

Flashman & the Angel of the Lord: From the Flashman Papers, 1858-59 Study Guide

Flashman & the Angel of the Lord: From the Flashman Papers, 1858-59 by George MacDonald Fraser

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Plot Summary

Flashman & the Angel of the Lord by George MacDonald Fraser follows the adventures of Sir Harry Flashman as he serves against his will as John Brown's military advisor for the assault on Harper's Ferry.

At age 89, Sir Harry Flashman tells about his misadventures after completing service in India, when he wants only to return home to England and be knighted. Indiscretions with two women, however, bring him back to the U.S., where warrants remain for him from ten years earlier under a variety of aliases, particularly Beauchamp Millward Comber. Flashy must reach the British consulate in Washington, but is seized by two sets of fanatics who want him to serve as John Brown's military advisor—one, Crixus and the Underground Railroad, wanting Brown to succeed; the other, Atropos and Kuklos, wanting Brown to fail. Before Flashy can join Brown, he is blackmailed into cooperating with a third interested party—the U.S. Government. Mr. Messervy wants Flashy to thwart the assault on Harper's Ferry or, failing that, to assassinate Brown before he can stand trial.

Doubting that Brown is organized enough to execute a raid and profit from it, Flashy looks only to escape, but is thwarted by the Kuklos' Joe Simmons, his constant shadow. Flashy produces ideal military plans to seize the Ferry without bloodshed and escape swiftly to the hills with the munitions. The plan works brilliantly but Brown then stops leading and all goes bad. The drunken townspeople turn hostile and military forces surround the Ferry. Flashy finds refuge with an enormous, sexually insatiable black woman, Hannah Popplewell, and, when discovered, flees to the engine house, where the final battle is at hand. When Joe, feeling betrayed, is about to shoot Brown, Flashy kills Joe. The military makes short work of the invasion, captures Brown, and turns over Flashy to Messervy, who wants him swiftly returned to England. He asks why Flashy fails in his mission but is philosophical about what lies ahead. Flashy admires Brown's bravery and dignity at the end.

Flashy is surprised to meet Hannah on the train and, more so, to learn that she is a Kuklos agent. She demands to know what has happened to Joe. Since Flashy has been better to her than any man, Hannah lets him slip off the train to evade a trap in Baltimore. Flashy thus misses the ship home and sees England only after adventures to be described in the next packet.



To pg. 37

To pg. 37 Summary

Aged Harry Flashman's great grandchildren ask him, as the song goes, about John Brown's body. Flashy feels that American slavery would have died out naturally, but Brown plays his part in ending it—as did he. While legend calls Brown the Angel of the Lord, Flashy finds him an ordinary, kindly chap with bright, fierce eyes who kills many before they meet. Walking back to the house, Flashy teaches the children alternate verses to the song. Strolling into tea filthy from play, they are banished. Flashy contemplates how Brown certainly is a saint as the poets have declared, but also a brute as biographers have shown. Flashy helps Brown make history by not shooting him in the back.

The second chapter finds Flashy contemplating perishing at cursed Harper's Ferry. He is callous towards slavery when it does not affect him, as it so often has. The Ferry is the most unlikely of his misadventures and, like most, it begins with a woman. In Calcutta in 1858, awaiting a mail ship home, Flashy cannot resist the charms of Lady Plunkett. They are caught in the act and her husband scarcely believes Flashy's explanation. To keep his reputation from being tarnished, Flashy hastily embarks for Cape Town. There he hears about whites having to unite against native unrest. Gov. Grey invites Flashy to the Castle, hoping to gain his support with Lord Palmerston to prevent his recall. Among the guests is a beautiful young woman who flirts with Flashy and, to his horror, introduces her father: John Charity Spring.

To pg. 37 Analysis

The first unnumbered chapter pictures 91-year-old Flashy watching his great grandchildren outdoors while their elders socialize in the house. Hearing a recording of "John Brown's Body," the young ones get Flashy to talk a bit about his adventures with the abolitionist. The various grandchildren are carefully differentiated by lisps and attitudes of piety. Some accost him on using swear words and ask about how one ought to refer to black people. As he talks, Flashy wanders off in his mind to Harper's Ferry and very succinctly summarizes how the story will play out. He establishes his ambivalence towards the institution of slavery and the necessity of Brown's mission. He concludes that Brown, as he invariably refers to him, is a combination of saint and brigand, as 19th-century poetry and early 20th-century biography contend. The passages are uncharacteristically warm and charming, as is much of the book. Flashy takes gingerbread up to the banished young ones and puts them to sleep, telling an expurgated version of his adventures. He even contends that Brown will survive the Last Judgment, for if God did otherwise there would be a popular revolt, thereby tying in the book's major theme of righteous revolution.



The second unnumbered chapter continues setting up the story. Flashy contemplates how he would be remembered had he fallen at Harper's Ferry during the doomed raid. He recalls other life-threatening situations he has been in, offering a brilliant, succinct summary of the previous novels in the series. First-time readers can assume that he has been through a lot, all around the world, while fans will savor the tantalizing tidbits. As with most of his misadventures, Flashy's path to the Ferry begins with his falling for a woman. He has been far from celibate in India but yearns for golden hair and white flesh like his dear wife's. The lord who catches him with his wife is unlikely to believe the story about Flashy being a physician performing a house call; Flashy dares not stick around to be identified, for it could cost him his knighthood when he gets home. Preserving this provides constant motivation throughout the novel.

There follows a long but edifying aside on the history of the Boers (Dutch) and British in southern Africa. This sets up an invitation to the Castle by Gov. Grey, who needs the famous hero's influence in London to retain his job. He is certain that he alone can save and civilize Africa. Flashy, who has earlier visited Africa as an unwilling slaver, shows little interest and wants to return England to avoid Lord Palmerston, who had sent him undercover to India and nearly gotten him killed. A second beautiful woman presents herself: none other than the daughter of his nemesis in the slave trade ten years earlier. As the chapter ends dramatically, focused on John Charity Spring's fiery eyes, readers of earlier novels can nearly guess what fate awaits Flashy and how it may come about.



Pgs. 38-81

Pgs. 38-81 Summary

In the third chapter, Spring takes Flashy out on the balcony to warn him ominously to stay away from his daughter Miranda until he sails for England. Grey fills Flashy in on Spring's prosperity and power. Flashy has seen the deadly side of Spring often enough to be put off, but would like some day to taunt him from afar about polluting his daughter, and cannot resist her written invitation to a picnic while father is far away. Miranda begins flirting in the garden and leads him to the yacht, where she amazes him with her sexual prowess. She begs him not to go topside for a refreshing swim until after dinner and a hand of cards. She identifies feet on the deck above as her father's—at last.

Beginning the fourth chapter, Spring has every escape covered. Miranda admits that Flashy had, of course, sought to kiss her but swears on the Bible that he failed. Spring turns jovial, pouring brandy and offering cigars, and tells of killing a would-be seducer of Miranda. Flashy realizes that she is in on trapping him for his part in Spring's being kidnapped in New Orleans ten years before. Spring rages about the indignity of being an Oxford don scrubbing toilets on the voyage and reminds Flashy that he has sneaked aboard without anyone seeing him. Miranda has planned this to help him get revenge, complete with drugging Flashy's drink and arranging to ship him to Baltimore and send word to the authorities ashore that the infamous Beauchamp Milward Comber has returned. As he passes out, Flashy panics at the thought of facing U.S. justice.

In the fifth chapter, Flashy cannot bribe Spring's carefully-chosen skipper to take him anywhere but Maryland. The competent mate Fitzgibbon supervises Flashy's menial assignments, which are unpleasant but he has endured much worse. By comparison, Spring was psychologically unable to accept his sufferings. Flashy's American misadventures include botching a job running a prominent slave north to Canada, being an overseer on a plantation, being sold into slavery for having sex with the master's wife, and perjuring himself to the U.S. Navy. He is still wanted for capital crimes under several names up and down the Mississippi River. Baltimore is likely to be relatively safe and Washington, DC, is nearby, where he can appeal to the British consul. Thus, Spring's scheme is likely to fail and, once he is home, Flashy will write him to brag about corrupting Miranda.

Flashy arrives weeks later, expecting to be met by all of his victims. Instead, he is dumped, drugged, in a disgusting waterfront whorehouse. Groggy, he hurries away, lest he be shanghaied again and makes his way, looking like a bum and getting \$4 in hand-outs in an hour. Flashy turns into a Catholic Church, where affable Fr. Rafferty quickly sees through his cover story, but lends him money to get to the British consulate in Washington. Rafferty advises him to go straight to Willard's Hotel, being careful not to get mugged, and thence go to the consulate. Flashy's train pulls in after dark. As he makes his way through the mud, he is surrounded and greeted as Comber.



Pgs. 38-81 Analysis

The third chapter shows Flashy and Spring posturing manfully on the balcony, recalling the events that have transpired between them. Spring warns Flashy that his life depends on avoiding Miranda until he sails for England. This, of course, sounds like a challenge to Flashy and, when Miranda assures him that her father has returned home far away, he accepts her invitation to a picnic. He has been with enough women to recognize that Miranda wants sex. They flirt and chat about how Spring cramps the randy girl's style, and then go to the family yacht, where the 17-year-old does things to Flashy that no professional prostitute has equaled. This gives him the opportunity to recall a long series of lovers around the world, with choice hints as to their specialties. Flashy has fewer lovers in this novel than others, but at each event he savors such memories.

Note Miranda's nervousness when Flashy announces that he wants to go topside for a quick swim. It seems out of character and suggests something might be awry. She has painted a convincing picture of frustration at her father's restrictions on her love life, so Flashy is caught up in lunch and cards. Hearing footsteps overhead, he figures that the butler has returned. Miranda, however, dramatically announces that it is papa, at last.

The fourth chapter reveals that Spring has told his entire story to his daughter and she has cooperated in constructing the perfect revenge. Flashy is drugged as Spring had been by Flashy's bigamist fiancé in New Orleans and is about to be shipped to Baltimore. Spring notes that he is sending him there rather than New Orleans, where his fate would have been met sooner, but has arranged for the crossing to be as humiliating as his own and will deliver him penniless and known to the local authorities. Flashy under the pseudonym Beauchamp Milward Comber is wanted by the U.S. Navy and various state officials for capital crimes, some of which he has committed and others of which he is merely implicated. Henceforth throughout the novel he refers to himself in the third person as Flashy but retains the Comber persona with others until he meets up with a U.S. government official who in Scotland had once known him as Flashman.

Spring is one of George MacDonald Fraser's more intriguing characters, a heartless slave trader who spouts Latin sayings and sneers at Flashy's failure to master the classics. Flashy's emotions shift constantly as he realizes that he cannot escape, cannot believe that Miranda goes so far as to swear on the Bible that she is still chaste—after having performed sexual acts that even prostitutes do not know (Flashy is too gentlemanly to specify)—and then slowly realizing that she is in on the plot. Women are often the cause of Flashy's downfall, but rarely is it effected so smoothly. Miranda flirts with Flashy silently as she leaves the cabin.

The fifth chapter says little about the Atlantic crossing, other than that Flashy tries repeatedly to bribe the captain into taking him anywhere but Baltimore, where Spring wants him, and that Flashy realizes that he is suffering from the hardships of being a common sailor less than Spring had, with his excessively high opinion of himself. Flashy is more vindictive than usual, planning, if he escapes the fate that Spring has set for



him, to write him from England to goad him with the details of his supposedly chaste daughter's behavior. As he often does, Flashy shares with the reader highlights of earlier dire straights that seem analogous.

When the ship reaches Baltimore, Flashy imagines being caught and tried by all of the people he has wronged in America ten years earlier. As it turns out, he is dumped in a filthy whorehouse where the greatest dangers are catching a disease and being forcibly recruited for a long whaling voyage. He ducks out in his ragged clothing, which earns him unrequested donations as a bum. He reflects on how lucrative this could be if he had time to spare. Flashy is anxious to get to the British consulate and clear things up. He has no money and no identity papers.

A cagey Irish priest becomes Flashy's deliverance. Flashy figures that any Catholic church in the U.S. will be full of Irish, who are practically English in his mind. He uses the identity of a comrade who has died in Asia, but the priest sees through the cover story when Flashy elaborates too much. Nevertheless, Fr. Rafferty helps the unfortunate young man, which touches Flashy so much that he drops his usual animosity towards religion. He considers the priest a shoe-in for heaven and later even repays the loan. It is an unusually tender passage for Flashy. The priest's advice includes a warning to be wary of mugging in Washington, DC, Flashy's next destination. The chapter ends dramatically with Flashy being surrounded and addressed by name—as Comber. The implication is that he is in the hands of the U.S. Navy, but this is soon disproved.



Pgs. 82-116

Pgs. 82-116 Summary

As the sixth chapter opens, one of the three abductors reminds Flashy how they grabbed him in New Orleans ten years before and took him to Crixus, the boss of the Underground Railroad. The scene is repeated and the frail old man is in rapture to welcome Flashy back, victorious, reminding him that the Railroad has eyes and ears everywhere. Learning of his chance arrival, they determine to keep Flashy safe. Flashy senses that Crixus has something in mind for him even before Crixus begins talking about the gathering storm, the powder keg that will destroy hated slavery. God has sent the man to light the fearful fire: John Brown.

Flashy knows nothing about the man and listens to Crixus' recounting the deeds of "Old Ossawotomie, the Angel of the Lord" (pg. 89), a prophet and warrior. Crixus goes on at length detailing how Brown has for 20 years planned a great crusade, arming rebellious slaves and uniting them with Northern sympathizers. He describes in ecstatic tones how battles in Kansas have lit the torch and, more recently, how Brown has inspired abolitionists by liberating Missouri slaves to Canada. A considerable bounty is on Brown's head, but no one dares touch him. He spends his time soliciting funds for arms in the North and inspiring supporters. His chief donors, a "Secret Six" dare not let their support become known.

Brown's greatest need is to replace his military advisor, Huger Forbes, a Briton, having left his side and revealed his plans to select senators. As Moses needs Joshua at his right side, so Brown needs a keen military mind and strong arm. Crixus is convinced that God has sent Flashy to fill this role. Flashy's attempts to convince the zealot that he must first talk with the consulate fall on deaf ears, and there is too much danger on the streets for him to strike out on his own. He keeps in character as Comber, issuing hallelujahs where appropriate, but considering both men to be insane.

The seventh chapter begins with Flashy feigning dismay at not being able to take part in so great an enterprise unless he is released from active duty. Angry, Crixus insists that Flashy meet Brown in Boston and insists that Flashy remain safe with him that night. Rejecting the idea of revealing his true identity, Flashy accepts. Moody shows him to his upstairs room and gives him a clean shirt from Joe Simmons'. Flashy is surprised that, as tired as he is, he cannot sleep, but thinks about how war over slavery is inevitable, given the regional differences North and South and the sanctimony about liberty in the U.S. Constitution. There are folks on both sides willing to compromise in order to preserve unity, but on the whole the North is strengthening its opposition to slavery and the South is digging in its heels. Had Americans in 1776 not insisted on freedom, slavery would have been outlawed here as in England by the Crown and there would be no need for war. Flashy recalls discussing this with ever-pragmatic Lincoln after the war.



Flashy is recalling his earlier encounter with Lincoln when Joe sneaks in, removes the window bar, and lowers Flashy to the street, telling him to catch a cab to wherever he wants. His release makes no sense, but Flashy flees. He hails the first cab he sees and is invited inside by a dainty, stylish woman whom he assumes is a prostitute. After two months at sea, he goes to her place happily. They enter a hotel by a side way and a salon as ornate as a Damascus brothel. After wildly slaking his passion, Flashy falls asleep and, awakening alone, is preparing to sneak out when Joe arrives. Flashy panics, hearing him argue with the woman that he cannot be Tom Arnold, and realizes that she is Annette Mandeville, whom he had seduced while serving as her husband's slave driver. Before he can do anything, three well-dressed men enter, wearing white hoods over their heads. They know enough about Flashy in all his aliases to get him to do as they wish: to enlist with Brown

Pgs. 82-116 Analysis

The sixth chapter reveals that Flashy's abductors are the same ones who seize him in a New Orleans alley ten years earlier and conduct him, blindfolded, to the secret home of the head of the Underground Railroad. Crixus is frailer than ever but burns as brightly on the subject of ending slavery and presses Flashy into service delivering an important slave to Canada. Flashy botches that assignment, but the man gets through and Crixus knows nothing about Flashy's treachery, saving his skin. Flashy had been known as Comber, an intrepid British undercover agent scouting out the slave trade from Africa, and must currently stay in character, responding to Crixus' rants as Comber would. He describes his recent service to the British Crown in Russia and Asia, trying to point up the abolitionist aspects even when these are absent. Note Crixus' claim that the Railroad has eyes and ears everywhere in Washington and beyond. They learn of Comber's arrival in Baltimore immediately and swing into action to rescue/recruit him before anyone else might. The complex weave of interested parties will be revealed going forward, but at this point is not even hinted.

Most of the chapter is given over to Crixus' ecstatic description of the mission of John Brown, a man completely unknown to Flashy. Much biographical and historical information is squeezed into a few pages, augmented by Fraser's dense endnotes. Flashy agrees with much of what Crixus says, but warns his readers that both men are crazy. Rather than let readers be misled, he quotes a bit of Crixus' oration and then adds in square brackets his own direct impressions of Brown while they serve together. Flashy is shocked to hear that Crixus is Brown's recruiter for a new military adviser and called by God to serve as Joshua to Brown's Moses. Going forward, select details from the Book of Joshua are brought out to develop the analogy. Flashy will, of course, most identify with the sending of spies among prostitutes. For a freethinker, Flashy always exhibits a fair knowledge of the Bible.

The seventh chapter shows Flashy trying to talk his way out of the situation, claiming duty to the Crown cannot be abandoned for even the most noble of crusades. This argument eventually backs him into the corner, for refusing to prevent a bloody civil war



would not be pleasing to Queen Victoria and could cost him his knighthood. At this point, Flashy is simply grasping at straws.

Flashy is put up for the night upstairs and, unable to sleep, muses about how the oncoming Civil War over slavery would have been averted by remaining part of the British Empire in 1776. Flashy finds the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution foolishly idealistic and detailed. Writing as an old man, he recalls discussing this with President Abraham Lincoln at the close of the war, suggesting that he would have made an excellent Prime Minister under Queen Victoria. He is impressed by Lincoln's honest answer to why it is legitimate to secede from the Empire in 1776 but not from the Union in 1859. Lincoln says that the former succeeded, while the latter did not. It is pure pragmatism. Flashy recalls his encounter with a young Congressman Lincoln a decade earlier and how Lincoln had seen through his alibis.

The novel takes a dramatic turn when one of Crixus' followers sets Flashy free and then shows up where Flashy lands, seemingly as a result of following his long-neglected lust. A cab happens by the deserted lane in which Flashy finds himself, so he cannot let it go by. It is occupied by a prostitute who takes a fancy to Flashy and he goes home with her. He reminds the reader of a number of his past encounters as he talks enthusiastically of playing with the tiny woman. He is ready to sneak out on her (being penniless) when Joe arrives. The woman insists that Flashy is not Comber but Tom Arnold, an alias he used in Mississippi. Suddenly he recognizes the woman: Annette Mandeville, whose seduction had nearly gotten him sent for life to a slave plantation. Joe is clearly playing someone against Crixus, his erstwhile boss. As if this were not drama enough, some well-dressed men, one in a military uniform, enter, their heads concealed in white hoods.



Pgs. 117-168

Pgs. 117-168 Summary

As the eighth chapter opens, Flashy faces the hooded men, with Joe holding a gun to his side. He recalls a poster about the Spanish Inquisition with which his childhood nurse would frighten him into behaving. An overweight figure in a broadcloth suit apologizes in a syrupy Southern accent. Flashy's anger is silenced by the colonel, Clotho, who in turn is told to relax. The three and vengeful Annette try to determine Flashy's true identity but decide that whoever he is, he will do for their purposes.

Fat, ugly Atropos removes his hood, claiming not to have a public image to preserve. He explains that they are members of Kuklos, Greek for "circle," a clandestine Southern organization devoted to preserving slavery. Each has adopted a name from the ancient Parcae (Fates): Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos. Joe is Kuklos' secret agent in the Railroad, and the organization has as good an information-gathering apparatus as the Railroad. They know every detail of Flashy's earlier crimes and are ready to turn him over to authorities if he fails to cooperate. They disbelieve his claims to care nothing about slavery and he dares not reveal his true identity, for they would clearly kill him, were he no longer useful. Flashy can only play along.

Atropos explains that after the 1860 election, the U.S. will inevitably divide, violently or not. Since a raid by Brown on Virginia will unify the South and split the North, one must occur. Flashy tries to stay in Comber's character, asking pointed questions. Kuklos does not believe that Brown can start a slave rebellion. The U.S. government cannot risk arresting Brown for fear of popular sentiment. Brown needs a trained military advisor and Flashy has proven his ability. Flashy wishes that he looked less heroic. Crixus has men searching Washington for Flashy and will be pleased when, in two days, Joe telegraphs from New York, saying that he has found Flashy and is taking him to Brown in Boston. Having been in such mixed-up situations often, Flashy submits—too easily for Atropos' taste, who warns that he will be surrounded by deadly secret agents at all times, in addition to Joe and Annette, his supposed wife. To unbalance crafty Atropos, Flashy demands \$10,000 to make him more reliable, before heading off to bed.

The ninth chapter finds Flashy and Annette in a dining room, talking about the past and the present danger that he downplays. Flashy warns her to stay in character as a honeymooning bride. Earlier, Atropos had laid out new clothing and a voucher for \$5,000, once Brown's raid inflames the nation. They are to take a night train to New York and continue to the Concord, MA, home of Franklin B. Sanborn, abolitionist, to enlist in Brown's service. Annette is in command during the trip but is to accommodate Flashy. The Kuklos will be watching everywhere and any disloyalty will result in death.

When Atropos leaves, Annette reveals that they are married and he enjoys watching her have sex with other men. He is rich, the brain (but not the head), of Kuklos, and not crazy. He gets what he orders and does what he promises. Resigned to his fate, Flashy



drinks heavily, anticipating more sex with this ferret-tempered woman and listening to talk at an adjoining table about the presidential ambitions of Sen. Seward and others. Annette breaks his reverie, saying that they must head to the station and warning against attracting attention. Filled with devilment, Flashy lets out a Lakota war-whoop, which helps him identify Kuklos' agents, they being the only people in the dining room who avoid looking at him. Annette is livid.

Flashy does not expect the comfort of a luxury overnight train. He and Annette have adjoining cabins, while Joe rests against Flashy's door. Flashy engages him in conversation about why he remains a slave. Joe enjoys prestige and comforts that he would lack as a "black trash" (pg. 144) freeman. These include sex with Annette, which Joe particularly likes because she hates it. Flashy argues that as smart as he is, he could educate and better himself, but Joe says that only being white would improve his lot. He reveals that he had studied alongside Atropos and is now his trusted best friend. He only feigns being a dumb field hand. Flashy earns a dirty look from Joe when he goes to Annette's cabin, specifically to have sex. She is wanton during it but silent between rounds. Flashy asks why with his education Joe does not run to freedom. Flashy waits for her fury when he alludes to Joe's having sex with her and is surprised when she weeps and asks to be comforted. Flashy holds off sex until she is asleep.

The tenth chapter follows the travelers through New York City, notable only for its fashionable, liberated women, who assume that men, even strangers, exist to serve them. As a result of the Kuklos, Flashy dares not leave the Astor Hotel once moved in. Annette reverts to being a shrew, arguing with Joe about dealing with Flashy until Crixus' telegram arrives. She dresses to go out on business and demands that Flashy stay with her and behave naturally. Each is flirted with on public transportation by members of the opposite sex before they reach an "enameling studio" (pg. 158) that caters to the beauty of women's face, neck, shoulders, and breasts. Annette is terse with the pushy sales lady, demanding to see Mme. Celeste. Flashy informs her that they have given one Kuklos guard the slip.

Suddenly there is a commotion at the door and Annette orders Flashy to run for his life. He blunders into a room full of bare-chested women undergoing treatments before racing to a studio gallery, where Annette stops, draws a derringer, and shoots twice at their pursuers. Flashy uses Annette as a shield as shots ring out from behind them, hitting two. The others surrender and are dragged off to jail. Annette passes out. The lead rescuer is a brisk, bearded Scotsman, Alan Pinkerton. Flashy is dazed, seeing these Kuklos men trapped by Annette and learning as he sips Pinkerton's whiskey that Annette is a government agent and Atropos is Count Charles La Force. Pinkerton assures Flashy that they have no warrants on Comber, as he asks for the full story. Flashy names his various aliases and insists that he is Harry Flashman. Pinkerton asks a series of questions about Flashy's wife, their wedding, and his part in putting down the Chartist riot before revealing that he had been the ringleader. He knows of Flashy's brilliant military career since and can vouch for him with the British consulate—but first needs him to complete a mission to save the nation. This involves Comber enlisting with Brown, but for different reasons than those given by Crixus and Atropos.



Pgs. 117-168 Analysis

The eighth chapter reveals who Flashy's latest captors are: members of a secret Southern organization devoted to preserving slavery by disuniting the North and South. Like Crixus, they see Brown as a central figure, but for opposite reasons: if he raids Harper's Ferry, ostensibly to raise a slave rebellion, Southerners will unite to preserve their way of life, while Northerners will divide ideologically. Like Crixus, Atropos sees Flashy as a perfect advisor for Brown.

Fraser is careful to avoid the anachronism of identifying the Kuklos' hoods with those of the Ku Klux Klan, something which would be natural for a modern reader. Instead, he has Flashy recall a lurid poster about the Spanish Inquisition, which his childhood nurse uses to frighten him into behaving. This adds to the atmosphere of terror that surrounds the first part of the meeting. Fraser adds a footnote about the Kuklos and postwar rise of the KKK. The aliases adopted by the members and Atropos' preference for the imagery of Eumenides over the Parcae is also explained in an endnote. Flashy is reminded of Spring's classical allusions, which serves to unify this portion of the book with earlier materials and tie Flashy back to his school days.

Much of the chapter is devoted to reviewing Flashy's misadventures under numerous aliases from New Orleans northward. There are sufficient warrants out to hang or enslave him and Flashy knows from experience that men like this will not hesitate to turn him in. Many of Flashy's experiences of imprisonment and forced missions are also reviewed, showing that he expects to escape as soon as the opportunity arises. Atropos has also anticipated this and warns that he will always be surrounded by Kuklos agents ordered to kill him instantly if he tries. Still, Flashy never loses hope.

Flashy will be sent to New York as the husband of vicious Annette, tended by their enormous slave, Joe, who during the interview holds a gun to Flashy's ribs. Atropos reveals that Joe is his boyhood friend serving as an undercover agent in Crixus organization. The full degree to which these groups—and the U.S. Government—engage in cloak-and-dagger activities is not fully disclosed until the end of the novel, but there is a constant—and entertaining—tension throughout. At this point, Annette is to Flashy merely an ex-lover, of interest only in bed and otherwise obnoxious. The reader senses the discomfort that traveling to Boston as her husband will hold for Flashy. Greater shocks about Annette remain as yet undisclosed.

The ninth chapter provides surprising, even shocking, detail on Flashy's new associates. Atropos, for whose obesity and ugliness Flashy finds no end of figures of speech, is married to Annette and gets pleasure from watching her have sex with other men, including Joe. Flashy recalls how she had hated blacks down south and has fun teasing her about this, hitting an unexpected tender spot. He also enjoys taunting Joe with his own free access to Annette after a long discussion of why Joe prefers to remain a privileged slave. The bottom line is that unless he could become white, freedom would avail him nothing. He would live in a prejudiced society—precisely the situation in the postwar South. Flashy sees through Joe's field hand English and gets him to recall an



obscure detail of British history to make him admit the ploy. Note how Flashy effects a Southern accent as he toys with Joe. He fails to mention it in this novel, but one of Flashy's talents is linguistics. Earlier he comments for the reader on how Atropos' accent shifts as he grows serious.

Flashy also gives space to musing about New Yorkers, particularly the unruly children. His observations about women, liberated by European standards, continue in the coming chapters. He overhears a political discussion about the upcoming 1860 election and for the first time hears the name of Sen. Seward, whom he will soon meet in person. The Lakota war-whoop that Flashy gives to flush out the Kuklos spies is an anachronism, as his adventures in the American wild West post-date the Civil War.

In the tenth chapter Flashy continues his admittedly sketchy impressions of New York City, saying that its buildings are no taller than Glasgow's and there need be no cabs for sightseeing because there are no sights to see. He is most impressed by how liberated the women are and postulates that this stems from how scarce they had been in the early days. He is not fully pleased by their voices, however, and believes that schoolgirls grow up to fast.

Annette leads Flashy into a plush "enameling studio" offering various beauty treatments. He is instantly disoriented and mesmerized. The drama builds too quickly for Flashy to savor "Mammarial Balm," "Bosom Balloons," and "Eternal Youth Pumped Cups" (pg. 158), but he would clearly have liked to. Instead, he runs for his life too fast even to enjoy being a peeping Tom. A brief endnote confirms that such products and services do exist circa 1859.

After a shoot-out with Kuklos toughs, Flash meets the soon-to-be-famous Allan Pinkerton, a detective and later head of the secret service. He speaks with the Scottish accent of Flashy's father-in-law and soon reveals that he knows the family and had been on the opposite side in a civil dispute from Flashy. This puts him in a position to vouch for Flashy's true identity—since he is dropped in Maryland without papers and has never gone about in America except under aliases. Pinkerton's rapid-fire questioning about Flashy's past disarms him and is done charmingly. Pinkerton further surprises Flashy by revealing that Annette is a U.S. government agent undercover and the true identity of disgusting Atropos, her husband. Pinkerton and the U.S. Government want Flashy to join up with Brown for yet a different reason from Crixus and Atropos. That reason is left hanging for the new chapter.



Pgs. 169-220

Pgs. 169-220 Summary

Beginning the eleventh chapter, Flashy cannot see how the U.S. Government will get him to join Brown. It cannot blackmail him like Crixus or threaten him like Atropos. Flashy, therefore turns Pinkerton down. He is taken to a government building, fed, and left alone to think. Flashy is happy finally to be safe from everyone—until Pinkerton brings in a lantern-jawed ruffian, Messervy, and a podgy, unnamed New England senator, who demands to hear the details of his earlier visit to America. Flashy does so, omitting only the "tender passages" (pg. 171). Accepting it all, the senator nevertheless asks Flashy to carry out the mission proposed for Comber: to restrain the untouchable Brown from starting a war. Flashy objects that as a British officer he may not meddle in foreign affairs and demands to see the consul. The senator agrees but insists that Flashy first meet the next President. Flashy wonders if it is Lincoln, but cares only about getting home to England.

They sail from Manhattan toward a flotilla of boats surrounding a large paddle boat that is set to sail. Flashy is taken aboard and introduced to Sen. William H. Seward, whom Flashy finds not a ten-foot giant but a slight, brisk politician with a nose like a battleship. Seward is headed for England, where he hopes to visit the Queen. Stating that Britons and Americans form a single race eager to come to one another's defense in time of trouble, Seward suggests that the Queen would condemn his turning his back on duty to humanity. It is an ingenious—and effective—argument, for it gets Flashy to picture his knighthood being withdrawn.

The twelfth chapter finds Pinkerton laying out immediate plans. Crixus is overjoyed to hear from Joe that Flashy is found and wants them in Concord. Annette will return to Washington to reassure Atropos. Neither Crixus nor Atropos knows of today's events. Messervy briefs Flashy on Brown's core followers and how Brown's indecision should make it easy to hinder him. Flashy must not undermine the men's loyalty to Brown, who is a man on fire, unlike anyone since the Revolution. Although a poor speaker, Brown is adored by abolitionists. His chief financiers, the "Secret Six," however, fear that he will do something desperate and have been restraining him for a year. Messervy regrets that he cannot take Flashy's advice and simply assassinate Brown, for it would bring on inquiries and retribution. He would like to station Marines at Harper's Ferry, but Washington is not taking Brown seriously. If Brown does attack, the South will insist on disunion and a blood war will surely result. The worst would be for Brown to survive a failed raid, be tried for treason, and hung. That would make him a martyr. The North would explode in hatred of slavery and war would be certain. If Flashy cannot keep Brown from attacking, he must kill him quietly.

Flashy can keep calm only because this plan does not put him in battle like the other plans and training Brown's army is less burdensome than some duties he has fulfilled. They claim he is "at no peril to himself" (pg. 193). He dislikes the idea of assassinating



Brown, but plays the tough-guy role. Messervy provides him a Tranter revolver, a sheathed stiletto, a quick look at a map of Harper's Ferry, and \$50. Taking leave, Messervy tells Flashy that it is too dangerous for them to send messages to one another. He will be keeping watch and step in if needed. He assures Flashy that he and Joe will both be welcomed with open arms as a gift from God. Flashy mentions how odd it seems that Joe does not desire freedom. Messervy doubts that Joe is loyal to Atropos as many blacks are to their masters and warns of his potential danger.

When they join Annette downstairs, surprisingly, she thanks Flashy for saving her life and moans about going to Hell for having intended to kill their attackers. Flashy explains the difference between murder and self-defense and suggests that she see a priest in the morning. By the end of dinner she is her imperious self, telling Joe, who reports that everyone has swallowed the story, that they must arrive in Concord after dark to avoid being seen entering Sanborn's house. She silences his question about why the imprisoned guards are not in place. Sure that he will have few opportunities in Brown's company, Flashy has a last fling with Annette. Usually silent during sex, she pours out her life's story, ending with recruitment by Pinkerton as an undercover agent. Flashy is amazed at her dedication to exact vengeance on Atropos. She is in a fiery mood in the morning, before bidding Flashy a tearful goodbye.

The thirteenth chapter brings Flashy and Joe to Concord where, in the house of Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, Flashy first meets the man of legend. Flashy finds Brown rather ordinary except for his steady gray eyes. He is a charming man, hard to dislike. Flashy plays up Brown's birthday, donating Messervy's \$50, and is nervous, recounting Comber's life story, embellished with select anti-slavery details from his own. Brown talks of battlefields and fortifications in Europe, bemoans his failure to pursue military studies, laughs at being teased in London, and believes that he and Flashy will get on famously.

Brown intends to attack Harper's Ferry on the Fourth of July, just two months ahead. Needing to convince Brown that he is as crazy as he, professionally-minded, seasoned, dedicated, Flashy speaks of needing to know the force, arms, further plans for holding and using what they conquer, and whether he is strictly under orders or to be consulted. They must strike a blow that will sweep away slavery forever. Brown assures him that this is the plan and takes him to meet half of the "Secret Six." Ardent followers worship Brown, which he handles skillfully, and end with blood-thirsty hymns.

Joe plays dumb as Brown fawns over him, and Flashy hears why zealous young Jerry Anderson idolizes Brown and follows him to expunge his family's guilt for holding slaves. Flashy hopes everyone is this naïve, lest anyone compete for Brown's ear. Flashy tells Joe nothing more of his discussions with Brown than the date of the campaign and angers him by suggesting that two months may be too short. When Flashy tells Joe to butt out and stop acting like a watchdog, Joe pulls a gun and reminds Flashy of the others watching, invisibly. Flashy has 5,000 reasons to keep the deal. Flashy cannot sleep, thinking about Brown being a slow-thinking dreamer, incapable of planning a military raid. Flashy is caught between dread and hope. He wishes he could



communicate with Messervy and dreads what Seward is saying about him to the Queen.

Pgs. 169-220 Analysis

The eleventh chapter completes Flashy's recruitment by the U.S. Government to enlist with Brown, but for the purpose of thwarting a raid on Harper's Ferry. Believing that Pinkerton has no right to detain him, Flashy puts forward a John Bull attitude, demanding to see the consul. Seward agrees, but insists first on introducing him to Seward, whom he calls the next President. Flashy wonders if he might mean Lincoln, whom he has met, but doubts if this could happen. From the perspective of 40 years, he congratulates himself for prophecy.

Seward wins Flashy over to the mission by suggesting that the Queen, Prince Albert, and Lord Palmerston would be embarrassed if he were to turn his back on duty to humanity. Seward develops the theme of a single people bound by blood and only slightly subject to political misunderstandings. Flashy sees precisely where Seward is heading, but there is no way out, if he is to preserve the knighthood that he so cherishes. Flashy mentally comments on the argument as it unfolds, admiring the approach. Flashy recalls other politicians who have pressured him and gives Seward high marks. The chapter ends with Flashy wishing that Seward had become President in 1860, but only to spare his friend Lincoln assassination.

The twelfth chapter sees Flashy briefed for his mission to keep Brown from launching the raid that will certainly ignite a civil war. The briefer is a new character, Messervy, a Federal agent who foresees that the next administration will be Democratic and wants it still to govern the entire nation. He downplays the chances of a massive slave rebellion and believes that the one chance of averting war is for Brown to die before stirring up emotions on both sides. The worst would be for him to become a national martyr as did Joan of Arc in France. That Brown gaining a forum for his ideas at a trial for treason is the worst possible outcome runs repeatedly through Flashy's mind for the rest of the story, even as it comes to pass. Flashy reflects on people whom he has killed, but always for a good reason and never strangers. He cannot see himself in the role of assassin, but dares not object to the assignment.

For the rest of the book Flashy will watch for a chance to escape—and be utterly frustrated by his shadow, Joe Simmons. Why an intelligent man would not seek freedom is again discussed and it is again decided that Joe has it too good to gain anything by being free. The nature of Annette's slavery to her disgusting husband is also examined, as Flashy enjoys her one last time and hears her life's story. It seems rather an afterthought but is nicely told.

The thirteenth chapter finally brings Flashy and Brown face-to-face. Having summarized his views on Brown early in the story, Flashy emphasizes how unlike his legend Brown is—and how likable as a human being. He shows him as a showman, skilled at playing to a crowd of admirers, adopting a persona at sharp odds with his savagery out West. At



Brown's birthday party the fact that the government is powerless to seize him is again reiterated, rather boastfully. Flashy hears the life story of one young zealous follower—he often comments on how Americans cannot resist pouring out their stories to complete strangers—and hopes that he is representative of Brown's army. Otherwise, someone may keep him from preventing the attack. Note how Joe plays the dumb field hand role, accepting Brown's condescension. Flashy remarks that Joe is better educated. Joe and Flashy conflict over roles. Flashy warns that Joe must not appear as a watchdog, lest suspicions be raised, and Flashy must be free to play the strategist. Flashy makes clear that he is a mercenary who wants to finish the job and get paid. For the rest of the novel Flashy will remember looking down the barrel of Joe's gun as conflict grows between them.



Pgs. 221-265

Pgs. 221-265 Summary

In the fourteenth chapter Flashy follows Brown's farewell to friends from Boston to New York in May 1859, during which Flashy studies Brown and hears lots of musings, including a description of Brown's preteen rage over the mistreatment of a slave boy and locating a runaway slave by the sound of his wildly beating heart. That is Brown's moment of revelation; Flashy cannot recall one. At a dinner in Boston, Flashy runs into the fat senator who tried to recruit him and tries to get a message through to Messervy about 4 July. Brown confronts the senator over the morality of the latest raid in Missouri. In June they go to Connecticut to see the pikes that Brown has ordered and Flashy is glad that money is being spent on such junk rather than real weapons. Delivery of 200 more cannot occur before August. Jerry, Joe, and Flashy go to Ohio, joining Brown's sons, Owen and John, Jr., and the dangerously capable John Henry Kagi, Brown's Gideon and Secretary of War, whom Flashy decides is the key to convincing Brown that the raid is hopeless.

The fifteenth chapter brings Flashy to Harper's Ferry. Having lost his map, he thinks nothing about heading to Hagerstown, MD, with Brown, Owen, Oliver, Anderson, and Joe, whom the conductor challenges about riding. Flashy had figured to conclude his charade safely in the North. Brown announces that the battle is near, but first they must spy out the land like the ancient Joshua. Harper's Ferry is just downriver. Brown mistakes Flashy's outburst of frightened profanity for eagerness. Flashy is relieved that they will not blindly attack but do some planning. Brown grows indecisive again.

They rent from Kennedy a ramshackle, three-story farm house three miles from Harper's Ferry, and for three boring months it serves as their base of operations for planning, arming for, training for, and staging the raid. It is shielded from the road and unlikely to raise questions about some eccentric Yankees wanting to play farmer. Nothing is accomplished. Flashy endures it because he knows that he cannot escape Joe and the Kuklos and believes that an end is coming. There will be no raid or uprising. Flashy prepares war plans calling for 100 well-armed and -trained men augmented by hordes of freed slaves. Brown is delighted by the suggestion that they send riders out with flaming crosses to recruit them. Flashy almost feels bad about humbugging Brown. Flashy is surprised when Brown announces that they must take prominent hostages, including Colonel Washington, the first President's remote relative. Brown relishes carrying Lafayette's pistol and Frederick the Great's sword, from the Washington collection, into battle.

As the core of six grows, it becomes important to keep nosy neighbors—to Flashy all Americans are nosy—from investigating. Brown's daughter Annie and daughter-in-law Martha keep house and run interference. Young, eager recruits arrive in groups of 2-3 all summer. Flashy pauses to characterize them and regret that all are now gone, as probably Kennedy's Farm is. Flashy recalls Brown preaching on Sundays, the "pet



lambs" (pg. 245) playing games and rough-housing, the Browns arguing and recalling their childhood, Brown cooking, showing kindness to animals, and philosophizing. Flashy notices that Joe looks at Brown differently and wonders what he is thinking.

The sixteenth chapter begins with Kagi and Flashy collecting arms. Kagi doubts that they can succeed, with recruitment, supply, and funding low, but hopes that Brown will succeed in winning over Frederick Douglass, the most famous black man in America. If this happens, Flashy's efforts to head off a raid will fail, so he insists on being present at the secret meeting. Douglass declares the plan crazy and wicked, sure to set back abolitionism and, based on Flashy's statistics, suicidal. They argue for hours. Douglass loves Brown but his conscience will not allow him to participate.

Throughout the autumn, news is bad, as enlistments falter and camp morale drops. Assembling and drilling with pikes brings some relief. Flashy convinces Stevens, the only real soldier in the bunch, to share with the youngsters his happiness at giving his life for the cause. When morale again plunges, Brown calls a staff meeting and cunningly resigns as leader to allow his re-election with a mandate. Kagi insists that it is now or never to attack. Flashy decides that it is time for him to flee. In October, Frank Meriam donates \$600. Knowing that this will ensure the raid, Flashy makes his break for freedom, but is stopped by Joe, a true convert to Brown's vision. Flashy thinks that if his plan is followed to the letter and no one is hurt, he will get a chance to give Joe the slip. He makes key assignments and is more scared than ever in his life. No one jokes at the last supper. Finally Brown tells them to get their arms and be on their way.

Pgs. 221-265 Analysis

The fourteenth chapter pictures Brown's farewell tour of the Northeast, which affords Flashy time to study the man and hear his stories. Much of the chapter's description is repetitious but colorful and contains a few new strokes that enrich the word portrait. The mysterious senator whom Flashy meets earlier is encountered as an ideological enemy of Brown. The meeting shows Brown's debating style and allows Flashy to attempt to get word to Washington about the target date for hitting the Ferry. Brown's sons begin being introduced, as is John Henry Kagi, whose value Flashy sees and begins cultivating. Flashy has to be careful never to appear to be trying to ward off the raid. He laughs at Brown's desire to apply classical military tactics. Flashy adopts the professional attitude that he can accomplish anything if given men and matériel. He is surprised when Brown applauds the idea of sending out messengers to plant burning crosses as a call to rebellion among slaves. After the Civil War the burning cross becomes the terrorist symbol of the white supremest Ku Klux Klan, which Endnote 21 relates to the Kuklos.

The fifteenth chapter continues the introduction of minor new characters as Brown rents an empty farm house near the Ferry and reconnoiters. Brown alludes to Moses sending Joshua in to spy out the Promised Land. When Brown asks if Flashy recalls the biblical story, Flashy does not admit that he remembers only the spies' encounter with a prostitute. Brown's "pet lambs" who begins trickling into the camp are briefly



characterized rather poignantly, as Flashy notes wistfully that they are all long dead. Their fates are tracked in the coming chapters and summarized in Appendix 3. There is a bit of humor as Flashy realizes that their train has just crossed into Dixie and Brown, using the alias Isaac Smith, jumps to Joe's defense when a conductor challenges his being on the train. Brown asks why a runaway slave would be heading southward.

The sixteenth chapter shows Brown's dream on the verge of collapse when he appeals to the renowned and revered Frederick Douglass to join in the raid. Flashy describes the great man in detail, including tidbits gleaned in a private conversation and depicts the back-and-forth argument over two days. Douglass cannot be swayed from his views on non-violence and, based on Flashy's assessments of the force's size, weaponry, and training, declares that the raid is suicidal. Flashy's spirits rise as Brown's fall and he is amazed when Brown rallies the troops to re-elect him when he voluntarily resigns. The ups and downs of group psychology are in focus, interwoven with individual psychology. In a *deus ex machina*, Brown receives a donation of \$600 in cash, which makes execution of the raid possible—and even inevitable.

Flashy's natural instinct is to flee, but Joe captures him. In the confrontation, Flashy sees what is behind Joe's changed behavior while listening to Brown: he has become a convert to a new truth, with the convert's characteristic zeal. He will kill Flashy before letting him let down Brown. Flashy throws himself into planning the raid in order to pull it off without detection or casualties, reasoning that it will be chaotic enough for him to sneak off into the woods. This seems odd, given Joe's renewed dedication to watching him, but is needed to drive the plot of the raid forward. The chapter ends with a solemn last supper and the leader's summons to go forward.



Pgs. 266-308

Pgs. 266-308 Summary

In the seventeenth chapter, fifteen whites and six blacks march on Harper's Ferry through a blinding rain. Only Brown and Kagi believe in victory. Flashy intends to survive for Elspeth's sake and to thwart the gods. They seize the Potomac bridge, cut telegraph wires, and capture the watchman; next come the Shenandoah bridge and armory gates. Flashy orders all captives gathered and care taken around the massed explosives. Brown gives an emancipation speech to a dozen frightened citizens and neglects to secure the rifle works and get out of town with the captured weapons before dawn.

Flashy in old age remains proud of his plan working, given what he had to work with. Brown seems detached at first and then indecisive and dreamy in victory. Flashy's only goal is to escape Joe. The first shot is fired by Taylor at a railway guard, who flees, screaming and boards a Baltimore-bound train. More shots wake the town. Since it is rumored that there are 100 raiders and the locals lack arms, they do nothing. A doctor protests the shooting of a black, defies arrest, and rides off to alert the militia. Stevens argues with Brown that the townsfolk will soon grow unruly and the militia will arrive. Brown refuses to yield his principles and is deaf to common sense. He grows steadily calmer. When shots are exchanged with locals armed with squirrel guns, Brown orders a tense ceasefire. He lectures Washington crazily and sends Joe to the hotel with \$15 to order hot breakfast for 45.

The eighteenth chapter begins with Joe requesting that Flashy accompany him, arguing that they will not listen to a black, while in fact wanting only to prevent an escape. Both keep hidden pistols. Flashy is gallant, passing through the astonished crowd, assuring them that Brown intends to retreat soon. Someone notes his accent. Flashy places the large order, allowing the cook discretion about the eggs. Looking up, he sees a plump, young, red-haired black woman on a balcony, looking at him fondly. As the crowd grows surly, Joe takes a punch and Flashy races upstairs to where Hannah Popplewell not only hides him, but seduces him repeatedly and insatiably. Happy but exhausted, Flashy resolves to wait for things outside to calm down and then calmly board the train with her.

From upstairs, Flashy watches the two sides "taking potshots and confabbing by turns" (pg. 292) while Brown wastes precious time. Hannah orders a hearty breakfast and reports that the militia are coming. Only 12 hours after Brown's men cross the bridge, the War Department orders Col. Robert E. Lee and Lt. J.E.B. Stuart and the U.S. Marines to Harper's Ferry. The civilian-clad Charles Town militia arrive ahead of them, rifles blazing, sealing off retreat. Dangerous Newby is the first of Brown's lambs to be killed and drunks then abuse his corpse. When a sharpshooter kills the mayor, the level of rage rises. Brown's first white flag gets Bill Thompson seized to lynch or burn. A second gets Watson Brown and Stevens gunned down.



When Flashy worries about the mob checking upstairs, Hannah tells him to hide in the attic. From there he examines the hopeless situation and sees most of the pet lambs picked off. He hears Hannah insisting that she is hiding no one but before he can react, the attic floor gives way, dropping him into the room. Flashy hurls massive Hannah at her questioners and flees. He emerges just as an attack on the sheds commences, is shot in the neck and thigh, and feels sure that he is dying. Taylor dies, dragging him to safety, and before Flashy passes out, he watches Oliver Brown gunned down.

Pgs. 266-308 Analysis

The seventeenth chapter shows Flashy's battle plan executed to perfection and Harper's Ferry secured without a shot. In old age he takes pride in this accomplishment. Much of the chapter is devoted to Brown's growing calmness, which even loyal Steven's believes shows mental problems. He fixates on the hostages, whom he assumes are his shield against government retaliation, and rattles on nonsensically at Col. Washington. Calculating that hostages outnumber his own forces two-to-one—and stating this out loud in the hearing of all—Brown orders breakfast for all. Except for a local doctor and the engineer of a train passing through, no one opposes the tiny company of raiders. Anyone who does talk back to Brown calls him crazy and is subject to his idealistic speech about freeing the captives. Eventually some locals fire ineffectual squirrel guns, but Brown orders his men not to fire back. Brown's lieutenants realize that the captives will not remain docile forever, but Brown is sure that his beloved slaves will flock to him and refuses to be gone from the Ferry. Left leaderless, the lieutenants cannot agree on how to evacuate to the hills with the captured weaponry. This marks their doom. Flashy wants only to escape.

The eighteenth chapter graphically depicts the growing violence on the second day of the raid on Harper's Ferry. He accompanies Joe into the hotel to order breakfasts for Brown's lambs and their hostages, and people note that he is British. This later makes escape more difficult for him. As astonishment changes to outrage among the townspeople, Flashy gets his chance to run and makes it upstairs to where he had observed a colorfully-dressed and young flirtatious black woman. Mrs. Hannah Popplewell is introduced as the last important character in the novel. She is a free-woman determined to get rich on white money. She knows the white taste for black flesh, of which she has an abundance, along with an enormous appetite for sex. She repeatedly ravages Flashy, who wonders if he will survive the massive onslaught. He recalls some of his earlier sexual conquests and ranks Hannah above most. Having few opportunities in this novel to describe his romps, Flashy waxes eloquent about this voluptuous black woman who uses him as a toy.

When Flashy surveys the town from the upstairs windows and later from the attic windows, he sees that Brown and his men are doomed. Stepping out into the frantic, drunken mob and announcing that he works for the U.S. Government is unlikely to spare him. Flashy describes the death of individual lambs with considerable pathos and his own wounding with near hysteria. The reader has had little time with the various characters but enough to feel for their falling into murderous hands. The psychology of



the frenzied mob is well depicted, down to the gratuitous postmortem violence against victims' corpses. Flashy is nauseated—and concerned for himself. The climax of the final assault on the handful of survivors is well set-up.



Pgs. 309-361

Pgs. 309-361 Summary

The nineteenth chapter finds Flashy musing on being wounded 20 times in his career and knowing how to play them up to maximum effect. His present wounds are superficial, albeit painful. Covering in the smoke-filled room, surrounded by three bodies and six sound defenders, Flashy hears Brown refuse to surrender unconditionally, despite his hopeless situation. He wants safe conduct to Maryland and protests violations of the acts of war by firing on a white flag. Capt. Sinn assures him that Lee is honorable and asks at least to let his doctor examine the wounded. Watson is dead and Oliver in pain begs to die. Flashy despises Brown for telling his son to die like a man. Fearing what Brown and Joe would do if he tells the doctor that he is an agent, Flashy pretends to be worse than he is and is ignored. Brown insists that he had known the dangers, going in, and will not shrink from his responsibility. His men and the hostages are in God's hands.

Flashy realizes that if the troops storm the engine house, the first ranks will be cut down, and the remaining drunks will kill everyone, including him, unless he joins the hostages and befriends Washington, without Brown noticing. When Brown approaches, Flashy talks about Kagi's death and others, playing up his own agony. He claims to have left the hotel to fetch to Kagi to Brown and claims that Kagi's last words are a plea to see that Brown's voice is not silenced. Brown must surrender so Kagi will not have died in vain. It is a powerful speech, but Brown refuses. He does give Flashy a weapon, however, so he can join the defense. Flashy wants to scream at Brown that a trial, even if hanging is the foregone outcome, will give his cause a soap box. Brown has decided that the cause does not end here but merely begins.

Over 1,000 men, mostly drunkards but 100 seasoned Marines, surround the six but do not move all night, probably restrained by Lee to spare lives. Flashy does not figure that Washington will believe his story and cannot approach him without being seen. Flashy knows that Joe cannot expose him to Brown without exposing himself as an agent of Kuklos. Joe admonishes Brown for bringing him to the point of death when he could have been safe in the hills, for failing to free and rally any slaves, and for ignoring his lieutenants' pleas, thus betraying them. Brown rebukes Joe several times but cannot silence him until he cocks his revolver at him and declares him mutinous. Flashy knows how blindingly fast Joe's draw is.

Flashy is regretting the chain of events that has brought him to this point when the sound of marching troops is heard. Brown calls his men to arms to fight off a sudden rush. Flashy rises with the others, checks his pistol, and realizes he can move about but not run. Anderson announces that two unarmed officers are approaching to talk.

The twentieth chapter opens with Flashy hobbling to Brown's side, determined to be in on this last negotiation before the final fight. A huge crowd watches the officers



approach to within 20 yards. Stuart alone advances, speaking on behalf of Lee and Messervy, demanding surrender. Stuart remains polite in the face of Brown's impudent refusal. Finally, seeing that talk is hopeless, Stuart, by a series of glances, tells Flashy to fulfill Messervy's commission. With Joe there, Flashy dares not obey. Stuart leaves and signals an assault with rams and bayonets. Joe is wounded. Flashy cannot decide why he shoots Joe in the back as Joe prepares to kill Brown. He hates Joe and likes Brown, despite everything, too much to let him be shot that way.

The Marines storm in, beat and bayonet Brown and his men. Brown is captured. There is blood everywhere. A cheer goes up outside as the hostages are freed. Flashy is not allowed to leave until Messervy comes for him, and he is taken out incognito in a Marine cloak and cap. Messervy asks why Brown is alive despite orders to silence him. He is quite talkative. They debate why the Government has done nothing to stop Brown. Flashy is glad the Americans waste no time in getting him back to Liverpool. He longs for England, Elspeth, and official honors. Messervy gives him reason to worry that Crixus and Atropos may be looking for him, although Atropos cannot be unhappy with this outcome. He will be angry about Joe's death, were he ever to hear about it. Atropos is the big winner.

After eating, shaving, and dressing, Flashy follows Messervy to a room where Brown lies, gaunt and pallid, but with fiery eyes, talking to a hostile crowd about his usual themes and answering questions. Flashy finds it heartless to badger him and treat him like a circus animal. Brown is admirably calm and courteous, not to be pitied. Flashy realizes that Brown enjoys having a world-wide audience. He refuses to name his financial backers and invites Southerners to prepare for the final settlement of the slave question. Flashy disapproves of several lies that Brown tells and apparently believes.

Messervy worries at how saintly Brown comes off. Flashy warns unsuccessfully against making him a martyr; he cannot then see how hanging one crazy farmer could start a war. If Messervy had unlimited money he would pay Flashy and Pinkerton to spirit Brown to Canada. It might unite North and South against Britain. The chance to silence Brown is regrettably past.

In the twenty-first chapter, Flashy tells second-hand about Brown's fate. Based on Brown's captured papers, his supporters are identified and vilified. Seward is considered the "arch agitator" (pg. 345), which may have cost him the presidency. The South hears a murderer out to overthrow their way of life being praised in the North as a hero and tunes out Republican politicians' condemnation of the raid. Even moderates see war or disunion as inevitable.

At his trial, Brown puts on the act of his life. He offers no defense and accepts his fate. Flashy approves of him rejecting an insanity plea for he is no madman, just a fanatic. The trial is a farce. All that is remembered of it is Brown's dignity and bravery. During the month before his execution, Brown gains a reputation as a cheerful martyr. He wants to die, knowing that it will lead, as his last note says, to great bloodshed. After Brown is hanged, bells cross the North ring in mourning, more so even than for Lincoln years later, while across the South Brown is detested more than anyone—but respected for



his courage. He is partly responsible for 750,000 deaths. Slavery would have ended anyway. Flashy recalls the faces of these companions whenever the children sing Brown's song. Only Owen and Flashy live to old age. Flashy is not proud of his part in Harper's Ferry but uses it to redeem himself to those who hear the story of Armageddon on behalf of "poor downtrodden darkies" (pg. 349).

After leaving Messervy, who is depressed over how Brown's papers will inflame the South, Flashy is escorted through the partying crowds and boards the train. He is too weary to undress. A giggling porter extends an invitation from the party in the next cabin to join in drinks. When Flashy enters he is amazed to see Hannah reclining nude and beckoning to him. She claims to be amazed to see him and dodges questions about how she had gotten out of town. Flashy tells her how he convinced Lee that he is a government spy and explains that he is now en route to Baltimore to report to his superiors. Flashy tries not to mention Messervy.

After satisfying sex, Hannah turns to business, demanding to know Joe's fate. She asks on Atropos' behalf, as Joe is his favorite. She reveals that she is high up in the organization, with code name Medusa. She also reveals that Atropos had not suspected Annette of being an agent, but had kept Messervy under surveillance. Flashy refuses to say anything, knowing that if Joe's body is examined, they will know who shot him. Flashy tries to flee, but Hannah is too fast with her derringer. Since he has pleased her more than any man has, she gives Flashy one last passionate kiss and tells him to disappear.

Pgs. 309-361 Analysis

The nineteenth chapter opens with Flashy recalling the many wounds he has sustained in his long career and observing how they can be used to gain sympathy. He describes the carnage around him as he realizes that his wounds are superficial, albeit painful. He passes out pouring alcohol over them as disinfectant. A doctor looks at two of the wounded but overlooks Flashy, saying that he will return next day. Flashy finds this attitude cavalier, although he would not want the extent of his injuries to be revealed. Brown is suspicious about his flight and seems not to accept his quickly-invented story about being at Kagi's side when he dies and agreeing that Brown must surrender in order to have at his trial the opportunity to preach his message to America. Brown refuses to compromise and believes that he has room to bargain. His men, having heard their behavior called treason, are loath to fight on. Some are weeping over being tricked.

In the end, Joe, who had experienced a conversion akin to Saul/Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9, 22, and 26) from his complacency being a privileged slave to a sworn enemy of the institution, stands up to Brown and accuses him of all the sins of commission and omission that have doomed them. Flashy notes to the reader that Joe in both conditions deeply and consistently resents white people. It looks as though the confrontation will grow lethal, but it is interrupted by the arrival of a negotiating team. Brown's men do not want to fight any longer.



The twentieth chapter contains the anticipated bloody climax that begins the denouement. The Marines make a last attempt to talk Brown out of suicide. JEB Stuart, later a premier Confederate commander in the first part of the Civil War, is a perfect Southern gentleman addressing the belligerent Brown. Later in the chapter, Stuart is shown quite otherwise, badgering Brown after he has been wounded and captured. The contrast is remarkable.

By reference to Messervy and quick glances, he indicates that Flashy is to carry out the mission that he has never seriously considered: killing Brown in cold blood. Instead, when Joe's anger peaks and he is at the point of shooting Brown, Flashy shoots him in the back. A self-analysis follows, in which Flashy rejects the idea that the act is racially motivated. He hates Joe nearly from the start and has never found it possible to hate Brown. Flashy at this point knows that he will be rescued.

He describes a good deal of gore, which is far less than in most Flashman novels, and reflects several times on how he has reached this point, relatively intact. Messervy takes charge, making arrangements to get Flashy home as fast as possible. He promotes an enlisted man to gain his silence about the disguise and itinerary. They discuss at length the consequences of Flashy's failure to follow orders and watch part of Brown's stellar performance taking questions from the public. Flashy believes that the inspiration is Lee's suggestion that at trial he will gain a world-wide audience. Flashy admires how Brown conducts himself, which contrasts sharply with how his enemies behave. Flashy denies any sentimentality, observing that he is a bully personally. He believes the victors ought not to behave so callously in this case. Flashy is glad to be heading home swiftly.

The twenty-first and final chapter summarizes Brown's fate, analyzing how his behavior at his trial and execution create a potent legend. Flashy has stated earlier that slavery will inevitably disappear in America with or without war, and does not admit the inevitability of war as most Americans do following Harper's Ferry, but at least partially credits Brown with the fearful legacy of hastening it. He talks about differing attitudes North and South hardening over Brown. No longer are only fanatics enraged. The kind of rumor-mongering seen in Harper's Ferry during the raid sweeps the South, bringing some areas to the point of martial law. Republicans cannot get the South to believe their condemnation of the raid. Flashy believes that Seward's presidential hopes are dashed when he is implicated in planning the raid.

Flashy is pleased to be on his way home. The government does not want any trace of him left behind. He is put on a train bound for a ship in Baltimore. Hannah, whom he has been remembering fondly and feeling sorry for having misused her, happens to be on the train and invites him for drinks. After another bout of heavy sex, she reveals that she is part of Kuklos and demands to know Joe's fate. The Marines in the final assault on the rebels had not fired guns, so if Joe's body, secretly buried, is found and examined, the bullet holes will point to Flashy. Hannah is too touched by her relationship with Flashy to let him fall into Atropos' hands, so she urges him to jump off the train before Baltimore. Hannah's role helps prevent the end of the novel from being a mere tying up of loose ends and historical reminiscences.



Fraser adds a postscript, noting that the tenth packet of Flashy's papers ends here. He states that Flashy does not get home to England as hoped, but in six months finds himself in Hong Kong. That story will be told in a later volume. Given how badly Flashy has wanted to get home, this is a disheartening second ending.



Characters

Sir Harry Paget Flashman / Beauchamp Millward Comber / Joshu

The 89-year-old narrator and chief character in the novel, "Flashy" resumes his memoirs where "Flash for Freedom!" leaves off. He has completed undercover service in India during the Sepoy Mutiny and is greatly looking forward to returning to England, his beautiful wife Elspeth, and the reception of a knighthood. He must be caught in nothing dishonorable lest he lose the distinction.

Having been caught in the act with Lady Plunkett while still in Calcutta, Flashy hastens to South Africa, where his old nemesis, John Charity Spring, sees him and plots to catch him molesting his beautiful daughter, Miranda. Flashy cannot, of course, resist her flirting, narrowly avoids being caught in the act, and is shipped off to Baltimore, MD, as revenge for his part in getting Spring shanghaied to South Africa ten years earlier. Flashy is still wanted up and down the Mississippi River for various felonies under various aliases: Beauchamp Millward Comber, Starnberg, Prescott, Arnold, and Howard.

Flashy lands penniless and in rags, without identifying papers, and takes refuge uncharacteristically in a Catholic Church. Kindly Fr. Rafferty sees through his cover story, but lends him money to get to the British consulate in Washington. Flashy is intercepted by a trio of thugs, who turn out to be agents of Crixus, the head of the Underground Railroad, who had earlier pressed Flashy into service in New Orleans. Flashy patiently hears out Crixus' ecstatic tales about John Brown's coming war of liberation and learns that they want him to serve as Joshua to Brown's Moses, providing military planning. He cannot say no but is determined to flee at first chance.

Before he can be spirited off to meet Brown, Flashy is freed by Crixus' henchman Joe Simmons, catches a cab inhabited by an upscale prostitute, who turns out to be another face from his past, Annette Mandeville. She and Joe are arguing about Flashy's identity when three hooded gentlemen enter the room. Members of Kuklos, a powerful Southern organization devoted to preserving slavery, they are determined to enlist Flashy to join Brown's organization, but for the opposite purpose to Crixus. They know every detail of his earlier crimes and are ready to turn him over to authorities if he fails to cooperate. They disbelieve his claims to care nothing about slavery and he dares not reveal his true identity. They would clearly kill him if he were no longer useful.

Flashy and Annette pose as newlyweds for the trip to Concord, MA. Too long celibate, Flashy enjoys sex with Annette as often as possible and learns that she is married to Atropos, the leader of Kuklos. In New York, Annette reveals that she is a U.S. Government spy in the Kuklos organization and hands Flashy over to a Mr. Messervy of the Treasury Department who is aided by Sen. William H. Seward and detective Allan Pinkerton, who knows Flashy's true identity from long ago in Scotland. Also wanting



Flashy to serve as Brown's advisor, the government group wants to head off an assault on Harper's Ferry or, failing that, to assassinate him before he can stand trial. They suggest that the Queen will be displeased to learn of his refusal to help and endanger his knighthood. Flashy has to agree.

Flashy and his close shadow Joe sign on with Brown and Flashy begins studying the man carefully. He believes that the raid will not come off because Brown is so disorganized. He also believes that Brown is crazy, but not in the sense of legally insane. Flashy's only goal is to escape, but Joe keeps too tight a reign on him. When Flashy tries to flee and is caught, he throws his energy into designing the ideal military plan to seize the Ferry without bloodshed and escape to the hills with the munitions. He is sure that at that point he can break away. The plan works brilliantly but Brown then stops leading and everything goes bad. The townspeople shake off the shock of being conquered and begin to fight back. Alcohol inflames them. Flashy slips through them and finds refuge upstairs in the hotel with an enormous black woman, Hannah Popplewell, who hides him—and repeatedly has sex with him. When men come to investigate, she hides him in the attic. When the attic floor gives way, he ungallantly throws her at them and flees to the engine house, where Brown and his last surviving men are holed up. Flashy is wounded superficially during his flight.

Flashy realizes that if the U.S. Marines invade, all will be killed. He receives hope of survival only when Messervy's name is mentioned in the government's surrender demand. When Joe, feeling betrayed, is about to shoot Brown, Flashy kills Joe. The Marines invade, bayonet the defenders, and take Brown captive. Flashy is designated a prisoner until Messervy arrives to smuggle him, incognito, out of town and home to England. He asks why Flashy fails in his mission but is philosophical about what lies ahead. Flashy admires Brown's bravery and dignity at the end.

Flashy is worn out when he boards the train to Baltimore and surprised to meet Hannah again. After more bouts of sex she reveals that she is a Kuklos agent who has been tailing him. She wants to know what has happened to Joe. Flashy claims not to know and tries to make a break, but Hannah is too fast for him. Since, however, he has been better to her than any man, Hannah lets him slip off the train rather than fall into a trap in Baltimore. Flashy thus misses the ship home and sees England only after adventures in Hong Kong, to be described in the next packet of papers.

John Brown

A historical character, "Old Ossawotomie," Brown is, in narrator Sir Harry Flashman's words, "a sincere, worthy, autocratic, good-natured, terrible, dangerous old zealot, hard as nails, iron-willed, brave beyond belief, and possessed of all the muscular Christian virtues which I can't stand" (pg. 207). Flashy in the guise of Beauchamp Millward Comber signs on to be Brown's military advisor and receives the code name Joshua—Brown himself being the Moses figure. Although Brown nearly gets him killed, Flashman likes him and at a crucial moment saves his life, even though he knows that Brown will



be hanged. Flashy considers Brown the only pest in his long life whom he is willing to bless.

Flashy characterizes Brown as a kindly old gentleman and an ordinary chap with wild hair and flashing eyes when angry. Brown is born in poverty, raised solely on the Bible, is strong, independent, benevolent, and devoted to liberty for all. He has for 20 years in 1859 been developing a revolutionary plan to destroy slavery in a single stroke, but it had been premature until being tempered in the bloody battles in Kansas. Flashy adds that Brown is an admitted liar and an utter failure in business. He knows large swaths of the Bible by heart and expects life to be hard. The Pottawatomie Massacre cannot be described as anything but cold-blooded murder. Flashy points out that there had been many marauders in Bloody Kansas, but Brown is the one who catches the popular attention and can fairly be said to have lit the torch of abolition. The Yankee press builds his image while Southerners make of him a murderer, brigand, and fiend. He heightens and arms the growing conflict, aiming to move it to Africa—his term for the slave-holding South.

Brown has lost Huge Forbes, a British adventurer who serves as his military advisor, and Crixus, the head of the Underground Railroad vows to find a competent replacement. He believes that he has found him in Flashy. Brown is not troubled that Forbes reveals his plans to a group of senators, but goes about his business in the North, raising funds to purchase arms and rallying support. His chief financiers, dubbed the "Secret Six," dare not reveal their support publicly. There is great fear in government that Brown will bring on civil war. There is considerable money on Brown's head, but no one dares arrest him. Under the alias Shubel Morgan, Brown has lately been raiding Missouri to liberate slaves to Canada. This tempers his meager troops. He now needs a military mind and strong right arm—a Joshua to his Moses.

Flashy meets Brown on the latter's sixtieth birthday, celebrated in the Concord, MA, home of Franklin Benjamin Sanborn. Brown is recovering from "malarial ague" (pg. 204). Over time, Flashy is impressed by Brown's ability in his public performances to play the "homespun hero" (pg. 207), despite his frontier reputation as a savage. Brown enjoys the role and plays it well. Brown knows how to play his followers' hero-worship coolly, putting them into fits of laughter and reminiscence of stories for him to tell.

Flashy hopes that Brown's ague will prevent a summer campaign, but Brown does not pamper himself. He lives like a Spartan, always on guard. He is not a good speaker, but has a presence that gets money flowing. His message is simple: it is time for action. He sometimes drifts into philosophizing but is capable of ringing phrases. Brown enjoys being likened to his hero, Cromwell. Brown also writes many letters, including one to his daughter Ellen about growing up good. During the tour, Flashy studies Brown. As the newcomer, Flashy hears a lot of Brown's musings, including an unnerving description of his rage as a 12-year-old over the mistreatment of a slave boy. He follows with the story of locating a runaway slave by the sound of his wildly beating heart. That is Brown's moment of revelation; Flashy cannot recall one.



With money, men, and munitions low, Brown needs support from the renowned Frederick Douglass, but Douglass declares the plan crazy and wicked, sure to set back abolitionism. Brown rages that the raid will signal freedom to the enslaved. Based on Flashy's statistics, Douglass declares that the mission is suicidal. Hostages, on which Brown depends, will make no difference. They argue for hours, until dusk, and again in the morning. Douglass loves Brown but his conscience will not allow him to participate. As they leave, Brown is depressed. When money appears almost miraculously, Brown orders the mission launched. Everything goes according to Flashy's plan, but Brown then grows indecisive in following up. He refuses to leave Harper's Ferry lest escaped slaves fail to find him to lead the great uprising. He does not order the removal of arms and munitions to the hills, where guerrilla warfare could be waged. Earlier, Brown shows signs of insanity when he insists on building fortifications linked by tunnels in the classical fashion. Still, Flashy refuses to believe him insane in the legal sense.

Flashy kills Joe Simmons as Joe aims at Brown, after listening in amazement as Joe rails at him for abandoning them to their fate and accomplishing nothing. Brown is beaten about the head and repeatedly stabbed by U.S. Marines in the final assault, but survives to stand trial. This is precisely what the government does not want. Brown seems to realize the value of this public platform, even though the gallows stand beyond. At his trial, a week after the raid, Brown puts on the act of his life. He offers no defense and accepts his fate with Christian patience. He rejects an insanity plea and, clearly, for all he has talked about him being crazy, Flashy confesses that he is no madman. The trial is a farce: short, marked by drunken prosecutors and conflict of interest. All that is remembered is Brown's dignity and bravery. During the month before he is hanged, Brown gains a reputation as a cheerful martyr. Everyone knows that because of him the two sides have hardened their views. Those who want a separation hope that his death will hasten it. Brown wants to die, knowing what it will lead to. His last note speaks of great bloodshed purging a guilty land.

Brown is hanged outside Charles Town, VA, on 2 Dec. 1859. Sentimental accounts are somewhat in error, but he does admire the beauty of nature on his last ride. He asks not to be kept waiting. Across the North bells ring in mourning, more so even than for Lincoln years later. Across the South Brown is detested more than anyone but respected for his courage. Flashy believes that Brown may be "the most evil influence ever let loose in North America" (pg. 348), the cause of 750,000 deaths and many more crippled. The war might have happened anyway, but Brown bears some of the blame. Flashy believes slavery would have ended anyway.

Joseph (Joe) Simmons

A fictional character, Joe is a black man, ostensibly one of Crixus' followers but in fact working for the secret white supremacy group, Kuklos. Crixus, who wants narrator Sir Harry Flashman to join up with Brown in order to start a civil war, assigns Joe to follow him everywhere. Joe, however, helps Flashy escape from Crixus' house and arranges for him to be picked up by Annette Mandeville and delivered to a hotel where three hooded members of Kuklos await. Joe, it turns out, is born a slave in the household of



Count Charles La Force, whose Kuklos code name is Atropos. They are boyhood friends and Joe is now his bodyguard and spy inside the Underground Railroad, having appeared to run away five years earlier and become one of the most trusted "conductors." Atropos assigns Joe to accompany Flashy and Annette, posing as newlyweds, to New York City and on to Concord, MA, to enlist in Brown's service.

On the train Flashy engages Joe in conversation about why he remains a slave. Joe enjoys prestige and comforts that would be denied him as a "black trash" (pg. 144) freeman. These include sex with Annette, which Joe particularly enjoys because she so hates it. Flashy argues that as smart as he is, Joe could educate and better himself, but Joe counters that only being white would improve his lot. He reveals that he had studied alongside Atropos and is now his trusted best friend. He only feigns being a dumb field hand. Flashy earns a dirty look from Joe when he goes to Annette's cabin, specifically to have sex. From then on they are enemies.

Joe is better educated than Brown or his followers but keeps up the dumb act. Flashy notices that after they have been with Brown a while, Joe looks differently at him during speeches and Flashy wonders why. When Frank Meriam donates \$600 to the cause, which Flashy takes as a sign he must make his break for freedom, since it insures the mission, Joe reaches the barn in time to cut him off. He looks like "the Wild Man of Borneo" (pg. 259). Joe threatens to kill Flashy unless he returns to the house because Brown is depending on his military acumen to lead all of the black folk who are going to gather for this great fight. Joe damns Atropos as just another slaver and declares that he will no longer be diverted by a white man's gifts. He now follows a real man who treats him as a man. Joe intends to see that Flashy is at Brown's side when he sets Joe's people free. Slapping him to the ground and picking him up, Joe promises to kill Flashy if he even looks false.

After Harper's Ferry is captured peacefully and Brown returns to indecision, Joe gets angry at Flashy for not warning him. Flashy insists that he has. Joe is among the last survivors and fights like a Ghazi. He cannot reveal Flashy's true identity without revealing his own ties to Kuklos. Flashy believes that Joe has had a true road to Damascus revelation (a reference to Saul's conversion, told in Acts 9, 22, and 26). Flashy is unsure whether Brown has given him a new "slant on the slave condition" (pg. 320) or if Joe is simply crazy. Joe certainly is prone to violence on his last day of life and he aims it at Brown for bringing him to the point of death when he could have been safe in the hills. Brown failed to free and rally the slaves. He ignored his lieutenants' sound pleas, thus betraying them. Brown rebukes Joe several times but cannot silence him until he cocks his revolver at him and declares him mutinous. Flashy knows how blindingly fast Joe's draw is.

During the U.S. Marines' final assault on the surviving raiders, Joe is bayoneted in the arm. He rises up angry at Brown, misfires one cylinder and is about to fire again when Flashy puts two bullets in his back. Flashy is not sure why, except that he hates Joe and cannot hate Brown, no matter what he has done. Joe is given a secret, nighttime burial. Kuklos wants to know what happens to him. Flashy refuses to tell when confronted by Hannah Popplewell, who so loves Flashy that she warns him to jump off the train before



Baltimore to avoid capture and interrogation. She suspects that Joe is dead and the Marines fired no weapons during the final assault. An examination of the body would quickly reveal the truth.

Jeremiah Goldsmith (Jerry) Anderson

A 26-year-old abolitionist zealot who is present at Concord, MA, when narrator Sir Harry Flashman first meets John Brown and enlists as his military advisor, Anderson regards Brown as the next best thing to God and follows him to expunge his family's guilt for holding slaves. Flashy hopes all of the followers are as naïve as Anderson, lest anyone compete with him for Brown's ear. A lieutenant in an irregular troop of Free Soilers in Kansas, Anderson has fought the U.S. Cavalry there and in Missouri, and been imprisoned for the cause. He sees Brown's present, small band as able to "shake this land of liberty and equality clear to its centre" (pg. 217). He is itching for action. During the final tour of the Eastern states, Anderson is Brown's normal bodyguard until Flashy takes over, the better to fit in among city folk put off by Anderson's dress like an "out-of-work scarecrow" (pg. 222). During the final siege on the survivors of the raid, Anderson hears that they are traitors and begins calling for surrender. He is bayoneted to death.

Atropos / Count Charles La Force

The leader of a trio of white-hooded Southern gentlemen who confront narrator Sir Harry Flashman in a Washington, DC, hotel room shortly after he and fiery Annette Mandeville have finished having sex. Atropos, along with Lachesis and Clotho, is a leader of Kuklos, an organization devoted to preserving slavery. Later in the novel it is revealed that he is the Count Charles La Force and Annette's husband.

Atropos is an obese man dressed in broadcloth. He has a sugary Southern accent. He alone removes his hood, claiming to have no public image to preserve. Flashy is repulsed by his "jelly jowls, swollen cheeks, and bulbous nose. He appears to be about 40 with windswept blond hair and smiling blue eyes 'amiable as fish-hooks'" (pgs. 120-121). Joe Simmons is a family slave and Atropos' boyhood playmate, current bodyguard, and best friend. Atropos enjoys watching Joe and other slaves have sex with Annette. Atropos is one of the richest men in the South, the brain (but not the head), of Kuklos, and not at all crazy. He gets what he orders and does what he promises. He is unaware that Annette is an undercover agent of the U.S. Government.

The Brown Offspring

John Brown's good-looking sons are his earliest and most trusted followers, although they are hardly leadership material. The eldest, John, Jr., is emotionally scarred by the massacre at Pottawatomie and physically scarred when tortured by the Border Ruffians. Owen is their father's right-hand man, big, bearded, tough, and genial. They are in Ohio during Brown's final financial drive. Dreamy, soulful Oliver joins them later. Handsome, shy, and bookish, he leaves a wife, Martha, up north. Flashy likens them to the



unsuccessful British revolutionary, Guy Fawkes. John, Jr. remains brooding in Ohio when Brown and his brothers, with narrator Harry Flashman, Joe Simmons, and Jerry Anderson, take the train to Maryland. Martha joins them at the rented Kennedy Farm as cook and Brown's daughter Annie helps keep house and is a great sentry. Tall, gentle Watson Brown arrives later, wanting all the while to return to his wife and baby. Brown's sons Salmon and Jason refuse to come south and join the force. John, Jr. in Canada fails to recruit any blacks. Watson and Oliver are killed at Harper's Ferry.

Johnny Cook

A historical character, Cook is John Brown's man inside Harper's Ferry for a year before the raid. He works as a teacher and frets about whether the slaves should rise up and join Brown and, if so, how will they know to rise up? Used to having his ideas rejected, Cook is happy when Brown is enthusiastic about taking hostage Col. Washington, a distant descendant of the first President.

Crixus

A fictional character, Crixus is a return character from "Flash for Freedom!" and a leader of the Underground Railroad. Crixus' pseudonym comes from Spartacus' fellow slave rebel leader in Roman times. As he had in New Orleans in the earlier novel, Crixus in Baltimore has his men seize narrator Sir Harry Flashman (whom he assumes to be Lt. Comber) in a dark alley to propose a mission. Crixus is now a physically frail old man. His chief henchmen are Moody and Joe Simmons.

Assuming that because the pugnacious slave George Randolph reaches Canada it has been thanks to Flashy's dedication, Crixus weeps for joy at Flashy's return, seeing it as an act of God, and tries to convince him to join John Brown's drive to start a slave rebellion in Virginia. Crixus assigns Joe, who in fact is working for the secret white supremacy group, Kuklos, to accompany Flashy. Crixus ecstatically describes how Brown has become the rallying point for a radicalized Northern abolitionism. He looks forward to a great crusade, an unmatched guerrilla war as slaves rise up to join free men everywhere. Flashy responds enthusiastically to protect his own position, but believes that Crixus is as crazy as Brown.

Crixus reveals his plan: Brown needs a competent military advisor to bring off his plan, having lost Huge Forbes, another Briton, who treacherously revealed Brown's secret plans to a group of senators as he left the movement. Crixus sees Flashy performing as Brown's military mind and right hand man, a Joshua to his Moses.

Frederick Douglass

A historical character, Douglass is an escaped slave and abolitionist who meets John Brown and narrator Sir Harry Flashman in Chambersburg, PA, before the failed raid on Harper's Ferry, VA. Flashy describes the greatest and most famous black man in



America as "altogether white in speech and style, but I doubt if he knew it or cared; he had a fine sense of his own dignity, which would have irked me whatever colour he was" (pg. 250). Douglass moves among the highest circles, publishes a newspaper, lectures widely, the first potential "black messiah" (pg. 248) since the Haitian revolutionary Toussaint l'Ouverture at the turn of the 19th century. If Brown can convince Douglass to join the raid, every black in North America would flock to him, but Douglass is dedicated to non-violence. Douglass declares the plan crazy and wicked, sure to set back abolitionism and, based on Flashy's statistics, suicidal. Hostages will make no difference. They argue for hours, until dusk that day, and the next morning. Douglass loves Brown but his conscience will not allow him to participate. He allows his associate, Emperor Green, to enlist, however. As they leave Chambersburg, Brown is depressed.

Lady Elspeth Morrison Flashman

Narrator Sir Harry Flashman's beautiful but brainless wife, Elspeth is much on Flashy's mind after a long separation while serving in India. Flashy is far fonder of her than in most of his papers, although he is rather certain that she is having an affair with the Prince of Wales.

Sir George Edward Grey

A historical character, Grey is the Governor of Cape Colony in what is now South Africa, having earlier been a soldier, explorer, and governor in Australia and New Zealand. His goal in South Africa is to reconcile Britons and Boers (the Dutch) and civilize the natives, whom he claims to understand. White old timers give Grey's policies little chance of success. London has rejected his idea of union with the British Empire, wanting no more overseas colonies. Grey summons narrator Sir Harry Flashman to the Castle to request a good word with Lord Palmerston, insisting that if he is recalled, Africa is doomed. When Flashy promises, having no intention of keeping his word, as he generally avoids Palmerston, one of his nemeses, Grey presents him as a great hero from the balcony and leaves him to meet beautiful Miranda Spring, which leads directly to Flashy's being shanghaied to America.

Julia Ward Howe

A historical character, Julia Ward Howe is the wife of abolitionist Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, one of the "Secret Six" who secretly fund John Brown. Julia Ward Howe's fame comes later with writing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Narrator Harry Flashman meets her at John Brown's sixtieth birthday party and recalls her as "a spanking little red-head with a sharp eye" (pg. 213).



John Henry Kagi

A historical figure, the 24-year-old Kagi is John Brown's Gideon and Secretary of War, and the only follower whom narrator Sir Harry Flashman considers brave and intelligent. This makes him a threat to Flashy's secret efforts to thwart a raid in Harper's Ferry, VA. Kagi is Swiss-American, dapper, well-read, and anxious for action. He analyzes with Flashy a well-drawn map and agrees with Flashy's initial strategy. He is glad finally to meet a professional soldier. Ready to laugh, Flashy asks him about the logistics of a massive slave rebellion. Flashy decides that he must let Kagi gradually perceive for himself that the raid is hopeless. Brown will accept this verdict from him alone. Staff meetings about crazy ideas trouble Kagi until at Chambersburg, PA, Kagi voices his concerns to Flashy: the slaves will not want to rise until after the harvest, when owners inhumanely sell them. Kagi hates waiting.

Kagi goes North awhile and then rejoins the party at Kennedy Farm, where he is in charge of the ludicrous flaming crosses mission. Kagi is stationed in Chambersburg, coordinating operations. As funds run out, Kagi brings Frank Meriam to the Kennedy Farm to donate \$600, which insures that the attack will take place. Kagi is second in command during the failed raid where he is killed in action. Asked why he disappears during the fighting, Flashy lies to Brown, claiming to have gone to fetch Kagi to Brown's side and being with him at the end. He claims that Kagi has begged Brown to surrender in order to use his trial to proclaim his message to the world.

Col. Robert E. Lee and Lt. J.E.B. Stuart

Historical characters, Lee commands the 2nd Cavalry and is dispatched by the War Department to deal with John Brown at Harper's Ferry. Stuart, who is in Washington, DC, "hawking his patent swordfrog" (pg. 295), is sent along as his aide-de-camp. Ahead of them march the U.S. Marines. Narrator Sir Harry Flashman, who later fights under Lee during the Civil War, calls him canny and imperturbable. Flashy notes that Stuart looks devilishly like himself—tall, handsome, and daring.

Stuart undertakes the final attempt at gaining Brown's surrender, speaking on behalf of Lee and Messervy at the Treasury Department. This mention gives Flashy hope of deliverance. Flashy later serves under Stuart during the Civil War and always has a high opinion of him. Stuart remains polite in the face of Brown's impudent refusal. He recalls dispersing Brown's riders on the Santa Fe Trail three years earlier and wishes that Brown would display the same good sense now, in order to save lives. Seeing that talk is hopeless, Stuart looks Flashy in the face, then at his gun, and then again in the face, which Flashy reads as a message to fulfill Messervy's commission and assassinate Brown. With Joe there, Flashy dares not obey, even if that were his style. Stuart leaves and signals the Marines to advance.

Stuart appears in the final chapter in a far less favorable light, badgering a gravely wounded but high-spirited Brown as he answers public questions. Flashy finds Stuart's behavior reprehensible.



Capt. Lynch and Mr. Fitzgibbon

The broken-nosed, incorruptible sea captain chosen by John Charity Spring to transport narrator Sir Harry Flashman (in the guise of Beauchamp Milward Comber) to Baltimore, MD, Lynch is a powerful man, able to toss Flashy about like a gunny sack. He declares that he is Spring's friend and believes in slavery, which Flashy is said to oppose. He assigns Flashy to his first mate, Fitzgibbon, an equally competent sailor, to fulfill his menial duties during the voyage.

Annette Mandeville

A fictional character, Mandeville returns from "Flash for Freedom!" where she and husband John own the Greystones cotton plantation in Mississippi. John hires narrator Harry Flashman (under the alias Tom Arnold) as a slave driver. Annette is imperious, spoiled, and petulant; well-shaped, with a sharp chin, tight lips, and cold, disdainful gray eyes. She and Flashy end up in bed together several times before being caught. John sends Flashy off to Alabama as a slave.

In the present novel, the ambiguous feelings remain on both sides as Annette picks Flashy up on the dark streets of Washington, DC, fleeing crazy Crixus, who wants him to become John Brown's military adviser. Flashy takes Annette for an upscale prostitute. Having had no women for two months, Flashy is more abrupt than usual and falls asleep. When he comes to, he hears the unknown woman insisting that he is Arnold, while Joe Simmons, Crixus' henchman, insists that his name is Comber. The members of Kuklos, a secret Southern organization devoted to preserving slavery as an institution, decide that whatever his identity, Flashy is the man they need to enlist with Brown to provide them an inside man.

In Atropos' absence, Annette reveals that she and rich, fat Atropos are married and he enjoys watching her have sex with other men. Atropos sends them to New York City and on to Concord, MA, as newlywed husband and wife, guarded by their slave, Joe. In New York, Annette reveals that she is an armed Federal agent, helping bring Flashy into the service of the U.S. to avert Brown's planned raid, rather than to facilitate it as Kuklos desires.

During a last bout of sex, normally taciturn Annette pours out her life's story: marriage at 15 to a disgusting redneck; widowhood soon after she and Flashy are caught in the act; a few lovers; a successful career on the stage; marriage to the disgusting, depraved—but wealthy—Charles La Force, a.k.a. Atropos. He makes her have sex with Joe and other slaves for his amusement and draws her into the dealings of Kuklos. Allan Pinkerton, who once suggests that she would do well in police work, recruits her as an undercover agent. Flashy is amazed at her dedication to getting vengeance on Atropos. Annette is in a fiery mood in the morning, but then bids a tearful goodbye to Flashy.



Francis Jackson (Frank) Meriam

A tall man with a limp and missing one eye, Meriam arrives at the Kennedy Farm in the company of John Henry Kagi, bearing \$600, just as John Brown's finances run out. Brown declares him God-sent. Knowing that this insures Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry, narrator Sir Harry Flashman makes a break for freedom, but is captured by Joe Simmons before he can leave the barn.

Messervy

A lantern-jawed government official who helps conduct narrator Sir Harry Flashman to see Sen. William H. Seward, Messervy takes over from Allan Pinkerton as Flashy's primary handler in his mission to prevent a raid on Harper's Ferry. Messervy is a keen "Yankee Corinthian" with laconic style, who speaks the "lordly half-English" of the Eastern U.S. colleges. He is a simple man with a burning purpose, though not a latter-day Oliver Cromwell as he fancies himself (pg. 186). Rather, he has a talent for inspiring devotion in colleagues above and below him in rank.

Messervy produces a list of John Brown's associates for Flashy to study. Most are young, uneducated, and violent. Messervy explains the factors that should help Flashy perform his job, warns him against undermining the men's loyalty to Brown, and talks about Brown's financial backers, the "Secret Six," whom Flashy will meet in Concord. The worst scenario would be for Brown to survive a failed raid and be tried for treason and hung. He is currently little-known; that would make him a martyr and archetype. If Flashy cannot keep Brown from invading Virginia, he must quietly kill him.

Messervy warns that Flashy may not contact him during the mission but promises to keep an eye on him. Flashy's hopes of surviving the failed raid rise when Lt. J.E.B. Stuart demands Brown's surrender on behalf of Col. Lee and Messervy of the Treasury Department. After the massacre, Messervy again takes charge of Flashy, preparing to send him home to England incognito. He asks why Joe Simmons rather than Brown is dead at Flashy's hand and is philosophical about the failure to eliminate the dangerous man. He wishes he could hire Flashy and Pinkerton to rescue Brown and smuggle him into Canada to avert the coming disaster.

Dangerfield Newby

A historical character, Newby is a 44-year-old freed slave who is the first of John Brown's raiders to die at the failed raid on Harper's Ferry, VA. Narrator Sir Harry Flashman recalls Newby weeping over a letter from his wife and hoping soon to free her and their children. Drunken townspeople kick and drag his corpse around.



Allan Pinkerton

A historical character, Pinkerton is a Scottish born detective, destined to become the most famous in America and to found the U.S. Secret Service during the Civil War. He is on the cusp of fame in 1859. Pinkerton meets narrator Sir Harry Flashman when Annette Mandeville, the wife of Atropos, leader of the pro-slavery Kuklos organization, tries to shake off Kuklos spies in New York City. They are ambushed by Pinkerton's joint police/federal agent task force, a member of which is Annette. Pinkerton knows Flashy's true background from his youthful days rioting against British occupation of Scotland, and promises to vouch for him only after he enlists with John Brown to prevent a raid that could set off a civil war. Pinkerton introduces Flashy to Sen. William H. Seward, who seals the deal for Flashy to become Brown's military adviser. Flashy's description of Pinkerton is not flattering: he is a nondescript man in a shabby suit, wearing a beard and having eyes that miss no detail. He shares a flask of Glenlivet single-malt whiskey, but quickly takes it back, claiming it is hard to get and expensive.

Hannah Popplewell / Medusa

A fictional character, Hannah first appears on a balcony in the Wager House, Harper's Ferry, VA, as narrator Sir Harry Flashman and Joe Simmons order breakfast on the morning after John Brown's raid. She has "bottle-red hair tumbling about shining ebony cheeks, a plump black hand clutching a silk peignoir round a form which would have done credit to a Turkish wrestler, and bold protruding eyes" (pg. 285) regarding Flashy with desire. She flashes him a dazzling white smile.

Moments later, as he seeks refuge upstairs from Joe, Flashy finds himself face-to-face with a bemused and flirtatious Hannah, who not only hides him from the drunken mob, but repeatedly seduces him. He finds her no Venus but "pretty in an overblown way" (pg. 288) and enormously endowed at 16 stone (224 lbs.). She claims to be on her honeymoon after marrying in Pittsburgh a rich runt who has gone ahead to Washington, DC. She is insatiable all night, leaving Flashy fearful of being suffocated, but finds it "capital fun" and "grueling" (pg. 291). Afterwards he figures to remain until the ruckus outside quiets down and then to board the train as Mr. Popplewell.

Flashy finds it odd that Hannah cannot imagine freeing "black trash fieldhan's an' low-life niggahs" (pg. 292) and assumes that Brown and his followers will be lynched at first opportunity. Even those emancipated will remain slaves mentally for a long time. For ten years since she is 16, Hannah has been using her body to get ahead and aiming to marry a rich white man. She gets sidetracked for a month in San Francisco with Billy, but he gets hanged. She next marries an older mulatto, Homer, who dies during sex. She is hired as a housekeeper by elderly white Popplewell and immediately sees his lust for her. She insists on marriage before giving in. He maintains that he cannot marry a black, but gives in. They have not consummated the marriage when he leaves.

Hannah hides Flashy in the attic and tries to divert officials who are hunting the foreigner. When the attic floor gives way, sending Flashy sprawling, he hoists Hannah



and throws her at the men before effecting his escape. He thinks about Hannah afterwards and is amazed to meet her on the train to Baltimore. They enjoy some more strenuous sex before she turns serious, announces that she is a member of Kuklos, code named Medusa, and demands to know what has become of Joe Simmons, Flashy's keeper. Knowing what will happen when Kuklos learns that he has killed Joe, Flashy tries to flee, but Hannah has him covered. Since he has given her the best love ever, Hannah gives him one last passionate kiss and has him jump off the train to avoid a trap.

Fr. Rafferty

A fictional character, Rafferty is an affable, "jaunty little leprechaun with a merry eye" (pg. 75), an Irish-born Catholic priest serving near the waterfront in Baltimore, MD. He advises narrator Sir Harry Flashman, posing as Grattan Nugent-Hare, newly-arrived and destitute, that he must go to Washington, DC, to see a British consul. Over tea, Rafferty leads Flashy into a trap about his supposed identity, but offers him train fare, partly as a loan and partly as wages for weeding his garden. Rafferty deduces that Flashy is an officer and at odds with the church. He advises Flashy on heading to Willard's Hotel and thence to the consulate, and emphasizes that Washington is full of muggers.

Franklin Benjamin Sanborn

A historical character, Sanborn is a member of the "Secret Six," a group of wealthy, influential abolitionists who secretly fund John Brown. Narrator Sir Harry Flashman first meets Brown in Sanborn's Concord, MA, home. Flashy describes him as "as intense and poetic as could be, with his fluffy whiskers and anxious eyes" (pg. 204). "Yes, indeed," is Sanborn's favorite phrase; saying it, he always rubs his hands. He babbles about Brown's health and the fatigue of traveling before running off to see if Brown is available to meet. Later, at a birthday celebration for Brown, Sanborn reads an ecstatic piece by Artemus Ward about Brown's speech in Cleveland, OH.

William H. Seward

A historical character, Seward is a U.S. Senator from New York and presumed Republican candidate for the Presidency in 1860. Narrator Sir Harry Flashman meets Seward through detective Allan Pinkerton, who has, on behalf of the U.S. Government, asked Flashy to enlist with John Brown to slow him down and prevent the raid that could precipitate a civil war.

Flashy finds Seward not a ten-foot giant but slight, brisk, blue-eyed, heavily eyebrowed, with a husky voice and a nose like a battleship. Having been manipulated by many eminent politicians, Flashy is not impressed, until Seward disarms him by flattery. Seward is en route to England, where he hopes to visit the Queen. He believes that Britons and Americans are a single race who will eagerly come to one another's defense in time of trouble. The U.S. has reached the crisis point over slavery.



When Flashy says that he would volunteer his services if allowed, Seward argues that the Queen, Prince Albert, and Lord Palmerston would condemn his turning his back on duty to humanity. It is an ingenious—and effective—argument, for it gets Flashy to picture his knighthood being withdrawn. Messervy, Flashy's handler after he accepts the assignment, declares that Seward is a "true-blue abolitionist" but not "a fool or a firebrand." His Grand Tour of Europe is timed to remove him while Brown is dealt with.

Brown's papers link Seward to the failed raid as an "arch agitator" (pg. 345) and probably cost him the presidency. Flashy is not displeased, calling him "the cigar-chewing blighter who blackmailed me into the business" (pg. 345).

John Charity Spring and Miranda

Fictional characters, Spring appears in two previous Flashman novels as the captain of a slave ship whom narrator Sir Harry Flashman keeps from being convicted of piracy in order to save his own neck in "Flash for Freedom!" and then happily sees shanghaied to South Africa in "Flashman and the Redskins." Spring is a large, cold man, with a scar across his forehead that reddens when he is angry, who has studied the classics at Oriel College, Oxford, before being expelled. Latin epigrams are constantly on his tongue. After being cleared of piracy charges, Spring gets into a brawl in a New Orleans bar, kills Peter Omohundro, and flees with Flashy to the bordello owned by Flashy's old friend Susie Willinck. Distrusting him, she administers knock-out drops and signs him aboard a commercial boat bound for Africa.

Spring is prospering in South Africa when Flashy arrives from India. He and his beautiful daughter, Miranda, born to a Coastal Arab after Mrs. Spring dies, live in Grahamstown. They come down the coast by yacht when visiting Cape Town. Spring is on the board of examiners and is constantly pushing for the founding of a university. Spring has lost none of his old animosity for Flashy when they meet at the Castle, both guests of Gov. Grey. Catching Flashy leering at flirtatious Miranda, Spring takes him aside and threatens a horrible death if Flashy does not avoid her for the remainder of his stay.

Bright-eyed and mischievous, with a dark cream complexion and glossy black hair that extends far down her back, a wide mouth, aquiline nose, and heavy eyebrows, 17-year-old Miranda invites Flashy to their mansion, promising that her father has gone away. She tells him a cautionary tale about how her father flogs one of her would-be lovers to death. She then lies to her father about not having had sex with Flashy aboard the Ariel when he reappears, thereby sparing his life, but is happy to have helped gotten revenge on her father's old nemesis, sending him off to America as a penniless deck hand with documentation to alert American authorities when he lands.

George Luther Stearns

A historical character, Sanborn is a member of the "Secret Six," a group of wealthy, influential abolitionists who secretly fund John Brown. To serve the cause of abolition,



Stearns' son offers all of his pocket money to Brown for his autograph. Brown calls it the "Widow's Mite" (after the story in Mark 12).

Aaron Dwight Stevens and Stewart Taylor

At 30 (28 in Appendix 3) the oldest of John Brown's "Pet Lambs" and a "formidable character" (pg. 244), Stevens has escaped a death sentence in Kansas. He and fellow spiritualist Stewart Taylor, a 22-year-old Canadian, stick together, discussing the hereafter. Taylor rightly predicts that he will be dead by Christmas. Taylor fires the first shot of the raid, after Harper's Ferry has been peacefully secured. This alerts the sleeping inhabitants and lessens the chances of narrator Harry Flashman's plan succeeding. Stevens is dispatched to arrest Col. Washington. Next morning, Steven is shot in the belly under a white flag and dragged inside the hotel, where Billy Thompson tries to rally his spirits. When Flashy is shot twice, superficially, and believes that he is dying, Taylor is dragging Flashy to safety in the engine house when a bullet explodes his head. Brown completes the rescue. Stevens survives but is hanged shortly after Brown.

The Thompson Brothers

Members of John Brown's "Pet Lambs," Dauphin Osgood Thompson, age 21, blushes like a girl and William (Bill) Thompson, age 26, is a jolly story-teller. Bill is seized under a white flag and held for either hanging or burning by the drunken mob. He is loud in proclaiming his willingness to die to set millions free. He tries to rally the spirits of Aaron Stevens, who has been shot in the belly. Thompson is dragged to the bridge and shot point-blank. The drunkards laughingly empty their weapons into his dead body on the river bank below. Dauphin also dies in the raid.

Col. Lewis Washington

A slave-owning, aristocratic landowner near Harper's Ferry, VA, Washington is a distant descendant of the first President and thus the most fitting of the hostages taken by John Brown during his raid. He is also an aide to the Governor of Virginia and, thus, a potential troublemaker. The rebels seize from Washington Lafayette's pistol and Frederick the Great's sword. Washington takes his arrest and the confiscation of his goods coolly, even as shots ring out and Brown delivers a nonsensical speech. Washington serves as the leader of the hostages. When the captain of militia tries to convince Brown to surrender and is told that his men and the hostages are all in God's hands, Washington calls Brown a blasphemer and pagan, and is ordered behind the engines with the others. Narrator Sir Harry Flashman, working undercover for the U.S. Government in Brown's organization, can find no way to befriend Washington or get him to believe his story. This seems to Flashy his surest means of survival.



Sen. Henry Wilson

A historical character, Wilson is a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts. "Editor" George MacDonald Fraser notes in Endnote 43 that narrator Sir Harry Flashman never names the fat senator who plays a role in trying to recruit him for the mission to thwart John Brown, but the physical description and confrontation at a Boston hotel indicate Wilson. When Brown asks about speeches that the senator has given against his recent foray into Missouri, Wilson declares that such illegal acts do harm to the anti-slavery cause. Brown disagrees and they part. Flashy passes a note to his handler, Messervy, via Wilson but does not know if he receives it or if it has any effect on the defense of Harper's Ferry.



Objects/Places

Baltimore, MD

Baltimore is narrator Sir Harry Flashman's first stop in America in this, his second involuntary visit, after being kidnapped in South Africa. He is transported to Chesapeake Bay doing menial labor and held aboard ship for two days while John Charity Spring's letters about him are distributed ashore. Flashy pictures all of the enemies that he makes ten years earlier gathering at the pier to wreak vengeance—and pictures all of the women whom he has used forming a jury—but is dropped off, drugged and penniless, in a cheap waterfront whorehouse, the "Knittin' Swede's" (pg. 72). Unable to find the British consul whom he assumes will reside in a major Eastern port, Flashy takes refuge in a Catholic Church, where Fr. Rafferty sees through his various lies but still lends him travel fair to Washington, DC, and advice about watching out for muggers there. At the end of the novel, Flashy is put on a train bound for Baltimore from Harper's Ferry, to catch a ship to Liverpool and home, but he is tipped off that agents of Kuklos are waiting to seize him. He jumps train and sadly does not make it home for some time.

Calcutta, India

At the end of "Flashman in the Great Game", narrator Harry Flashman finds himself in Calcutta, awaiting a voyage home to England. Instead, to avoid being killed by Lord Plunkett, whose blonde, white-skinned wife he has enjoyed, Flashy sails on the first ship to South Africa, where even greater dangers lurk.

Chambersburg, PA

A small town in southeast Pennsylvania, Chambersburg lies just north of the Mason-Dixon Line. John Brown uses it as a staging post for his raid on Harper's Ferry, VA, and outside of town in a quarry holds a secret meeting with the famed non-violent abolitionist Frederick Douglass, whose help is vital to military success. Douglass declares the plan crazy and wicked, sure to set back abolitionism, and suicidal. As they leave Chambersburg, Brown is depressed.

Concord, MA

Home to Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, Concord is where the narrator, Sir Harry Flashman, first meets John Brown and signs on as his military adviser. A number of the "Secret Six" are meeting there at the time.



Harper's Ferry

Located just downriver from Hagerstown, VA, Harper's Ferry lies at the meeting place of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers between grand heights on either side. Bridges connect the town over both rivers to Maryland and Virginia. A map, hand-drawn by narrator Sir Harry Flashman, can be found on page 269. The Ferry is not the sleepy hamlet that Flashy expects. The armory stretches half a mile along the Potomac. Beyond that stand the rifle works and before it Wager House, a hotel on the Baltimore & Ohio railroad line. There are no soldiers but many laborers and townspeople to be seen. The idea of taking the place seems to Flashy preposterous, but he prepares the best plans he can to seize the munitions quickly and non-violently.

They succeed admirably, but the situation quickly falls apart as locals begin shooting at the better-armed raiders. When Mayor Beckham is shot dead by a sharpshooter, tempers flare further and emissaries sent out under white flags are either seized for later hanging or burning or shot dead in the street. Flashy survives the drunken violence upstairs in the Wager House with the insatiable Hannah Popplewell, who hides him. Finally discovered, Flashy races to the concrete walled engine house inside the armory, where the survivors have taken cover. There they make their last stand against U.S. Marines. Only three, including Flashy, survive.

Kennedy Farm

A ramshackle, three-story farm house and outbuildings located three miles from Harper's Ferry, VA, the Kennedy Farm is John Brown's base of operations for the planning, arming of, training for, and staging of his infamous raid. The Farm is shielded from the road and unlikely to raise questions about eccentric Yankees wanting to play farmer. Narrator Sir Harry Flashman, as Brown's military advisor, spends three hot, boring months there. As the core of six grows, it becomes important to keep nosy neighbors—to Flashy all Americans are nosy—from investigating. Brown's daughter Annie and daughter-in-law Martha keep house and run interference. The final plan is to seize the armory and transport captured weapons and munitions back to the Farm and thence into the hills. Brown's indecision prevents this and dooms the men.

Kuklos

A secret organization dedicated to the preservation of slavery as an institution, Kuklos has an intelligence operation rivaling the anti-slavery Underground Railroad. Each has spies in the other's organization. Kuklos picks up narrator Sir Harry Flashman after he is allowed to escape from the Railroad, whose leader is convinced that Flashy will work with them in fostering a slave revolt. Flashy is seduced by an upscale prostitute who turns out to be an ex-lover from Flashy's last adventures in New Orleans ten years earlier. The members who confront him wear white hoods that evoke in Flashy's mind the Spanish Inquisitors. They adopt names from classical mythology: Clotho, Lechesis,



and Atropos. These are the Parcae (Fates), "arbiters of birth, life, and death" according to Endnote 21 (pg. 382). The note points out similarities to the postwar Ku Klux Klan.

Leicestershire, England

Narrator Sir Harry Flashman's home when he eventually returns from all his misadventures worldwide, Leicestershire includes a lakeside home nicknamed Gandamak for the establishment that Flashy frequents in Kabul, Afghanistan. It provides the opening scene in the novel, as 91-year-old Flashy watches his five great grandchildren, who hear the strains of "Glory, glory, Halleluia," and beg to hear about his relationship with John Brown.

New York, NY

Described as a city of no architectural interest in 1859, New York City is a stopover for narrator Harry Flashman, his erstwhile wife (actually double agent Annette Mandeville), and slave Joe Simmons en route to Concord, MA, to enlist in the service of John Brown. They stay at the Astor Hotel, the finest in the city, and travel by street car and omnibus to an enameling studio on one of the avenues. There they are pursued by Kuklos guards who are fought off by Allan Pinkerton and a mixed force of New York police and federal agents. They send the surviving Kuklos to the Tombs prison to be held in isolation. Flashy describes life in New York as bustling. He is particularly impressed by the independence of the women, but dislikes their laughs and sharp speech. Flashy describes the busy harbor vividly. He returns in Brown's retinue during his farewell tour of the Northeast. Brown clashes with an unnamed senator about the latter's attitude towards violence in Kansas.

Pottawatomie, KS

The site of the massacre of pro-slavery settlers by John Brown, his sons, and a handful of followers, Pottawatomie became a byword for violent abolitionism. Narrator Sir Harry Flashman recalls Brown, saying that those people "had a right to be killed" (pg. 16). The romanticized pro-abolitionist version is first given by Crixus, head of the Underground Railroad, as the opening battle in God's righteous battle with sinful slavery. Flashy then tempers the rhetoric, explaining the simple facts to his readers: Brown and his boys invade the homes of five innocent Free Staters and cut the people down with sabers in cold blood. Brown does not deny the deed but claims to have killed no one personally. It had followed an act of provocation in the U.S. Senate. Brown's followers have never been able to explain it away. The Border Ruffians' reprisal kills over 200 and destroy thousands of dollars' worth of property.



The Secret Six

Historical characters, the Secret Six are a group of wealthy, influential abolitionists who secretly fund John Brown while worrying that he will do something drastic. They are Dr. Samuel Howe, Gerrit Smith, Theodore Parker, George Luther Stearns, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Franklin Benjamin Sanborn. A few of them are shown celebrating Brown's sixtieth birthday at Sanborn's home when narrator Sir Harry Flashman first meets him. After Dobbs Ferry, Brown's capture papers divulge the names and Howe, Sanborn, and Stearns flee to Canada to avoid arrest.

South Africa

Narrator Sir Harry Flashman's refuge from a vengeful Lord Plunkett in Calcutta, India, Cape Town turns out to be his unwanted ticket back to North America. Flashy describes Cape Town as booming economically but socially dull. Parties are still held in Grahamstown, up the coast. Flashy's old nemesis, John Chastity Spring, owns many acres there and is an influential man. Gov. George Gray has moved the army there to deal with the Mutiny. Missionaries and Boers (the Dutch) are stirring up the native populations, Bantus, Basutos, Kaffirs, and Zulus, and Grey is dedicated to uniting all whites for survival against the blacks, whom he also aims to civilize. London is against Grey's policies, so he invites the famous Flashy to the Castle to seek his help in avoiding being recalled.

Spring is looking to get even with Flashy for his part ten years earlier in shanghaiing him to South Africa. In league with his flirtatious (but supposedly chaste) daughter, Miranda, Spring drugs Flashy aboard his yacht and ships him as a common sailor to Baltimore, MD, to face charges under various aliases he has used there. Flashy offers a concise history of colonial Africa, where the British and Boers (Dutch) hold out together against the overwhelming number of native races.

Washington, DC

The capital of the United States, Washington is narrator Sir Harry Flashman's second stop after arriving by ship in Baltimore, MD. A kindly Irish Catholic priest lends him travel money and advises him to go to fashionable Willard's Hotel and thence to the British consulate to straighten out his affairs. He warns about muggers in the capital. Slogging through mud in the city that is little improved in the ten years that he has been away, Flashy cuts through an alley and is captured by three men who address him using the primary alias from when he worked for Crixus, head of the Underground Railroad in New Orleans, a decade before. They escort Flashy to Crixus' finely-furnished home and lodge him on a bare upper floor. The house is clearly a rarely-used station on the Underground Railroad. With slave Joe Simmons' help, Flashy escapes Crixus only to be taken captive by three hooded members of the secret Kuklos organization, in a hotel elsewhere in Washington where Annette Mandeville works as an upscale prostitute.

Flashy is for a second time recruited to join John Brown's organization. He and Annette, posing as husband and wife, and Joe take a train the New York City.



Themes

Religion

Religion always plays a part in the Flashman novels, with the narrator maintaining a cynical, detached view. In *Flashman and the Angel of the Lord*, Flashy comes face-to-face with a truly messianic character, John Brown. Many of his followers consider him just short of being God and truly divinely-guided. Brown has, over sixty years, memorized large portions of the Bible and interprets them according to his own views. Frederick Douglass is also considered a potential "black messiah" (pg. 248) but is sworn to non-violence. If Brown can convince Douglass to join the raid, every black in North America would flock to him, but Douglass sees the raid on Harper's Ferry as crazy, wicked, and suicidal, and his conscience will not let him participate. Brown finds parallels between ancient Israel's conquest of the Land of Canaan and the coming battle for the abolition of slavery in America.

To this end, he orders the mysterious Crixus, a religious zealot almost of Brown's caliber, to find him a competent military advisor. Crixus speaks in terms of Brown being a new Moses and Flashy his new Joshua, Joshua being the warrior who actually leads the bloody campaigns in Canaan. When Flashy joins Brown's flock, another character, John Henry Kagi, Brown's Secretary of War, is code-named Gideon, after a hero from the later era of the Hebrew Judges. Brown speaks fiercely in terms of expiation through blood, a major premise of biblical religion. His final message before being hanged warns of the cleansing to come. Flashy considers him a martyr and nearly a saint. He declares that Brown is one of the few people about whom he is willing to say God bless him. If God denies Brown a place in heaven at the last judgment, there will be a popular revolt.

Rather early in the novel, Flashy meets an old Irish-born Catholic priest in Baltimore, MD. Flashy has just landed in America penniless and without identification papers and figures that he is most likely to find British subjects in a Catholic church. The priest sees through Flashy's cover story but is kind in demonstrating this, and gives him travel money and advice about Washington, DC. Flashy remarks that he is so impressed that he actually repays the loan, not for conscience's sake but because of Fr. Rafferty's goodness. Some time later, when Annette Mandeville has a spiritual crisis over almost murdering a man, Flashy thinks of Rafferty and advises her to obtain absolution and be put right with God. He approaches the subject rather cheekily but it is clear that Rafferty has impressed him more than clergymen tend to.

Sex

Narrator Sir Harry Flashman, looking back over his ninety-some years, never hides from his readers the fact that he is a sexual being to the core. Several times in *Flashman and the Angel of the Lord* he recites litanies of past lovers' names with titillating references to specific pleasures. He does so fondly and unapologetically. Flashy also confesses that



his beautiful wife Elspeth is as promiscuous as he and, in 1859, is seeing the Prince of Wales. He thinks often of Elspeth and longs to be with her after a long period apart. He needs blonde hair and light skin, but is also emotionally attached to her, for all her faults.

Flashy admits to enjoying sex whenever possible, even when it entails physical risk from irate husbands. In this novel, Flashy leaves India faster than expected because of such a tryst, only to run into a father in South Africa, who warns him away from his beautiful and supposedly virginal daughter. When Flashy cannot resist, he lands in Baltimore, MD, penniless and without identity papers, and with the authorities alerted to the numerous warrants out on him in the South from years before. Flashy is determined, some day when it is safe, to inform the father that his daughter knows and practices sexual tricks that he has not encountered in whorehouses on four continents.

Flashy's first sexual encounter on this second visit to America is with Annette Mandeville, whose husband ten years earlier he had cuckolded; this results in him being shipped off to the slave market in Memphis. In Washington, DC, Flashy hails a cab, finds an upscale prostitute inside, and is fondling her before they reach her hotel. Having abstained too long, Flashy is brisk and falls asleep. When he awakens, he recognizes Annette. She is partnered with him as his ostensible wife for a trip to New York, and Flashy takes advantage of husband's rights as often as possible. Out of bed, they are mutually hostile. Annette confesses in tears that her repulsive current husband forces her to have sex with other men, including black slaves, in order to enjoy watching them. Knowing that he will face a long sexual famine when he joins John Brown's party, Flashy waits for Annette to fall asleep before satisfying himself a last time.

Famine there is and it ends to Flashy's surprise when he runs upstairs in the hotel as suppressed anger over Brown's raid turns to drunken violence by the populace. Flashy finds a large, red-headed black woman who not only hides him from the mob but who also repeatedly quenches her sexual appetite on him. He plays along happily but worries about being suffocated. They meet again at the end of the novel, as Flashy is riding the train to Baltimore. Hannah Popplewell is in the next cabin, reclining naked like a barroom painting, and beckoning him to her. After quenching her desires several times, she turns all business, announcing that she is part of one of the organizations that has commissioned Flashy to thwart John Brown's plans. Flashy denies that he kills their inside man but because he has been such an extraordinary lover, Hannah allows him to jump off the train and avoid interrogation by her colleagues. It is one of the few cases in which Flashy is delivered by his sexual nature.

Slavery

Slavery is central to *Flashman & the Angel of the Lord*, as narrator Sir Harry Flashman reflects on his role in John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, VA, in 1859. Brown is a great polarizing force between North and South. In previous volumes of his papers, Flashy takes an active role in transporting slaves from the Gold Coast of Africa to North America and has been himself enslaved. In this volume he declares that he does not



care about the institution unless it involves his welfare directly. Several times he observes that the United States would not be facing this crisis had it remained a British colony, for the Crown has abolished slavery and the American South could not have prevailed. He cites Abraham Lincoln as a typical pragmatic politician. Slavery can be abolished entirely, partially, or not at all, provided that the solution preserves the Union.

Ten years earlier, Flashy is pressed into serving Crixus and the Underground Railroad in New Orleans, moving liberated slaves north into Canada. He goes along because he cannot avoid it. In the present book, Crixus is in Washington, DC, and finds Flashy's return a godsend. He recruits Flashy to serve as John Brown's military advisor, hoping to spark a slave uprising that will spread across the South. Flashy is also recruited by the opposite pole: those who want to preserve the peculiar institution in the South. They want Flashy to prevent a raid that would fire passions on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line and precipitate a war. Finally, the U.S. Government, unable to deal directly or openly with Brown, browbeats Flashy into blocking a raid or, if it comes to that, assassinating Brown to prevent his trial from inspiring a civil war. In the background, the bloody battles being fought in Kansas between slavers and abolitionists are described and debated. No one is willing to compromise any more. Brown fully expects slaves to rise up, particularly after the harvest season, when they are typically sold, breaking up families, and inspiring suicides, but none rally to him. Ex-slaves in Canada do not come. Flashy is sure that even if they came they could not be welded into an effective fighting force, given Brown's primitive weapons. They will not help themselves.

The character who most clearly points up the problems of slavery is Joe Simmons, born a slave in the household of Count Charles La Force, whose Kuklos code name is Atropos. They are boyhood friends and Joe is now Atropos' bodyguard and spy inside the Underground Railroad. Atropos assigns Joe to accompany Flashy and another member Annette, posing as newlyweds, to New York City and on to Concord, MA, to enlist in Brown's service. On the train Flashy gets Joe to talk about why he remains a slave. Joe enjoys prestige and comforts that would be denied him as a "black trash" (pg. 144) freeman. These include sex with Annette, which Joe particularly enjoys because she so hates blacks. Flashy argues that as smart as he is, Joe could educate and better himself, but Joe counters that only being white would improve his lot. He reveals that he had studied alongside Atropos and is now his trusted best friend. He only feigns being a dumb field hand. Flashy earns a dirty look from Joe when he goes to Annette's cabin, specifically to have sex. From then on they are enemies.

After extended exposure to Brown's doctrine, Joe swallows the abolitionist line completely, damns Atropos as just another slaver, and declares that he will no longer be diverted by a white man's gifts. He has a real man to follow, one who treats him as a man. Black people must be set free. Another black character, Hannah Popplewell, amazes Flashy by declaring that she cannot imagine freeing "black trash fieldhan's an' low-life niggahs" (pg. 292). She assumes that Brown and his followers will be lynched at first opportunity. Even those emancipated will remain slaves mentally for a long time. She has for a decade been using her body to get ahead and aiming to marry a rich white man. They lust for "black meat" (pg. 293) she notes but taboos keep them from marrying. Having gotten rich Mr. Popplewell to the altar, Hannah enjoys the benefits of

his station, like Joe with Atropos, and is thus not typical of the slaves waiting for delivery.



Style

Point of View

Author George MacDonald Fraser uses 91-year-old Sir Harry Flashman, retired as a Brigadier-General from the British Army early in the 20th century, as a memoir-writer reviewing a long and seemingly illustrious career. Fraser purports to be no more than a technical editor who also adds historical and cultural endnotes to help the reader. The "Flashman Papers" are said to have been discovered late in 1966 by the family and given to Fraser to prepare for publication. This cache follows Flashy's adventures in India, told in "Flashman and the Great Game" and covers events in 1858-59.

Flashy assumes that readers are familiar with his exploits, ranging over his entire career and reminding them continually of how his reputation as an intrepid hero is at odds with reality. Somehow something always seems to come along to put him in harm's way. Flashy readily admits to crippling fear and following the impulse to flee danger. He refers most heavily to events during his two visits to America, and a number of characters are reintroduced. He often addresses the reader in the second person when drawing conclusion from current events or those of his long and colorful career.

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

Setting

"Flashman and the Angel of the Lord" begins where "Flashman and the Great Game" leaves off, in Calcutta, India, in 1858. Narrator Harry Flashman is again an accidental hero during the Sepoy Mutiny, honored with the Victoria Cross and promised a knighthood when he reaches London. He is anxious to get home. Flashy's sexual appetites, too long denied, get him in trouble first in Calcutta and then in Cape Town. The woman in question in South Africa is the daughter of Flashy's old nemesis, John Charity Spring, who traps him and sends him off to Baltimore, MD, in revenge for Flashy's having ten years earlier been a party to getting Spring sent penniless to South Africa. In Baltimore, Flashy comes to in a seedy waterfront warehouse, escapes with his skin, and asks help from a Catholic priest. Fr. Rafferty gives him money to reach Washington, DC, and directions what to do there to reach the British legation safely.

In Washington, Flashy is seized by agents of the Underground Railroad and brought before Crixus, for whom Flashy works earlier in New Orleans. Crixus wants him to enlist with John Brown and encourage a slave uprising in Virginia. Overnight, Flashy escapes



and finds himself facing the opposite end of the spectrum: three hooded members of Kuklos, a secret organization dedicated to preserving slavery. They hire him to join Brown and head off an uprising. Flashy and Annette Mandeville travel to New York City as man and wife, accompanied by Joe Simmons, a double agent. In a women's beauty salon Flashy learns that Annette is a federal agent. He is blackmailed into becoming Brown's military aide to prevent Brown from making a raid or to assassinate him, lest he be brought to trial and receive a forum for his ideas.

Flashy and Joe travel to Concord, MA, to join Brown and meet some of his rich financiers. They accompany him for the most part on his travels around the Northeast, speaking, collecting money, and encouraging volunteers. For a while they work with his sons in Ohio. They are with Brown and a small band as it rides south in Dixie. They rent the Kennedy Farm near Harper's Ferry and use it as a headquarters for training and perfecting a plan. Flashy's plan to seize the arsenal goes flawlessly, but once the Ferry is taken, everything falls apart. There are deaths and injuries and both the militia and U.S. Marines are dispatched. The small band is hopelessly surrounded when Brown hesitates to collect weapons and flee to the hills, and the lambs are picked off one by one. A final assault takes Brown alive and frees Flashy to return home to England. That trip is thwarted when Flashy learns from a lover that Kuklos is waiting for him in Baltimore and urges him to jump off the train.

Language and Meaning

"Flashman and the Angel of the Lord" is told in British English. The narrator is 91 years old, writing in the 20th century, looking back over a lifetime of misadventures. The present novel describes his being run out of India, double-crossed in South Africa, shipped to Baltimore, and being approached by three separate groups to ally himself with the radical abolitionist John Brown, alternatively to ward off or to launch a great civil war.

The novel is rich in the dialect of British soldiers, Southern plantation owners and their slaves, New Yorkers, and a few Scotsmen, Flashy always enjoying imitating their brogue because it is the language of his late father-in-law. The cruel and crazy master of Balliol College is briefly reprised from two previous novels, again demeaning Flashy with snippets of classical Latin authors. Flashy takes more time than usual to reflect on the various dialects as he seeks to capture their nuances.

Flashy describes violence explicitly, but in this volume keeps it to a minimum. He has been more or less celibate for a year and a half, so when sex presents itself—every few pages in general—Flashy describes the process from flirtation to consummation in jolly detail. He is rather staid by twenty-first-century standards of explicitness and uses a variety of British euphemisms, but is proud of his sexual nature, prowess, and history.

Writing as an old man, Flashy inevitably dredges up memories of people and events analogous to what he is currently experiencing. For readers new to the Flashman



series, this may be confusing but for veterans it is delightful, being not as heavy as in some volumes.

Finally, 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 quintessentially 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. Often it seems that Fraser relishes in using Flashy as politically incorrect, but catering to modern sensibilities would throw off the spirit of the character and the period.

Structure

Flashman and the Redskins opens with the usual "Explanatory Note" by George MacDonald Fraser, who describes how he comes to be editing the "Flashman Papers", which come recently to light a half-century after being written early in the twentieth century. Fraser then adds a short "Introduction", wonderfully summarizing "Flash for Freedom!", the third packet of manuscripts, whose continuation the present work represents. This memoir covers the Gold Rush year of 1849 and a second visit to North America a quarter-century later in 1876.

The body of the novel consists of 21 unnumbered and untitled chapters, running in chronological order. The chapters vary considerably in length. Sixty-two endnotes explain obscure references in the text and provide detailed background information on major historical characters, maintaining the fiction that this is a historical memoir rather than a work of historical fiction. Some of these are exceptionally useful to the reader. Two maps help picture where Flashy is in the crisis of 1859. The volume is completed by three appendices: "Flashman and John Brown," "The Harper's Ferry Mystery, and "John Brown's Men."

The novel opens with an elderly Flashy spending time with his great grandchildren. Hearing "Gory Halooyah" and asking what happened to "Jombwown's body" (pg. 11), the youngsters get him thinking about how he finds himself in the thick of things at Harper's Ferry and, again, barely escapes with his life. He tells the children a few stories but then turns to the reader for the main tale. The early chapters establish that Flashy is en route home from India to England but, thanks to two women, gets shanghaied to the United States, which he leaves ten years earlier, wanted for felonies up and down the Mississippi. In Baltimore, he escapes capture—the old enemy who waylays him having spread word ashore who and where he is—and bounces among three powerful figures who want to enlist him to steer John Brown his own way.

Flashy cannot say no and spends the following months traveling from Baltimore to New York to New England, where he joins Brown's entourage, and with him back through to Ohio and Pennsylvania and into Virginia, all along looking for any chance to escape. Brown is intent on taking the arsenal at Harper's Ferry to spark a slave rebellion, but Flashy sees that he lacks the practical sense to pull this off and virtually no men or



money. Try as he may to dissuade the old zealot. Flash is in the thick of it as the assault begins and quickly falls apart, but is fortunate to be hidden by a highly-sexual black woman who, in a twist, turns out to work for the white supremacists, and Flash is saved from sure death by an agent of the U.S. Government. The level of physical danger is less than in some Flashy novels, but his sense of doom and never getting to see his beloved wife again is more intense than usual.



Quotes

"So you understand, I hope, that they could have kept every nigger in Dixie in bondage for all I cared—or freed them. I was indifferent, spiritually, and only wish I could have been so, corporally." Pg. 22.

"You may think I make light of it—being kidnapped and pressed into sea-slavery, but if I've learned anything it's that when you have no choice, you must just buckle down to misfortune ... and wait." Pg. 66.

"He was gazing at me like a dervish on hashish, clutching my wrist, his eyes burning with the flame of pure barminess, as I sat open-mouthed, the chicken leg poised at my ashen lips. 'I say it yet again: God has sent you to us—a Joshua for John Brown!'" Pg. 97.

"If I wasn't drunk or dreaming, I must be drugged again. I couldn't be sitting in an American hotel, listening to a well set-up military man in an Inquisitor's hood, calling himself after one of the Fates, and apologising for coarse language to an aristocrat-turned-whore who used to be my mistress." Pg. 122.

"'An' again, an' for the last time,' he gave me his blandest fat smile, 'don't evah think you can jump off the wagon 'long the way. The Kuklos will be theah, always, an' if you play false by wo'd or deed ... then, suh, you are crow-pickin's.'" Pg. 137.

"'Why, already Brown is looking to you, the man chosen for him by his trusted friend Crixus. And Crixus and the Kuklosk, from far different motives, have set you on the path to the same dreadful end that they both seek. We are asking you to follow that path, so that their infernal machinations may be confounded!' So help me, it's what he said; Senatorial oratory, you see." Pg. 174.

"From all I'd heard in the past three days, I'd formed a picture of John Brown as a towering figure with flowing white locks, glaring like a fakir and brandishing an Excelsior banner in one fist and a smoking Colt in t'other; what I saw as an elderly man, spare and bony in an old black suit, like a rather seedy farmer come to town for market." Pg. 206.

"A great rage surged up in me as I blundered along, compounded of lust for Elspeth and hatred against the gods; I was damned if after all I'd suffered it was going to end in a two-bit pest-hole like Harpers Ferry..." Pg. 267.

"Not my vision of Venus, exactly ... but it seemed as though centuries had passed since Mandeville, my randy imaginings of Elspeth were still fresh in mind, and as I contemplated those enormous endowments fore and aft, and the massive shapely thigh thrust out of her peignoir, I came all over a-tremble, pointing like a gundog her languid smile became a hungry complacent smirk." Pgs. 288-289.



"Taylor's grip loosed, and something warm and wet struck me in the face, and as I fell back he was standing over me, but where his head should have been was a hideous crimson mess, and I cried out in horror, pawing his blood and brains that had spattered over me. Someone heaved me to my feet; it was J.B." Pg. 307.

"Ironic, ain't it? He'd failed ... and found his triumph. Wounded and doomed, he was a man uplifted, and he laid it off to them with his matchless mixture of deep sincerity and sheer damned humbug." Pg. 340.

"'You gotta git off, 'cos mah boys at the Ferry'll telegraph ahead when they fin' out whutevah's happened to Joe, an' the Kuklos'll be a-waiting at Baltimo' ... an' Ah cain't let 'em take yuh, Ah jes' cain't, 'cos, oh, mah dearie, if anythin' wuz to happen to yuh, Ah b'lieve Ah'd die!'" Pg. 360.



Topics for Discussion

How does Flashy's desire to be knighted by the Queen upon his return to London color his behavior in this novel? What incentives and vulnerabilities does it create?

What is the program of the Underground Railroad in 1859? What role does it assign to Flashy and why? What is Flashy's attitude towards it?

What is the program of Kuklos? What role does it assign to Flashy and why? What is Flashy's attitude towards it?

How does Flashy's great-grandchildren's interest in the song "John Brown's Body" flavor his telling of the story? What atmosphere does it set? Is that atmosphere carried through the entire novel?

Flashy always finds himself in dangerous situations thanks to his irrepressible sexual appetites. How do chance liaisons in this novel put him in harm's way?

What qualities in John Brown does Flashy most admire? Which does he find most reprehensible?

After killing Joe Simmons, Flashy states that he hates him. Why does he hate this man, who seems only to be doing a competent job of being his watchdog?