalled, but before he can walk away, Flashy adds off-color remarks. It is not well brought out, but Flashy and East had been schoolmates at Rugby, where Flashy is a grand bully. In Russia he fears East will try to get even, but the pious officer turns the other cheek and lets bygones be bygones. Flashy will come to regret treating East so callously in the next chapter and will learn in the final chapter that someone has decided to expose Flashy's bullying in print.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Mrs. Jacobs arrives under white flag with Nana Sahib's offer of safe passage. The officers debate whether to risk treachery for the sake of the women and children. Flashy wants to accept, but plays it cool. He and Moore are sent to negotiate with Nana, who awaits with Sultana Adala, Tantia Tope, and Azeemoolah. Flashy realizes getting a British company to surrender is a bigger victory than wiping it out. Background sounds of torture heighten motivation.

As the younger British officers cheer "Duty and Honour," Flashy nudges Wheeler to the correct decision. The officers vote to accept and Flashy cannot see how Nana profits from playing them false or anything worse than dying in Cawnpore.

The garrison packs up, rejoicing at the thought of liberation. Ilderim refuses the suggestion to slip away, dresses in his best uniform, and doubts Nana will keep his promise. Flashy rejects this typical Pathan suspicion. In the morning, a pitiful convoy forms up, passing through lines of sullen pandies. Flashy retains vivid, poignant memories. The one-mile walk to the river takes an hour, taunted the whole way. They hear gunfire and learn that Ewart has been killed. As Whiting goes to investigate, Flashy takes the news to Wheeler at the river where thatched barges are anchored. Unloading wagons is chaotic, and Flashy is sent to inspect provisioning, help with boarding, and fix a stuck rudder. He is too busy to contemplate treachery.

Whiting inflames Flashy with news that Ilderim too has been killed as Moore pushes him onto the last barge. Suddenly a bugle sounds and hundreds of pandies on the hillside open fire. Flashy falls overboard, overhead hearing screaming, musket fire, and distant cannons. As the pandies charge with bayonets, Flashy dives under the boat to reach the open river. Boats begin sinking, people struggle in the water, and a crossfire is set up from the opposite shore. Flashy swims underwater to the next barge, where the officers lie dead or dying. As Flashy helps Moore free the rudder, Moore's head explodes from a bullet. Flashy is hauled aboard the only barge underway and it is soon out of range. Seeing East mortally wounded, Flashy holds his hand, surprised to find himself blubbering about this "little bastard" he has hated as boy and man, but is glad himself to be alive.

Until an attack by flaming arrows, Flashy's memories of riding the only barge that escapes is vague. He knows that all other survivors are herded ashore and massacred. Fleeing the fire-arrows, they ground on a sandbar from which they cannot shove off, some 100 miles from Allahabad in a seemingly peaceful area. There are two dozen survivors, half of whom are likely to die of gangrene, and they are short on supplies and ammunition. Flashy considers going native again and setting off on foot, claiming for effect that he will return to Cawnpore to avenge Ilderim. Vilbart, the acting commander, talks him into scouting friendly villagers to help re-float them. Soon drums sound in the



dense forest. Arrows fly and they flee into a small temple with screaming natives in pursuit. After a bloody five-minute mêlée, the natives set fire to the temple, forcing the surviving Britons to race to the river.

Flashy dives in and swims out the current to be carried to safety. Only four others follow him. Suddenly, Delafosse screams "Muggers!" (crocodiles) and Flashy fights exhaustion and panic to make for the white water these killers are supposed not to like. Sullivan reaches an island first and plucks a grateful Flashy out. Flashy is swooning when Delafosse sees people waving and assumes they are friendly.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 describes the surrender of the Cawnpore garrison, which leads to the infamous massacre at Suttee Choura Ghat, which Flashy assumes all of his contemporaries know about. He claims primary responsibility for the decision, throwing his reputation as a gallant fighter on the side of considering first the starving women and children. The younger officers are hot-heads and the senior officers need an approach that will not make them look cowardly. Flashy refuses to believe that starvation would have been better, and that is the only alternative. Furthermore, he sees no benefit to the native leaders in deceiving the British. He is treading water in the filthy Ganges River when he realizes he has been wrong.

Nana Sahib, Azeemoolah Khan, and Tantia Tope are sketched without rancor, and Flashy admits to flirting with the beautiful Sultana Adala, and regrets not getting ten minutes alone with her. Flashy's libido is not even idle at the riverside, but the women are too haggard to fondle. As he does before describing the butchery of Meerut, Flashy shares with readers vignettes of garrison life on the last day, when people are relieved that no bullets are flying and that they will soon be evacuated. Pages later he will see these same people struggling in the water as he swims for his life.

The pressure in the narrative builds. Just before the treachery begins in earnest, several British officers are killed, seemingly in random acts, and the general knows he can do nothing about it without risking everyone's lives. Flashy is in the thick of things getting the flotilla underway when he learns Ilderim is among the dead. He curses his old friend for not having fled to safety and tenderly recalls their earlier times together. Later, when Flashy puts on his macho act, claiming to want to return and avenge Ilderim, it for once sounds plausible. He allows himself, however, to be diverted to helping save the group.

The voyage of the only barge to escape is a galloping adventure. Most of the officer corps is killed, including East, who dies in Flashy's arms, causing a conflicted flood of emotions about someone he grows up with but never likes. There seem to be no non-hostile natives in the area as the number of survivors dwindles. Native drums cause flashbacks to other disastrous situations. In the midst of describing exhausting efforts to out swim a herd of crocodiles, Flashy jarringly recalls how a naturalist once hears this story and asks whether the beast has an overlapping tooth in the lower jaw. That would make it a gavial. Flashy recalls only that it looks like an Iron Maiden, a horrible torture

device. Flashy's friends pull him from the river and he swoons, half hearing them hail "friendly" natives.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

By luck, Flashy washes up in the realm of Maharaj Diribijah Singh, a steadfast friend of the British, and spends weeks resting, taking stock, and planning his return to England. Henry Lawrence has holed up in Lucknow under siege, but Flashy's friend Gen. "Gravedigger" Havelock reconquers Cawnpore three weeks after the massacre. When Flashy visits weeks later, the Bibigarh is no longer ankle-deep in blood, because Gen. Neill has forced the pandies to lick the floor clean before hanging them. Having known many of the victims, Flashy approves, as does British public opinion for years, until liberal writers begin claiming that Christians should know better. Flashy cannot understand why British sins are always painted as blacker.

When it is safe, Diribijah Singh returns the refugees to Cawnpore, where Flashy tells his story to grumpy old Havelock, who assigns him to his staff as an intelligence aide. It is a nice, safe billet and interlude for his second encounter with Lakshmibai and his final, terrible adventure in Gwalior. Flashy knows little about the seven-week siege of Lucknow, because he spends it raving in bed with cholera for two weeks. When he comes to, Gen. Campbell is approaching, and Flashy rouses himself to appear dutiful and passes his time telling exaggerated war stories.

This backfires, because when Gen. Outram needs someone to guide Campbell's 5,000 to the Residency, he teams Flashy with Kavanaugh, a zealot who knows the streets but is too Irish-looking and -sounding to disguise. Flashy tries to slip out but is caught and cannot get out of the assignment without ruining his reputation. He moves the staff bon mot "like only jocular heroism can" and warns Kavanaugh to leave all the speaking to him. He realizes, however, that his terrified babbling cannot be controlled, and everything about him is an "indication to disaster."

Kavanaugh promptly gets them lost, asking directions, falling into bodies of water, and blundering into pandy patrols, but also without knowing it, paying five rupees so Flashy can have sex with the "charmingest little brown girl" he has met. He also learns that they are near British lines. When they find the 9th Lancers, Kavanaugh is disappointed that Campbell is not more impressed with his story, but gets his coveted Victoria Cross. Flashy is passed over, gets dysentery, but cannot deny Kavanaugh's bravery.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Marking a transition in the novel, Chapter 10 opens with a disquisition on luck: the ill luck that brings Flashy to Meerut for the birth of the Mutiny, the good luck that makes him one of five to escape the massacre at Cawpore; the ill luck that brings wild jungle men and crocodiles down on him, and the extraordinary good luck that delivers him to one of the few Indian rulers to remain loyal to the British. Flashy's philosophical tone



continues as he summarizes the aftermath at Cawpore, dismissing liberal views on retribution, and concludes pointedly that there is "nothing crueller than a justified Christian. Except maybe a nigger running loose."

Explaining how he comes to a nice safe intelligence job on Gen. Havelock's staff, and rather disconcertingly but delightfully plugging his three-volume official autobiography, *Dawns and Departures of a Soldier's Life*, Flashy finds himself accompanying a demented Irishman who cannot be disguised or contained on a misadventure looking for Gen. Campbell's camp. This section is rollicking good fun, showing Flashy's discomfort at the danger Kavanaugh cannot perceive. Flashy is proud of himself for getting the Irishman to pay for his session with a prostitute, enthusiastically told as always, and peeved that Kavanaugh is awarded a Victoria Cross while he is passed over. In the general tone of the chapter, Flashy tries to be philosophical about the slight, which is righted at the end of the novel.

Kavanaugh inspires varied and colorful descriptions, including allusions to Guy Fawkes Day, when British children carry effigies of the failed hero of the Gunpowder Plot and buy fireworks for a penny, and the launching of the SS *Great Eastern*, the largest ship of its time.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Campbell wisely takes his time reaching Lucknow, sparing his Highlanders' lives, but lives only a few days before dying of dysentery. Campbell methodically cleans up rebel resistance along the Ganges and in the Oudh kingdom. Flashy supervises intelligence work and is reprimanded for bringing a whore to a band parade, showing that the true crisis is over. Tantia Tope moves his force south into Gwalior country and reports often mention Lakshmibai as a Jezebel and traitor. Flashy finds this natural, recalling her vow not to give up her Jhansi, but cannot picture her as part of these horrors. He pictures her on her swing and wonders how many lovers she has taken to the pavilion. Longing to see and hear her, he hates feeling like a green kid and knows that a few weeks of sex would cure him.

As the winter wears on, Billy Russell of the London Times, another sign that victory is near. Flashy does paperwork while the 30,000-man army slaughters the enemy and engineers demolish shrine and temples to show who is boss. Ignorant looting troops destroy more treasure than they carry off. Flashy watches Russell dickering with an Irish soldier over jewelery and himself buys for £2 a chain he later sells in Calcutta for £7,500 at half its value. While smoking and drinking at the camp fire, congratulating himself on making it through another war, and contemplating all the famous people he has met, Flashy is summoned to Campbell's tent. The general intends to hang the remaining rebel chiefs, but wants Lakshmibai brought in alive. This, he winks, requires Flashy's diplomacy and intimacy with the Queen.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Brief Chapter 11 summarizes Campbell's cautious but bloody mopping-up operations along the Grand Trunk Road and plans to eliminate the final pockets of resistance further south. Certain that he has survived another war and will soon be home, Flashy is ordered to arrange the surrender of Lakshmibai, about whom he has spent the winter fantasizing. He is annoyed that he cannot regard her simply as a sexual object. Flashy spends a few pages describing the ignorance with which the British soldiers loot ornate Indian palaces, destroying far more booty than they steal. Flashy risks being near the shooting to supervise work by two orderlies buying up valuables for a song and selling them in Calcutta for a fortune. They finance his retirement home. He observes wryly that had there been philosophers on hand they would have condemned it roundly, while profiting themselves, of course.

The chapter is unusually rich in biblical references. Recalling Gen. Campbell's words over a fallen comrade years earlier, Flashy repeats 2 Macc. 15:28: "Nicanor lay dead in his harness." It is not entirely apt, for Nicanor dies expecting an easy victory over the Jews, which falls apart. The British alliteratively dub Lakshmibai "Jhansi Jezebel" after



the Queen of Israel who in 1 Kings talks her husband Ahab into restoring Baal worship, earning the undying wrath of Elijah and Elisha. Her dead body is thrown over the city wall and consumed by dogs. Curiously, Campbell's plan is to preserve Lakshmibai's life. Finally, Campbell vows to hang rebels Nana, Tantia, and Azeemoolah "higher than Haman." In the Book of Esther Haman is hanged on a 75-foot gallows he prepares for Mordecai, whose life Esther has spared.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Had Lakshmibai been ugly and old and if Canning had not feared public opinion turning her into an Indian Joan of Arc, Flashy would have been spared suffering. Flashy finds the impregnable city walls encircled by British troops. Gen. Rose is confident the conquest will take a week and doubts that Lakshmibai will surrender. Giving Flashy the leery look that pious gentlemen give, Rose asks what she is like and gapes at the complex description. Flashy downplays the idea she may have a male harem.

For the next three days, while guns and mortars breach the wall and infantry stands ready to invade, Flashy weighs options. He pictures both the carnage in rooms where he has found pleasure and regular sex on a long voyage to Calcutta as Lakshmibai's guardian. Flashy suggests having a special platoon snatch her before the battle begins, but Rose wants to use diplomacy and intrigue to trick her into fleeing via the under-guarded Orcha Gate. Flashy worries that they underrate Lakshmibai and that she will smell a rat, but Rose is confident—because Flashy is his trump. There will be no white flag to suggest that she has abandoned her people. Only if she accepts the offer is Flashy to explain how her "capture" will occur. If she refuses, she may still look for a bolt-hole and be nabbed. She may try to hold Flashy hostage, but he has never avoided risk. Flashy figures the odds and wonders if Lakshmibai is as cruel and treacherous as other Indians. He can know only by facing her.

Rose concocts a foolproof way of getting Flashy inside Jhansi, riding, disguised, with a cavalry squadron in a sudden raid through the breached wall. He hides during the brief skirmish and merges with the defenders afterwards. Flashy has to agree and admits that the plan works. Flashy remembers little of the preparation, the diversionary bombardment, but recalls the tremor of excitement every horse-soldier feels before a charge. He rides slung along the side of his pony like a Sioux, while his protectors howl like dervishes. Flashy turns into shadows and hides in the bushes for 15 minutes after the fighting ends, then strolls naturally through the bazaar and streets filled with troops and busy tradesmen. He gets shakier the nearer he gets to the palace and overcomes the temptation to run away by thinking about the greater violence that will break out soon behind him.

Flashy hands the guard commander, Sher Khan, a cryptic note referring to perfume and a picture for the Rani and is soon taken inside, put in a guard room, and confronted by the fat little chamberlain. A lit cigarette tossed between them signals Ignatieff's appearance and Flashy nearly has a heart attack. Ignatieff is pleased to have caught a spy, smashes Flashy in the mouth, and sends him to the dungeon. Flashy is terrified, seeing and being clamped into an enormous wheel. Ignatieff is certain that a coward like Flashy will not require much torture before providing information, but assures Flashy that it will not end until he is dead. As the wheel is turned several notches, tearing at his joints, Flashy begins begging and cursing.



Flashy is telling Ignatieff the truth when he sees angelic Lakshmibai enter with the spitting sergeant and ordering Ignatieff to stop instantly. In agony, Flashy affects bravery. Lakshmibai insists that Flashy is not a spy but an envoy of the Sirkar, and demands the note that Ignatieff has confiscated. Reminding Ignatieff that she rules Jhansi, Lakshmibai dismisses the Russian and has Flashy released. He can barely stand but denies telling Ignatieff anything. The chamberlain backs Flashy's lie and tries to ingratiate himself while leading him to a richly-furnished, perfumed apartment.

There, Lakshmibai orders Flashy bound and dismisses everyone else. To his amazement, Lakshmibai throws herself on him, pressing his head to her bosom, sobbing over how she has worried she would never see him again. She refuses to untie him in order to maintain the illusion that he is a captured spy. Flashy explains Rose's offer of life while Lakshmibai fondles and kisses him, curses the Russians, gives him wine, and laments not listening to Flashy earlier. She has always known that Flashy is different—kind and understanding. Flashy declares the pavilion the most wonderful moment in his life, but Lakshmibai hurries on to talk of despair when he disappears, probably dead, and her inability to prevent the "red wind" of killing. She has to join her cousin, Nana, or lose Jhansi.

Flashy assures Lakshmibai that he is here to set things right. Jhansi will be overrun and the pandies punished, but the British want to save her, partly because it is not the British style to make war on women. When she asks if he has stood up for her with Palmerston, Flashy takes advantage, looking "romantically stuffed," declaring that he has loved her more than anything in the world since first seeing her on her swing. This produces a look of sorrow and perplexity, and Lakshmibai asks what Flashy wants her to do, caring only that Flashy stay with her after her escape. Flashy explains the plan for seizing her at the Orcha Gate and making it look good. Rose has promised that Jhansi will not be looted and innocent civilians will not be harmed. Flashy does not know what will happen to Lakshmibai, assumes she will be exiled to a distant part of India, but assures her she will be well-treated. Britain has shown it is not vindictive towards former enemies.

"Monstrously horny," Flashy asks to be untied, but Lakshmibai with a kiss insists the charade continue until Rose's plan unfolds. He assures her he will protect her before the Sirkar. Straightening herself and returning to her divan, she summons her retinue and orders Flashy confined in the north tower but not ill-used. Flashy suspects that Sher Khan knows it is an act, and the leery Pathan provides for all his needs and treats him with respect. In the first few hours, Flashy wonders about Lakshmibai's obvious infatuation with him and compares her with his earlier pampers but frustrated women. He is willing to cherish and protect her for a few months, but she will have to accept his sailing away as the others have.

Cannonading begins next day, but Tantia Tope suddenly appears with 20,000 men to relieve Jhansi, forcing Rose to deal with them first. The pandies of Jhansi do not storm out to catch the British between two stones. Sher Khan declares himself not a mutineer but a mercenary fighting for the Rani as earlier he had for the British in the Guides. Ignatieff has fled Jhansi, but Flashy is sure he is too cunning to be killed or captured. A



day later, Rose begins the massive two-day assault that Flashy has been waiting for. Sher Khan reports that the pandies are fighting better than expected and wonders whether Her Highness will have him slit Flashy's throat when the British break in—showing that Lakshmibai has not confided her plan to him.

As he expects, at nightfall, Lakshmibai makes her break. Sher Khan and two guards hustle him down to a courtyard and chain his feet together beneath a horse's belly for his own safety. Flashy sees Lakshmibai on a white horse amidst mounted ladies and guardsmen, one of whom holds Damodar, her stepson. Flashy assumes this is still part of the charade as they exit to the Orcha Road. He is confused, however, when they veer away from the lights of the British pickets onto the maidan, away from safety. When he tries to ride forward to warn Lakshmibai, Sher Khan threatens to kill him. Flashy realizes that Lakshmibai has used his information to form a plan of her own. All the tears and passion may have been an act.

When shots are fired from the pickets, the cavalcade gallops forward, with Sher Khan holding a knife to Flashy's back. Flashy rides, disoriented, bewildered, angry, and disbelieving, a deceiver having been deceived. Infatuation, however, still stirs hope. Towards dawn, Company cavalry attack and Flashy watches Lakshmibai fight a savage sabre battle. Flashy has no words when she confronts him and orders Sher Khan to take him to Gwalior until she calls for him as her "bargain." Flashy believes this serves him right for being trusting.

Gwalior is a fearful place with dungeons worse than a Mexican jail. Flashy spends two months in one with his own filth and vermin and Sher Khan looking in once a week to see he has not died. Delivered at night after a punishing ride, Flashy sobs and babbles about all he has suffered in India—not suspecting something worse is ahead. Meanwhile, the Mutiny is mopped up and Rose pursues Tantia Tope and Lakshmibai, who has joined him, towards Gwalior. Flashy in his cell knows nothing of this and begins raving, doubting he has lived through the good things in his life. Unable like some in solitary confinement to sing hymns, prove Euclid, or recite poetry, Flashy makes a mental note of all 478 women he has had in his life. Some of them figure in a nightmare from which he awakens to the sound of artillery.

Suddenly, Flashy is dragged out into blinding sunlight and bedlam, put in the saddle, and told "She wants you!" They ride through milling crowds out of the city into the midst of a pandy retreat. They pass artillery and lancer units formed up to fight. Sher Khan wheels Flashy towards a grove where the Pathans are camped, to the doorway of Lakshmibai's tent. She is a vision and angry at the treatment that has reduced Flashy to a filthy, ragged scarecrow. She tells him simply that he is free to join his friends. That is the last thing she can do for him. Flashy is downcast, being once again simply a colonel to her. He cannot recall how he tries to convince Lakshmibai to surrender, but she rides away. Flashy recalls with an old man's fancy tears in her eyes. Riders of the Light Brigade, Irish Hussars, charge and Flashy watches the mêlée, with Lakshmibai fighting valiantly but falling, clutching her stomach. Flashy runs to her and holds her, writing hideously in the dust. When she dies—unromantically—Flashy dives for safety, steals a horse, feels a sudden pain in his head, and loses consciousness.



Flashy awakens, leaning on something hard and shiny. He cannot make out voices. He shrieks in pain when he moves his arm, and someone gags him brutally. Flashy realizes he is tied across the muzzle of a cannon along with 6-7 other pandies, all about to be executed in style. The troopers joke and taunt. Flashy writhes in frenzy, forcing himself not to faint, trying to make some sign that will show someone their error. The men straighten up as officers arrive. Flashy recognizes Clem Hennidge, with whom he rides at Balaclava. Hennidge wants the "bestly business" over with swiftly. He wonders why Flashy alone is carrying on and the young lieutenant at his side is mesmerized. As the old-fashioned fuse on Flashy's cannon sputters, he makes grotesque faces at the lieutenant, willing him to look at his signaling fingers. The lieutenant orders the fuse removed and then the gag, and Flashy calls out English phrases to convince Clem that he is Flashman. Hennidge is pop-eyed in horror and apologizes. Flashy swoons with relief and breaks into sobs, insisting the other prisoners be released. One of them could be Canning.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Long, climactic Chapter 12 shows Flashy facing fearful danger to avert the adverse publicity that would erupt in Britain if Lakshmibai were to die during the capture of Jhansi. Flashy opens bluntly: it is only because she is young and beautiful that it matters. Flashy is all for saving her and contemplates the pleasure he will enjoy escorting her to wherever her exile leads. He figures commandos could infiltrate the palace and kidnap her, but Gen. Rose favors something subtler—and something for which Flashy's unique relationship with the Queen and reputation as a lady's man are required.

Flashy's insertion into the city and casual wandering through the streets in disguise are artfully told and his hesitancy to knock at the palace gate is understandable. He truly does not know Lakshmibai's frame of mind, presently or even at the time of their lovemaking. From the appearance of Sher Khan, the doorkeeper who earlier spits of Flashy's shadow, the mood is ominous. The chamberlain is amazed that Flashy has shown up in disguise rather than his trim uniform as before.

The arch of a tossed cigarette dramatically marks Ignatieff's return to the story. It marks him earlier at Balmoral, but is even more memorable for anyone who has read *Flashman at the Charge*. The Russian is determined to do away with Flashy. He mentions the broken off "discussion" at Balmoral, but he clearly yearns for his knout, a horrible Russian torture inevitably fatal that he shows off to Flashy in Russia and promises will be his end. Flashy mentions it in passing at Balmoral. What he has prepared for Flashy is nearly as ghastly: racking on the wheel. Flashy describes the stretching of his joints and answers questions willingly to end the torment. All of the pious phrases of the forlorn make their way into his vocabulary. It seems impossible that he could be more horrified than he is just before Lakshmibai's appearance, but he has several times assured readers that the worst comes at Gwalior.



Flashy describes in detail how Lakshmibai covers him with kisses and caresses, declaring her love and the horror of thinking he had been killed. For the rest of the novel, Flashy wonders if this is sincere or an act. When he has told her her Gen. Rose's plan, she puts him in a comfortable prison, ostensibly as a cover for her surrender: people cannot know that she has left Jhansi down. When he is pulled from his cell and chained to a horse, Flashy sees that Lakshmibai is not going through with the plan. He feels betrayed but still hopeful. These plunge when she imprisons him in the filthy Gwalior dungeon for months. He vividly describes how people held in isolation lose their minds. Suddenly, he is pulled out of his cell, hurried to Lakshmibai's tent, and set free to rejoin the British. She has become a cold warrior and he is an enemy colonel. He watches her battle again, fearful for her, and runs to her side when she falls. Flashy remarks bitterly that real-world death is nothing like its romantic depiction in fiction. As he rushes to make his escape, Flashy is knocked out.

Flashy awakens in arguably the most hazardous situation of his life: tied to the barrel of a cannon about to blast his guts to Calcutta in retribution for all of the pandy carnage. His predicament appears inescapable, for he is gagged after crying out in pain when he moves his broken arm. The enlisted men assigned to the execution are sadistic. The officers are clearly sickened by what they must do, and the young lieutenant grows curious seeing Flashy alone writhing and grimacing, seeking to get someone's attention. With the gag removed from his mouth, he convinces them who he is and is released. He demands that those condemned with him be released, joking that one could be the Governor-General. Deeper humanity appears to have surfaced as a result of this inhuman mental torture. Several times earlier British officers debate the efficacy of slow, horrible deaths in convincing native peoples not to break British laws and customs. Recall that Flashy is writing long after the fact, so it appears that this incident at Gwalior has not fundamentally altered his views on capital punishment. He still finds it fascinating to watch, but at this point demands the condemned be set free.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The Great Mutiny ends at Gwalior. Flashy recovers from a broken arm and frazzled nervous system. He prepares detailed reports and in autumn gets Campbell's permission to go home. He pays his respects at Lakshmibai's shrine and in Cawnpore collects some mail. Elspeth gushes about pride about his gallantry and her longing, turning Flashy sentimental, and passes along a gift book from the attentive Lord Cardigan. Angry at that, Flashy boards a train to Allahabad to meet Russell. As they chat about the medals and titles being distributed to veterans, Flashy grows jealous. Russell leads him to a room where Campbell and other high officers have gathered. Canning reads the citation bestowing on Flashy the Victoria Cross. Flashy is speechless as all sing and hurrah, knowing they would howl for his blood if they knew the truth of how little he has done. The Cannings then inform him secretly that he has been knighted. The official ceremony will take place in London.

On the Calcutta train, Flashy imagines Lady Elspeth ecstatic and insufferable. He pulls out the book she has sent him, opens it at random, and reads about a bully, the "blackguard Flashman." Tom Brown's *Schooldays* by an "Old Boy" is entirely about him at Rugby. Everything is there, including his expulsion for drinking. Flashy foams at this humiliation at his moment of triumph. He curses Cardigan and vows public vengeance.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Brief Chapter 13 is an epilogue, describing Flashy's physical and mental recuperation and leave taking from India. The closing skirmishes in the Great Mutiny are summarized, and Flashy wonders again about Lakshmibai, whose grave he visits. In a classic maneuver, Times reporter Russell talks about how all of Flashy's comrades are being honored and promoted, working up his jealousy so the surprise will be greater when he receives his V.C. Appending the knighthood (secret until he reaches London) seems more a way of painting Elspeth as a flighty twit.

It also allows her to be associated with Cardigan who once pursues her and who Flashy always fears may be pursuing her yet. He has often alluded to the one near-conquest. Through Elspeth Cardigan has sent a book, which Flashy casually packs for the train ride. Flushed with pride at his new stature (unearned, he always admits), Flashy opens Tom Brown's *Schooldays*, which describes him as a young bully, leaving nothing out. Flashy has mentioned the popular 1857 novel earlier, but here reads whole exasperating paragraphs. Flashy is sure its publication will ruin him in society and curses Cardigan for ruining his big moment. Fraser as editor of the "Flashman Papers" briefly describes how Flashy's rightful indignation subsides over the novel by Thomas Hughes and its sequel, which specifies that no real person is intended in either volume.



Characters

Sir Harry Flashman

The novel's narrator and chief character, "Flashy" is enjoying his fame as the hero not only of Jallalabad but also of Balaclava. The 34-year-old, six-foot, 182-pound colonel in the reserves on half-pay, cuts a dashing figure. He is married to the beautiful but ditsy former Elspeth Morrison, and lives on her inheritance with her and their son, Harry Albert Victor Flashman ("Havvy"). Throughout the book, the fifth in the "Flashman Papers" series, Flashy assures the reader that he is not what he appears. He is at heart a coward, an exploiter of situations, and a womanizer.

Writing in his eighties in the early 20th century, the narrator describes being called upon by Prime Minister Lord Palmerston personally to scout rumors of a pending mutiny in India. For much of the time, he masquerades as Makarram Khan, a Hasanzai of the Black Mountain, most recently a member of the Peshawar police. He first adopts the guise, which takes advantage of his fluency in the Urdu and Pushtu languages, to enlist as a sowar in 3rd Cavalry, Bengal Army, at the Meerut garrison, after narrowly avoiding assassination in Jhansi, where he meets with and becomes enamored of the Queen, Lakshmibai. When Flashy learns that the Thugs are hired by the Russian Count Ignatieff, who years earlier in the Crimea vows to cause him a horrible death and who in England has tried to arrange a hunting accident, he prudently goes underground.

Flashy does not, however, find peace and safety. As a common soldier, he is in the midst of events that set off the Great Mutiny. Wounded, he flees to besieged Cawnpore and is one of five survivors of Nana Sahib's treachery, goes on to Lucknow, where a safe job as a general's intelligence aid leads to a disguised nighttime wander through the woods with a deranged Irishman to guide Gen. Campbell in and raise the siege. Finally, Flashy returns to Jhansi to convince Lakshmibai to surrender. Narrowly escaping Ignatieff again, Flashy thinks he has talked Lakshmibai into surrendering and believes she loves him (as he half-loves her), but she double-crosses him, escapes on her own terms, and locks Flashy, again in native clothes, in a squalid Gwalior dungeon. She releases him in time for the final battle and dies in Flashy's arms. Knocked out, marked as a rebel, gagged, and tied to the muzzle of a British cannon, Flashy nearly goes insane, trying to get someone's attention. He orders the other condemned men freed.

Leaving India, Flashy receives not only the cherished Victoria Cross but also a sub rosa knighthood, which together puff up his ego, and a copy of a tell-all book about his Schooldays as a bully, which he is sure will destroy his reputation.



Rani Lakshmibai

A historical figure, Lakshmibai is Queen of Jhansi, a kingdom annexed by the British four years before the action of this novel. Rumored at 29 to be an old hag and an implacable foe of the British, probably in league with the Russian Count Ignatieff, Lakshmibai turns out to be incredibly beautiful and sensual, adept with horse and sword, and earnestly willing the good of her kingdom. "Mera Jhansi denge nay - I will not give up my Jhansi!" The British political officer in Jhansi, Skene, hopes that her temper can be controlled and arranges a rare audience for Harry Flashman.

Accepting a homely picture of the British Royal Family and a bottle of French perfume from Flashy, Lakshmibai insists that London recognize her adopted son Damodar's legitimacy and let her rule as regent without strings. Flashy convinces her that he cares and will be her advocate. They grow closer and eventually make love at her pavilion. Thugs attack Flashy and he is forced to flee to the underground.

Claiming she is bereft, Lakshmibai is protected by Kala Khan, challenged for rule of Jhansi by Sadasheo Rao, and at war with Kathe Khan and the Dewan of Orcha. Meanwhile, she claims to be loyal to the Sirkar. Flashy cannot believe that Lakshmibai can kill children but merely cannot prevent the slaughter of the British at Jhansi. At any rate, Lakshmibai joins the Indian rebels and finds her fortress and palace surrounded. Flashy is sent in to talk her into surrendering. With great tears and kisses she tells him she misses him and has worried he is dead, and seems to accept his guarantee of safe conduct out. In the end, Lakshmibai tricks and imprisons Flashy in Gwalior. As the rebel princes are steadily beaten back, Lakshmibai releases Flashy and plunges into battle. Seeing her struck down, Flashy runs to her side and watches her die in agony. He later visits her grave and temple.

Nicholas Pavlovich Ignatieff

A historical figure, Ignatieff is the "gotch-eyed, freezing ghoul of a man" who nearly kills Harry Flashman in Russia after taking him prisoner in the Crimean War (described in *Flashman at the Charge*). In this novel, the mere mention of Ignatieff's name by Lord Palmerston makes Flashy's bowels "play the Hallelujah Chorus in earnest." Ignatieff then turns up at Balmoral as a diplomat and makes an attempt on Flashy's life while hunting. In Queen Victoria's presence they must appear cordial, but Flashy asks if he has brought his knout to England. Palmerston wonders about Ignatieff's part in Russian machinations in India.

In India, Flashy hears of a one-eyed foreigner drumming up rebellion, and is certain it is Ignatieff, who must cover his odd half-blue/half-brown eye. Ignatieff sics Thug assassins on Flashy, forcing him to disguise himself and enlist in the Bengal Army. They meet again when Flashy is sent to Jhansi to get Rami Lakshmibai to surrender. Ignatieff seizes Flashy and is stretching him on the rack when Lakshmibai intervenes. Ignatieff then disappears into the jungles. Flashy notes in passing that they meet twice afterwards.



Ilderim Khan

Harry Flashman's blood brother from the Afghan War, Ilderim is a huge, bearded Ghazi (an Islamic warrior who has killed infidels), with a devil's face, skull cap, and wearing the yellow coat of Skinner's riders. They are reunited in the stables at Jhansi, while Flashy is looking for evidence of rebellion among the sepoy (native) troops before his first meeting with the Queen of Jhansi, Rani Lakshmibai. Ilderim warns him to beware of this woman who has too much knowledge, but Flashy dismisses this as typical Muslim male prejudice.

Flashy and Ilderim meet again weeks later when Flashy has made progress towards seducing the Queen, and happens upon a group of Thugs intent on murdering Flashy after a tryst with Lakshmibai. Ilderim gives Flashy an I-told-you-so about fornication (Ilderim is notably less strict about alcohol), tortures one of the perpetrators into admitting they are hired by the Russian Count Ignatieff, and advises Flashy to masquerade as Makarram Khan, a Hasanzai of the Black Mountain, most recently a member of the Peshawar police, whom Ilderim has recently killed. He sends Flashy to the 3rd Cavalry at Meerut garrison, where he has a relative.

Flashy and Ilderim are reunited after the Meerut garrison is burned, and travel together towards supposedly safe Cawnpore, but have to run a gauntlet to get in. Ilderim scoops Flashy up when he loses his own horse, is shot from his saddle, rescues Flashy when he is thrown and dragged, and tosses him over the breastworks to safety. Ilderim rejects advise to flee when the garrison accepts safe-conduct downriver from Nana Sahib, dresses in his best uniform, and is butchered by the treacherous mutineer. Flashy curses Ilderim's stubbornness but cherishes his memory.

Sir Colin Campbell

A historical figure, Campbell is the British general whose 93rd Highlanders relieve the siege of Lucknow. Harry Flashman characterizes "Old Slowcoach" as as "an ugly old devil, with a damned caustic tongue and a graveyard sense of humour," but adds that he has never seen anyone who made him feel more secure. The meet earlier in Flashman at the Charge, where Campbell commands the "Thin Red Line" at the Battle of Balaclava.

Lord Canning

A historical figure, Canning is the Governor-General of India during the Mutiny of 1857. Others describe him as weak by comparison with his predecessor, Lord Dalhousie, but Harry Flashman calls him a "fart in a trance." Flashy's knowledgeable old friend, Gen. John Nicholson, says Canning is big on education and spreading Christianity, fawns on the native princes rather than crushing them, and is softer on the sepoys than with British regulars. Sentimentally, and intuiting that repression in the style of Neill and Havelock will bring adverse public opinion, Canning wants beautiful Ran Lakshmibai



captured unharmed. At the end of the novel, the Cannings head the celebration of Flashy's departure, including the awarding of a Victoria Cross.

Lord Cardigan

A historical figure, Cardigan (nicknamed "Lord Haw-Haw" for his distinctive laugh) is Harry Flashman's English nemesis in *Flashman at the Charge*, first trying to seduce wife Elspeth and then leading the disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade. In this novel, Flashy refuses to exonerate Cardigan and is challenged as a "viper." Refusing to duel with him, Flashy has to accept that his Victoria Cross is blocked. At the end of the novel, en route home from India, having received the V.C. and been secretly knighted, Flashy is happy about life until he receives from Cardigan via Elspeth a book, Tom Brown's *Schooldays*, which page-after-page describes Flashy as a young bully at Rugby School.

Scud East

Harry Flashman's old schoolmate at the Rugby School, East is last seen in *Flashman at the Charge*, abandoning Flashy to cossack pursuers in order to get critical information through to headquarters. In this novel, they meet in Cawnpore and East, a devout Christian, tries to get Flashy's forgiveness for that act. Flashy shocks East by saying in made love to Valla several time a week and to her aunt. When East is mortally wounded and dies in Flashy's arms, Flashy admits to being more moved than he would have expected.

Lord Ellenborough

A historical figure, Ellenborough is Governor-General of India during Harry Flashman's Kabul adventures, and is present at Balmoral when Flashy's mission to India is ordered. Flashy describes him as a "cheery, boozy buffer" who wants to civilize Russia by teaching them cricket. Ellenborough insists that Flashy remain at Balmoral after Count Ignatieff shows up, perhaps suspecting it is Lord Palmerston's plan that the old enemies face one another.

Elspeth Morrison Flashman

Flashy's dim-witted, loving, and sexually appealing wife, Elspeth plays a marginal role in this novel. Brought up in Scotland, she marries Harry Flashman after her father catches them together in the bushes. Flashy suspects his wife is cheating on him, as he regularly cheats on her, but he has loved no one as he does her, although he admits late in the novel that Rani Lakshuibai presents a deeper than usual temptation. Elspeth charms Queen Victoria during the Flashmans' visit to Balmoral, perhaps because she once learns to recite "The Lady of the Lake." Count Ignatieff claims that Elspeth spills word about Flashy's confidential assignment to India. At the end of the novel, Elspeth



forwards a book given to Flashy by the smarmy Lord Cardigan. It is Tom Brown's *Schooldays*, an expose of Flashy's formative years as a bully.

Henry Havelock

A historical figure, Havelock is the British general who recaptures Cawnpore, three weeks after the terrible massacre. Harry Flashman describes him as "Abraham Lincoln dying of diarrhoea, with his mournful whiskers and bloodhound eyes." When Flashy reunites with Havelock, the "busy old Baptist" drags him to his knees for prayer, congratulating God on delivering Flashy from the "Philistine at Cawnpore." Havelock turns down Flashy's request to return home and assigns him to his staff as an intelligence aide. Havelock tries to relieve Lucknow, 40 miles away, but lacks the forces.

Thomas Henry Kavanaugh

A historical figure, Kavanaugh is "a great freckled Irish bumpkin of a civilian" with flaming red-hair who talks Hindi with a Donegal accent—but is eager to get through to Gen. Campbell instructions on how to enter besieged Lucknow safely. He is poorly disguised to accompany Harry Flashman on the mission. Flashy considers him an idiot, but acknowledges his courage. Kavanaugh receives the Victoria Cross before Flashy.

Col. Duff Mason

A British officer in the Meerut garrison, Mason appoints Harry Flashman, disguised as the sowar Makarram Khan, as his orderly—in effect majordomo of his home for several months before the outbreak of the Mutiny. Other members of the household include Mason's twitchy spinster sister, Miss Blanche, who sits by herself on the veranda, and Mrs. Leslie, a plump, red-headed, pale relative of some sort, who drives Flashy crazy trying out all of the sexual positions in the Hindu repertoire. Capt. MacDowall's wife also drives Flashy crazy by dropping in to dictate in a "carping Scotch voice" how the household should be properly run. Hours after the Mutiny starts, Flashy finds the Mason bungalow running with blood. Mrs. Leslie has been decapitated and her body stripped and mutilated. Mrs. MacDowall has been speared to the wall.

Nana Sahib

A historical figure, Nana Sahib is one of the leaders of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857-58. Harry Flashman negotiates with Nana the surrender and safe conduct downriver of the Cawnpore garrison. Instead, when all the barges are loaded, Nana orders his men to open fire. Only one barge - Flashy's - escapes. The survivors are imprisoned in Bibigarh under horrible conditions, and butchered on Nana's orders when Gen Havelock approaches. After Cawnpore is reconquered, Nana moves upcountry to Delhi.



Gen. John Nicholson

A historical figure, Nicholson serves in the East India Company when Harry Flashman arrives in India in 1857. Fifteen years earlier, they serve together in Afghanistan. Flashy meets Nicholson en route from Bombay to Jhansi while Nicholson, dressed like a Baluchi robber, is heading to Peshawar. Flashy risks explaining his mission, knowing that no one in India is better in the know than Nicholson and is told that Jhansi is a tough, dangerous region. "Irish instinct" tells Nicholson that the northern frontier is in danger. Although a Christian, Nicholson worries that the missionaries' approach is wrong-headed and will cause trouble. Strength and discipline, Nicholson contends, are needed. When, at Lucknow, Flashy learns that Nicholson has died at Delhi he drinks a brandy to his memory.

Florence Nightingale

A historical figure thrown into the opening chapters for color, Nightingale meets Harry Flashman at Balmoral Castle before he is dispatched to India. Queen Victoria questions her about soldiers and social infections. Flashy finds Nightingale attractive, but conditions are not suitable for taking "a squeeze at her."

Lord Palmerston

A historical figure, "Pam" is the British Prime Minister who sends Harry Flashman on his nearly fatal misadventures in India. Flashy calls Pam both "an impatient old tyrant" and a "decent, kindly old sport at bottom" when they meet late-night at Balmoral. He is "politically unprincipled" and reckless, speaks with a brisk, sharp voice, has bright, shiny eyes in an ancient face, suffers from gout, and has annoyingly mobile false teeth. Palmerston gives Flashy no authority to negotiate or deal with Ran Lakshmibai of Jhansi over her grievances since having her late husband's kingdom annexed, but Flashy is certain that if Pam ever saw and heard the beautiful woman, he would grant her anything.

Gen. Hugh Rose

A historical figure, Rose commands the final conquest of Jhansi. Harry Flashman characterizes Rose as "careful as Campbell but twice as quick." A brisk, bright-eyed, and spry Scotsman, Rose serves as attaché to the French in the Crimea, where he and Flashy first meet. He looks like Gen. George Custer but is a far better soldier. Flashy favors sending a team of commandos in to kidnap Rani Lakshmibai, whom British forces are determine to spare, but Rose wants to use more devious diplomatic means. These require Flashy to don his native disguise again and get into the palace. He is then to convince the Queen, with whom Rose leeringly assumes Flashy has made love, into slipping through a bolt-hole and into British safe-keeping.



Col. James Kane Rowbotham

A former physician turned "complete little bandolero," Rowbotham forms a volunteer corp of "Mosstroopers" after the Mutiny breaks out in Delhi. Commissioned by the civilian Gov. Colvin at Agra, Rowbotham is chasing mutineers past where Flashy and Ilderim Khan are riding, approaching Cawnpore. Red-faced, angry-looking, short and stout, Rowbotham is dressed in a makeshift uniform, and his pale, staring eyes are filled with suppressed wrath. He is determined to eliminate the "vermin" from the Agra-Cawnpore Road. As he has been doing nearly 100 times, Rowbotham orders the slow, painful hanging of captive mutineers after a wrathful prayer to the Christian God of vengeance. Rowbotham and chief lieutenant Cheeseman die during the dash into beleaguered Cawnpore.

William Howard Russell

A historical figure, Russell is a war correspondent for The Times. Harry Flashman first meets him in the Crimea, covering the war (in Flashman at the Charge). When Russell shows up in India, Flashy knows the mutiny is nearly over. At the end of the novel, Russell is assigned to bring Flashy to a ceremony bestowing on him the Victoria Cross. On the way, Russell helps build up Flashy's indignation at being passed over for the V.C.

Sher Khan

A havildar (sergeant) in Rani Lakshmbai's service, Sher Khan spits on Harry Flashman's shadow as Flashy waits to see the Queen for the first time. At the end of the novel, Sher Khan becomes Flashy's jailer in Jhansi and Gwalior, threatening to stab him in the back during the frenzied ride out of Jhansi.

Skene

The British political man at Jhansi whose reports to Lord Palmerston results in Harry Flashman's assignment to India, Skene is an intent, helpful young man, overwhelmed to meet the great Harry Flashman and amazed that Palmerston would have sent him on such a trivial mission. When Skene describes Count Ignatieff, Flashy declares that is the man he has come to kill. Although Skene has never seen or met Rani Lakshmbai, Flashy leaves it to him to arrange an audience for him. Skene dies along with all other British officials and their families during the Mutiny.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert

Historical figures, Queen Victoria is the reigning British monarch at the time of this novel and Prince Albert is her consort. They are shown early in the novel when Harry and



Elspeth Flashman come to visit. Pop-eyed and speaking in a high, singsong voice, "Vicky" takes a liking to Elspeth. Albert, with his heavy German accent, bores Flashy, who nevertheless toadies to him unconscionably. An enthusiastic hunter, Albert insists that Flashy join him and teams him—nearly fatally—with the Russian Count Ignatieff.

Gen. Wheeler

Commander of the garrison at Cawnpore, Wheeler unlike many British commanders takes seriously the threat of violence spreading beyond Meerut, fortifying the barracks and digging entrenchments. Still the site is indefensible against the mutineers. Flashy knows Wheeler in the Sikh War. The tall, wounded Capt. Moore is his adjutant.



Objects/Places

Allahabad

A city in north-central India at the junction of the Jumna and Ganges rivers, Allahabad is the scene of a fighting during the 1857-58 Indian Mutiny. When the beleaguered British defenders of Cawnpore look to escape, they head downriver to Allahabad not knowing it is also under siege. All but five perish, and Harry Flashman, one of the survivors, heads instead to Lucknow.

Balmoral Castle

The large estate in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, purchased by Prince Albert, Balmoral is the setting for Harry Flashman's fateful meetings with Queen Victoria and Lord Palmerston. The Prime Minister summons Flashy secretly to go to Jhansi in central India and investigate rumors that the sepoys (native troops) are about to rebel. Flashy dislikes the "Highland gloom" and piety of Balmoral, which he visits every September during Queen Victoria's reign. Shortly before his departure for London and India, Flashy is horrified to find the Russian Count Ignatieff as a guest at Balmoral. Flashy does his best not to cause an incident, but Ignatieff makes clear he has not given up on his threat in the Crimea years earlier to kill him painfully. Flashy narrowly escapes being shot in the woods during a stag hunt, which Ignatieff would have staged as a tragic accident.

British East India Company

Referred to repeatedly as "John Company," the Company for centuries enjoys a monopoly on trade in India. Its military victory at the Battle of Plassey (23 June 1757) makes enemies of the Mughals, and its upcoming centenary is prophesied to bring the end of British rule (signaled by the distribution of chapatti buns). This comes about in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857-58, in which Harry Flashman is caught up and nearly perishes.

Cawnpore

A straggling city of northern India on the Ganges River, Cawnpore is the site of an infamous massacre during the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58. Despite new fortifications and entrenchments, it is indefensible, and its slim hope of survival is reinforcement from Lucknow, 40 miles north and/or Allahabad, further east. The garrison is commanded by Gen. Wheeler, Harry Flashman's stoic old comrade. By the time Flashy arrives as a refuge from Meerut, half of the original 900 men, women, and children have died, while only half of the surviving men are fit to bear arms.



Choosing the safety of civilians over honor in battle, the beleaguered British garrison accepts the mutineer Nana Sahib's guarantee of safe passage to Allahabad. Flashy uses his reputation as a lever against the more gung-ho officers who favor fighting to the death. When all of the refugees have been loaded on barges, Nana Sahib opens fire on them. Flashy is aboard the one barge that escapes. Those who remain behind are herded into the Bibigarh and massacred when word comes that Gen. Havelock is approaching. When Flashy visits weeks later, the Bibigarh is no longer ankle-deep in blood, because Gen. Neill has forced the pandies to lick the floor clean before hanging them. Having known many of the victims, Flashy approves, as does British public opinion for years, until liberal writers begin claiming that Christians should know better.

Gwalior

The massive Indian fort in which Harry Flashman is imprisoned by Rani Lakshmibai, the fugitive Queen of Jhansi, Gwalior brings Flashy close to insanity and then even closer to death. As some people in solitary confinement recite Bible verses or poetry or prove Euclid's theorems, so Flashy recalls all of the women with whom he has made love; he is amazed at the number. Lakshmibai orders Flashy released as the mutineers flood towards Gwalior in a final retreat. Lakshmibai rides out to fight, is stricken, and dies in Flashy's arms. He later returns to visit her modest tomb.

In between times, Flashy is knocked unconscious trying to flee Gwalior and awakens to find himself tied to the barrel of a British cannon, about to have his innards blown all the way to Calcutta, he is told. This is averted only by his panicky facial expressions, which lead a young lieutenant to remove his gag. Flashy demands that those condemned to die with him in this ghastly manner be released.

Jhansi

A town in north-central India, annexed in 1853 by the Governor-General of India, Jhansi is nominally ruled by the brave Queen Rani Lakshmibai when Harry Flashman arrives on orders of Lord Palmerston to determine whether reports of rebellion are true. Flashy has been warned that his dread archenemy, the Russian Count Ignatieff, has twice visited Jhansi raising insurrection. The local British agent knows nothing of Lakshmibai and Flashy has the impression that she is a skinny, bitter old woman. Lakshmibai turns out to be exceedingly beautiful and determined never to abandon her domain. She breaks her own fast rule of never seeing outsiders face-to-face, and is charmed by the officer who seems to take an interest in her case. Flashy knows the British Crown will not give in, but figures within two weeks he can charm Lakshmibai into bed.

Flashy apparently succeeds in Lakshmibai's charming, secluded two-story pavilion near the city, but while he is recovering is attacked by Thugs and nearly assassinated. Learning they are employed by Ignatieff, Flashy disguises himself as a sepoy and goes to Meerut to enlist in the Bengal Army. Months later, after surviving the horrors of the early days of the Mutiny, Flashy returns to Jhansi to learn that all British officials and



their families have been slaughtered. He goes off on other adventures, but returns again to be sent into the palace by Gen. Rose to talk Lakshmibai into surrendering, to prevent her becoming an Indian Joan of Arc to the British public. Believing he has arranged a deal, Flashy finds himself betrayed and locked away in Gwalior.

Lucknow

A town in north-central India, just annexed by the British in 1856, Lucknow is besieged by sepoy mutineers from June until November of 1857, with the British suffering heavy casualties, including Sir Henry Lawrence. Sir Henry Havelock, augmented by the forces of Sir James Outram reinforce the garrison and are trapped inside, with Harry Flashman recovering from dysentery the whole time. Flashy recovers in time to help team with a crazy Irishman, in guiding Sir Colin Campbell's forces in to relieve the garrison. Thomas Henry Kavanaugh, supposedly an expert in local geography, gets them lost for hours in the woods. After the siege is broken, the British evacuate Lucknow for a year before re-entering.

Meerut

A town in north-central India, Meerut is where the Mutiny of 1857-58 begins, when Hindu and Muslim religious sentiments are outraged by giving soldiers rifle cartridges supposedly greased with beef and pork fat. All but five sepoys—one of whom is Harry Flashman incognito—refuse to touch the cartridges as ordered, are summarily court-martialed and sentenced to ten years of hard labor. Seeing them stripped of insignia, shackled, and marched away, the remaining Sepoy launch a bloody rescue mission that spreads into general revolt. Wounded while trying to comfort a dying British man, Flashy goes bungalow to bungalow, finding scenes of nauseating horror. He hopes against hope that his former comrades in the 3rd N.C. are not responsible. Among the victims are the household of Col. Duff Mason, whose aide Flashy has been. He finds Mrs. Leslie, with whom he has just made love, decapitated and her body stripped and mutilated, with Mrs. MacDowall nearby speared to the wall.

Sepoy Mutiny

Also referred to as the Indian Rebellion or Indian Mutiny, the Sepoy Mutiny subject north central India to two years of bloody terror (1857-58). Towards the end, rebels are driven southward. After Sepoy Mangal Pandy of the 34th Native Infantry is hanged for inducing rebellion, his name is applied by the British to all Indian rebels. Sepoys are native Indian soldiers, who are led to rebel when the British disregard their sensitivity to caste pollution and ill-conceived evangelization by their British officers. The mutiny begins when Muslim and Hindi sepoys refuse to handle ammunition for the new rifle, believing that cartridges are greased with taboo pork or beef fat. When the vast majority of sepoys at Meerut are court martialed for refusing a direct order, the 11th and 20th Native Cavalry turn against their officers and the Mutiny is under way. Harry Flashman



at the time is disguised as a sepoy and faces danger from both sides. Highlights of the Mutiny are massacres of men, women, and children at Joka Bagh near Jhansi and at Bibigarh in Cawnpore.

Major leaders of the Mutiny are Nana Sahib and Tantia Tope, belatedly joined by the latter's cousin, Rana Lakshmibai of Jhansi.

Third native Cavalry, Bengal Army

The military unit in which Harry Flashman, disguised as Makarram Khan, hides from assassins hired by the Russian Count Ignatieff, the 3rd N.C. is headquartered at Meerut in north-central India. The competent troop is made up mostly of northern Muslims with a few high-caste Hindus. In the barracks they complain more than most soldiers, mostly about the failure of their commander, Col. Carmichael-Smith to rein in the chaplain, Reynolds, and by rumors that white soldiers are trying to "break their caste." Flashy tries to reduce pressures by asking what the sahibs would have to gain. Prominent officers in the 3rd N.C. include Bloody Bill Hewitt, the garrison commander; Duff Mason; Archdale Wilson, the artillery commander; Jack Waterfield; Gough; prominent enlisted men include Pir Ali, the hotheaded Ram Mangal, and old Sardul. The Mutiny breaks out when 85 of 90 men refuse to touch supposedly tainted ammunition, are court martialed, and publicly humiliated.

Thugs

Also referred to as "Thugee," the Thugs are at the time of this novel a secret Indian fraternity that assaults innocent travelers. Members include Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus, but all members are dedicated to the Hindu goddess Kali and the murders they commit, usually by strangulation with a special scarf, are considered sacrifices to her. Flashy narrowly avoids falling victim after making love with Rani Lakshmibai at her outdoor pavilion in Jhansi. A pickax, called the "tooth of Kali" is also mentioned. Flashy learns that the Thugs are hired by his archenemy, the Russian Count Ignatieff.



Themes

Sex

Sex provides a continuous undercurrent to Flashman in the Great Game, as narrator Harry Flashman, writing in his eighties, recalls his lovers fondly. Flashy remains physically attracted to his wife, the comely if dim-witted Elspeth, whom he suspects is as unfaithful as he. Summoned to Balmoral Castle by the Prime Minister, Flashy takes time to make love with Elspeth, who is waiting for him naked in bed, waving a feather fan.

In Bombay, Flashy visits a whorehouse, not only to assuage his passions but also because it is the best place to here gossip. He wants to know more about the Queen of Jhansi than he has heard at Balmoral. Official word is that she is old at the time she marries and has become an embittered widow stripped of her fortune and sovereignty. Flashy hears variously that she is skinny and pious and that she is beautiful and earned a sexual reputation as a girl. When he sees her in person, Flashy is overwhelmed and charmed. Her breasts, barely hidden in gauzy tops and bouncing delightfully when she moves, are burnt into his brain for life. Flashy confesses he loves her almost on a par with Elspeth, and put side-by-side, Lakshmibai might come out on top in beauty.

After two weeks of flirting, which grows mutual, Flashy is summoned to Lakshmibai's pavilion, where a voluptuous, lithe, golden-skinned beauty he takes to be Lakshmibai wears him out after three sessions of vigorous sex. She never completely removes her veil. When Flashy awakens, he must immediately flee Thug assassins and goes into hiding for months. Only at the end of the novel does he return to face Lakshmibai, who smothers him with kisses and tears, caresses him until he is ready to burst (his hands are tied, so he is at her mercy), and professes her love. She then betrays him, so he wonders what if anything they have shared is authentic.

Flashy has several other sexual escapades in the novel, most notably with Mrs. Leslie, a plump, pale, red-headed woman living in the household for which he serves as majordomo. He has her eye on her, but, because he is pretending to be a native horse soldier, he must maintain proper behavior towards the mem-sahib (white woman). When Mrs. Leslie requests Flashy's services as escort, he takes her to deserted ruins at Aligaut where erotic friezes depict sexual positions. They visit frequently, but No. 45 alludes them. A second encounter comes as Flashy is lost in the woods with Kavanaugh and borrows five rupees, ostensibly to get directions to British lines, but really to have sex with the "charmingest little brown girl." In the dungeon at Gwalior, fighting to keep his sanity, Flashy catalogs all of his lovers and is somewhat amazed to realize there have been 478, not counting repeat performances.



Brutality

Flashman in the Great Game depicts artillery duels and bloody hand-to-hand combat by professional soldiers as part and parcel of frontier life in India. True brutality is reserved for how Indian mutineers deal with their former officers, British colleagues, and any British woman or child who falls into their hands. Narrator Harry Flashman is living in native disguise for months at the garrison in Meerut before the Mutiny begins, and has come to know many of the victims. He hopes against hope that his former colleagues are not responsible for beheading and mutilating women, tearing soldiers to pieces on the streets, and burning down bungalows on the inhabitants.

At Cawnpore, Flashy helps negotiate a British surrender and safe-conduct down the Ganges. He is one of five survivors of Nana Sahib's treacherous betrayal, and later visits the "Bibigarh," where blood runs ankle-deep as butchers are called in to hack up the women and children—the sepoys refusing to do it. Flashy sees a cleaned-up version, for Gen. Neill has forced the pandies (mutineers) to lick the floor clean before hanging them. Having known many of the victims, Flashy approves, as does British public opinion for years, until liberal writers begin claiming that Christians should know better. Flashy cannot understand why British sins are always painted as blacker. Flashy also hears gruesome accounts of the massacre at Jhansi while he is away. "Jokan Bagh," where the victims beg piteously for their lives, becomes another byword of brutality. Flashy briefly joins a troop of privateers who cheer and gamble at lynchings of captured pandies, wagering over who will survive the longest. They have killed nearly 100 captives.

From Flashy's point of view, the worst acts of brutality come at Jhansi and Gwalior. In the former, Count Ignatieff clamps him onto a wheel in the dungeon and has turned it several notches to strain Flashy's joints to the maximum before Queen Lakshmibai intervenes. Early in the novel, Flashy meets his old nemesis from Flashman at the Charge and reminds him about knouting, the most hideous torture every devised. Later, in Gwalior, Flashy is locked for months in a filthy dungeon where he fights to keep his sanity by listing all of his lovers. Released, he watches his beloved Lakshmibai die on the battlefield, is knocked out, and comes to find himself lashed to the barrel of a cannon, his innards about to be spread all over India. He nearly loses his mind trying to get someone's attention and have the gag removed so he can explain who he is. The relief when this happens is so great that Flashy shows uncharacteristic mercy and insists that his fellow prisoners also be freed.

Religion

In all the Flashman novels, the narrator, Harry Flashman is a religious skeptic. In Flashman in the Great Game, he shows consistent hostility to moralistic Christianity and is oddly tolerant of the same attitudes among Muslims. Flashy condemns those who confuse religion with belief in God and, oddly, claims to be as religious as the next man. Several times Flashy finds himself in straights dangerous enough to call out to



God. On the other hand, he greatly resents being dragged to his knees by pious generals who feel the need to lecture God on how to watch over this sinner. He is pleased to report that several of these should have referred themselves more often to the Maker, for he is alive in his eighties, while they are long mouldering in their graves.

Unlike the officers, Flashy sees a profound religious basis for the native troops' discontent, and agrees with Queen Lakshmibai of Jhansi that Christian proselytism is both evil and foolishly provocative. Flashy relates a stuffy sermon by a chaplain, delivered in English and not so much translated as creatively (and pejoratively) interpreted for non-Christian troops. It is a gem of eisegesis (reading things into the text). British officers, of course, cannot understand why soldiers would disobey direct orders because of superstitions and are above looking for solutions that might avoid confrontation. Agitators keep the troops focuses on how whites want to pollute them and destroy their religion. Both the majority Muslims and the minority Hindus observe strict food taboos (albeit for different animals). Forcing them to handle ammunition reportedly (falsely) to be coated in offending animal fat—and making them open the cartridges with their mouths, making the pollution twice as bad—inevitably causes Mutiny.



Style

Point of View

Author George MacDonald Fraser uses octogenarian Sir Harry Paget Flashman, V.C., as a memorialist, reviewing a long and seemingly illustrious career. Fraser claims to be a technical editor who adds historical and cultural endnotes to help the reader. The present novel is the fifth packet of "Flashman Papers" discovered in 1965 by Fraser. Flashy assumes that readers are familiar with his exploits and his foibles both before and after the current action, and reminds them often of how his reputation as a soldier is at odds with reality. Flashy readily admits to crippling fear and following the impulse to flee danger.

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 for the same reason. Everything is put forth through Flashy's eyes after fermenting in his memory for half a century.

Setting

Flashman in the Great Game spans the years 1856-58. The action opens in London, England, where Harry Flashman is enjoying the height of his fame as the hero not only of Jallalabad in the Afghan War but also of the recent Crimean War. He is summoned to Balmoral in Scotland by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, where Prime Minister Palmerston commissions him to go to India.

The action shifts to India, first to Bombay on the coast and then inland to the Kingdom of Jhansi in the north central region. Flashy then finds himself in the major British garrisons along the Grand Trunk Road: Meerut, Cawnpore, Lucknow, and Gwalior dungeon. All but Gwalior are under siege by "pandies" (mutineers), so scenes of bloody fighting are commonplace.

Flashy offers bare-bones descriptions of the locales through which he passes. He sneaks or races ahead of danger through forests and down the Ganges River, paying little heed to anything but the immediate threat. He frequently finds himself incapacitated or otherwise out of touch and relies on hearsay to fill the reader in on what is happening in the Mutiny and its suppression. He does describe in detail the luxurious palace at Jhansi and its dungeon, where he is tortured on the rack, and the squalid dungeon and parade grounds at Gwalior, where he nearly loses his mind.



Language and Meaning

Flashman in the Great Game is told in British English. The narrator is an octogenarian writing about his life and career early in the 20th century, about events that fall in 1856-58. There is much 19th-century jargon—particularly military—used. This book uses less dialect than many of the Flashman novels, although there are Scottish and Irish characters who spout a bit of brogue. Remarkably little of India's pidgin English is incorporated, but a plethora of technical terms (ranks, honorific, and specific objects) are included, generally being explained the first time encountered in footnotes.

It should be noted that the novel is filled with 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 anachronistic and ring false.

Structure

Flashman in the Great Game is a 1975 novel by George MacDonald Fraser. It is the fifth of the Flashman series. It consists of an "Explanatory Note" by George MacDonald Fraser, who claims to be the editor of the "Flashman Papers" that in 1965 come to light a half-century after their being written early in the 20th century.

The body of the novel consists of 13 unnumbered and untitled chapters. They run in chronological order, following Harry Flashman to 1) Balmoral Castle in Scotland, where he is commissioned to examine the situation in India and narrowly escapes assassination; 2) Bombay, where he briefly hunts for information about Jhansi; 3) Jhansi, where he advises and becomes enamored of Queen Lakshmibai, and narrowly avoids assassination for the second time; 4) Meerut, where he serves in disguise as a common horse soldier and witnesses the outbreak of the Mutiny; 5) back in Jhansi to learn of its sorrowful fate; 6) Cawnpore garrison, which is barely holding on under siege and is treacherously massacred when it accepts supposedly safe passage down the Ganges—Flashy is one of five survivors; 7) Lucknow, another garrison under siege but lighter—Flashy helps guide in the relieving column; 8) Jhansi again, to talk Lakshmibai into surrendering; and 9) Gwalior, where Lakshmibai jails him for several months in a horrid dungeon, releases him only to die in his arms, and where he finds himself tied to the muzzle of a British cannon, about to have his innards scattered across India, because he is caught looking like a pandy.

Forty-nine endnotes explain references in the text, maintaining the fiction that this is a historical memoir rather than a work of historical fiction. Finally, there are two appendices discussing the Indian Mutiny and the Rani of Jhansi. Their value to the volume is minimal.



Quotes

" 'Well enough,' says he. 'I know you will. Who knows—perhaps the signs are false, what? Tokens of mutiny, in a place where Russia's been stirrin' the pot, an' the local ruler's chafin' under our authority—it's happened before, an' it may amount to nothin' in the end. But if the signs are true, make no mistake—' and he gave me his steady stare '—it's the gravest peril our country has faced since Bonaparte. it's no light commission we're placin' in your hands, sir—but they're the safest hands in England, I believe.' "So help me God, it's absolutely what he said; it makes you wonder how these fellows ever get elected. I believe I made some manly sounds, and as usual my sick terror must have been manifesting itself by making me red in the face, which in a fellow of my size is often mistaken for noble resolution. It must have satisfied Pam, anyway, for suddenly he was smiling at me, and sitting back in his chair." Chapter 1, pg. 34.

"It wasn't the gorgeously-cared golden throne, or the splendour of the furniture which outshone even what I'd left, or the unexpected sensation of walking on the shimmering Chinese quilt on the floor. Nor was it the bewildering effect of the mirrored ceiling and walls, with their brilliantly-coloured panels. The astonishing thing was that from the ceiling there hung, by silk ropes, a great cushioned swing, and sitting in it, wafting gently to and fro, was a girl—the only soul in the room. And such a girl—my first impression was of great, dark, almond eyes in a skin the colour of milky coffee, with a long straight nose above a firm red mouth and chin, and hair as black as night that hung in a jeweled tail down her back. She was dressed in a white silk bodice and sari which showed off the dusky satin of her bare arms and midriff, and on her head was a little white jeweled cap from which a single pearl swung on her forehead above the caste-mark." Chapter 3, pg. 74.

" 'Hold on,' says I, sweating. 'They're looking for Colonel Flashman—but if Colonel Flashman becomes, say—a Khyekeen pony-pedlar, or an Abizai who has done his time in the Guides or lancers, how will they find him then? I've done it before, remember? Dammit, I speak Pushtu as well as you do, and Urdu even better—wasn't I an agent with Sekundar Sahib? All I need is a safe place for a season, to lie up and sniff the wind before—m' and I started lying recklessly, for effect 'm—before I steal out again, having made my plans, to break this one-eyed fakir and his rabble of stranglers and loose-wallahs. D'you see?'" Chapter 4, pg. 104.

"While the drum beat slowly, a havildar and two naiks went along the ranks of the prisoners, tearing the buttons off the uniform coats; they had been half cut off beforehand, to make the tearing easy, and soon in front of the long grey line there were little scattered piles of buttons, gleaming dully in the sultry light; the grey coats hung loose, like sacks, each with a dull black face above it.

"The the fettering began. Groups of armourers, each under a British sergeant, went from man to man, fastening the heavy lengths of irons between their ankles; the fast



clanging of the hammers and the drum-beat made the most uncanny noise, clink-clank-boom! Clink-clank-boom! and a thin wailing sounded from beyond the ranks of the native infantry." Chapter 5, pg. 140.

" 'Shabash!' says I. 'That was a bold stroke.' And as he leered and chortled I brought my hand up with the Colt in it, aimed carefully just above his groin, and fired.

"He reared up, and I clutched the bridle to steady the horse as he went flying from the saddle; a second and I had it managed, then I was up and in his place, and he was thrashing on the ground, screaming in agony—with luck he would take days to die. I circled him once, snarling down at him, looked back along the Mall, at those distant black figures like Dante's demons against the burning inferno behind them, and then I was thundering eastward, past the last bungalows, and the sights and sounds of horror were fading behind me." Chapter 6, pg. 154.

"If any of you young fellows ever find yourself in this predicament, where you're dragged over rough, iron-hard ground, with or without a mob of yelling black fiends after you, take a word of advice from me. Keep your head up (screaming helps), and above all try to be dragged on your back—it will cost you a skinned arse, but that's better than having your organs scraped off. Try, too, to arrange for some stout lads to pour rapid fire into your pursuers, and for a hand Gilzai friend to chase after you and slash the stirrup-leather free in the nick of time before your spine falls apart. I was half-conscious and virtually buttockless when Ilderim—God knows, wounded as he was, where he'd got the speed and strength—hauled me up below the entrenchment and pitched me almost bodily over the breastwork. I went over in a shocking tangle, roaring: 'Britannia! Britannia, for Christ's sake! I'm a friend!' and then a chap was catching me and lowering my battered carcass to earth and inquiring:

" 'Will you have nuts or a cigar, sir?'" Chapter 7, pg. 185.

"He was still fearful of treachery, you see. I was not—you may think I was deluding myself, but the fact was I couldn't see that the Nana had anything to gain by playing us false. I state that honestly now, and I've explained the details of the Cawnpore surrender because it was a momentous thing, not only in the Mutiny, but in Indian history. I had spoken—and, as I've said, I believe mine was the decisive voice—for surrender, because I saw it as the only way to save my skin. But apart from that vital consideration, I still believe that surrender was right, by every canon of soldiering and common sense. Call me a fool if you like, and shake your heads in the light of history—nothing could have been worse than fighting on in that doomed entrenchment." Chapter 9, pgs. 212-213.

" 'Are you there, Flash?' says ye, in a hoarse whisper you could have heard in Delhi. 'We'll have to be hellish quiet, ye know. Oi think there's pandies up the bank!'

"Since we could see their picquets round the camp-fires not fifty yards away, it was a reasonable conclusion, and we hadn't stoned twenty yards along the riverside when



someone hailed us. I shouted back, and our challenger remarked that it was cold, at which the oaf Kavanaugh petrified me by suddenly bawling out: 'Han, bhai, bahut tunder!' like some greenhorn reciting from a Hindi primer. I hustled him quickly away, took him by the neck, and hissed:

"Will you keep your damned gob shut, you great murphy?"

"He apologised in a nervous whisper, and muttered something about Queen and Country; his eye was glittering feverishly. 'Oi'll be more discreet, Flash,' says he, and so we went on, with me answering another couple of challenges before we reached the bridge, and crossed safely over into Lucknow town." Chapter 10, pg. 245.

"There are times when you know it absolutely ain't worth struggling any longer. First Palmerston, then Outram, and now Rose—and they were only the most recent in a long line of enthusiastic madmen who at one time or another had declared that I was just the chap they were looking for to undertake some ghastly adventure. I made one attempt at a feeble excuse by pointing out that I didn't have a beard any longer; Rose brushed it aside as of no importance, poured me another brandy, and began to elaborate his plan." Chapter 12, pg. 266.

"For myself, I can only say I had no earthly reason to suppose her false. After all, our last previous meeting had been that monumental roll in her pavilion, which had left me with the impression that she wasn't entirely indifferent to me. Secondly, her acceptance of Rose's proposal seemed natural and sensible. Thirdly, I'll admit to being enthralled by her, and fourthly, having just finished a spell on the rack I was perhaps thinking less clearly than usual. Finally, m'lud, if you'd been confronted by Lakshmibai, with that beautiful dusky face looking pleadingly up at you, and those tits quivering under your nose, I submit that you might have been taken in yourself, and glad of it." Chapter 12, pg. 296.

"I was writhing frenziedly in my bonds, almost fainting with the agony of my wounded arm, which was gashed and bleeding, flinging my head from side to side as I tried to spit out that horrible gag, almost bursting internally in my effort to make some sound, any sound, that would make him understand the ghastly mistake they'd made. He stood, grinning stupidly, and Bert sauntered up, knocking his pipe out on the gun.

"'Matter? Wot the 'ell d'yer think's the matter, you duffer? 'E don't want 'is guts blew all the way to Calcutta—that's wot's the matter! Gawd, 'e'll kill 'isself wiv apple-plexy by the look of 'im.'

"'Funny, though, ain't it?' says the first. 'An' look at the rest of 'em—jes' waiting there, an' not even a squeak from 'em, as if they didn't care. Pathetic, ain't it?'

"'That's their religion,' pronounced Bert. 'They fink they're goin' to 'eaven—they fink they're goin' to get 'arf-a-dozen rum bints apiece, an' bull 'em till Judgement Day. Fact.'

"'Go on! They don't look all that bleedin' pleased, then, do they.'

"They turned away, and I flopped over the gun, near to suffocation and with my heart ready to burst for misery and fear." Chapter 12, pg. 308.



"I listened to all this in a daze, and then Canning was passing something to Campbell, and he was coming up to me, glowering under his brows, and harrumphing.

" 'It is at my perr-sonal request,' growls he, 'that I have been purr-meeted tae bestow a disteenction that should rightly have come from Her Majesty's ain—own—gracious hands.'

"He reached up, and I felt a sudden keen pain in my left tit as he stuck a pin in it—i gasped and looked down, and there it was, on its ribbon, the shabby-looking little bronze cross against my jacket; at first I didn't even recognize it, and then Lady Canning was leading the clapping, and Campbell was pumping my right hand and staring at me with his brows down.

" 'The Order o' the Victoria Cross,' says he, and then he added, 'Flashman...', but there he stopped and shook his head. 'Aye,' says he, and grinned at me—and God knows he didn't often grin, that one, and went on shaking his head and my hand, and the clapping and laughter rang in my ears." Chapter 13, pgs. 318-319.

Topics for Discussion

Does Flashy actually make love with Lakshmibai? What is the evidence for and against it happening?

How does counterpoising Tom Brown's Schooldays with Flashy's decoration and knighthood serve to develop his character? Does it cast light on any particular events earlier in the novel?

How does Flashy use humor in his narratives? What is your favorite example? Describe its effect in context.

How does Lakshmibai critique the British imperial/colonial administration? How objective or subjective is she? What is Flashy's response?

How does Count Ignatieff's shadowy presence affect the novel? Is he sufficiently developed as a character in this work that the reader need not have read Flashy at the Charge? Note in your answer whether or not you have read that work.

How does Mrs. Leslie contribute to the novel?

How does Florence Nightingale contribute to the novel?