

Flashman's Lady Study Guide

Flashman's Lady by George MacDonald Fraser

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Plot Summary

Flashman's Lady by George MacDonald Fraser finds Harry Flashman ca. 1900 reminiscing about events in his life in 1842-43, when a disguised pirate takes him and wife Elspeth to raising adventures in Singapore, Borneo, and Madagascar.

A former schoolmate, whom Afghanistan war hero Harry Flashman once bullied, invites him to play in a special cricket match. While Flashy bowls the game of his life, achieving the world's first "hat trick," beautiful wife Elspeth is befriended by rich Don Solomon Haslam. As they mix in society Flashy can find nothing wrong in Haslam's behavior. To Flashy's consternation, a notorious London bookie, Daedalus Tighe, twice presses on him. After being caught in an affair and being unable to lose a one-on-one match with Haslam, Flashy finds two sets of thugs on his trail and his reputation threatened. The Flashmans sail to Asia with Haslam.

In Singapore, Flashy and Elspeth quarrel; she goes on a picnic with Haslam, and Flashy is nearly killed by a Black-face street gang. Rescued, Flashy learns that Elspeth has been abducted; Haslam is the notorious Borneo pirate Suleiman Usman, and James Brooke is a gun-ho fighter of pirates. Flashy has no choice but go along to rescuing the fair maiden. Flashy fails to live up to his Afghan reputation, but J.B. never notices. By being wounded and falling overboard, Flashy survives and is picked up by Haslam's Sulu Queen.

Flashy and Elspeth are reunited; Haslam accepts that they are in love, and gives up his quest for Elspeth's heart. Anchored off the coast of what Flashy believes is British-owned Mauritius, he swims ashore. As a castaway in Madagascar, however, Flashy automatically becomes a slave. A European freedman, Jean Laborde, gives Flashy a long list of survival tactics and promises to look after Elspeth. Flashy becomes the love-slave of lusty, malevolent Queen Ranavalona and is appointed "sergeant-general" in charge of training and drilling her army.

Conspirators induce Flashy to march the Hova Guard away from the city so they can strike, in return for his and Elspeth's freedom. When the coup is uncovered, Flashy undergoes trial by ordeal, survives, and collects Elspeth for a ride to the coast, where a British man-of-war is supposedly anchored. They arrive, pursued by Guardsmen, to find a Franco-British naval operation underway. They sail to Mauritius, where Flashy receives orders to Bombay to help put down the Sikhs. Furious, Flashy tries to resign his commission, but all experienced officers are needed and he goes.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Compared with cricket in the 1840s, when Harry Flashman ("Flashy") excels as a bowler, the current game is for old women. In school, he learns only survival and cricket. Returning famous from Afghan service, Flashy is recruited by prissy old classmate Tom Brown, to play against Kent at Lord's. There, gigantic bowler Mynn terrorizes Flashy for three balls before Felix catches him, and after a stint lounging in the outfield stands in to bowl. After a slow start, he retires three stars of the sport—Felix, Pilch, and Mynn—achieving the world's first "hat trick."

Among those congratulating Flashy are a doddering old Duke, his flirtatious lover, Mrs. Leo Lade, and Daedalus Tighe, a bookie, who unsuccessfully presses on Flashy champagne and £50 from his winnings. Flashy finds Elspeth in the arms of Don Solomon Haslam, who is innocently teaching her archery. Haslam laments missing the hat trick. Arriving home, Flashy finds an envelope containing £50 and a note, which he burns.

Elspeth's diary contrasts the forwardness of the ladies admiring her heroic but naïve husband—particularly Mrs. Leo Lade, the Duke's "odious" companion, with Haslam's discretion. Haslam's riches come from the Far East Indies. She is sure they will see much of him socially but will not drive Flashy to jealousy.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter opens with a rush of information about the quintessential British sport of cricket. Narrator Harry Flashman, writing early in the 20th century, is nostalgic about the way it is played in his day and laments the rule changes, padding, and prohibitions on betting that have made it suitable only for old women. He recalls playing it at Rugby School, missing it while inadvertently becoming a national hero in Afghanistan, and in the late summer of 1842, being invited to play a match against an old rival school. His recruiter is Tom Brown, Pa schoolmate whom Flashy bullies. Flashy refers to his own writings and an "infernal book" by Thomas Hughes, published in the 1850s about him (Tom Brown's Schooldays). This novel inspires George MacDonald Fraser's series, of which this is the eighth.

A dense but rollicking description of the match, during which Flashy by sheer luck achieves the world's first "hat trick," brings together the characters needed to set Flashy on his misadventures in the East Indies and Madagascar. He remarks that if the first batter had gotten a hint, he and wife Elspeth would have been spared much suffering. His enumeration whets the reader's interest. Flashy's Afghan fame goes everywhere before him, making people expect of him a foolhardy bravery that is the opposite of his true nature. His compulsive sexual drive is evident from the start—visiting a whore



house as part of his training for the match, declared partly to shock the pious Brown. In this novel, Flashy's animosity towards Christianity is more blatant than in some earlier ones.

A most subtle key to the story about to unfold is found in Haslam's passing remark that he is Mars and Elspeth's Diana as he teaches her archery. Roman mythology turns the god of war into a protector; whereas, the Greek equivalent, Ares, is violent and unscrupulous. In both cultures Diana/Artemis is a virginal goddess of hunting and fertility. Haslam will reveal himself to be the Greek version after cloaking himself in the Roman.

An innovation in this novel is to include at the end of most chapters excerpts from Elspeth's diary corresponding to the ongoing action. These provide a wealth of essential details that would otherwise break the narrative (e.g., Haslam's enterprises). They also serve to make Elspeth into a more rounded character. Fraser's notes explain that before the manuscript falls into his hands, Elspeth's sister-in-law, Grizel de Rothschild, inserts these excerpts and modifies Flashy's "blasphemies," turning all curse words into dashes (e.g., d—n, h—l). This device adds charm to the telling.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

For eight months, the Flashmans enjoy the fêting of his fame, and Haslam, about whom no one knows anything, becomes part of their lives. He always knows the latest news and gossip, throws lavish parties, and charms. Oddly, opinionated old Morrison enjoys debating with Haslam, who soothes him and suggests financial ventures in Asia. In June, Flashy is invited to join the Household Cavalry and to play cricket beside Mynn in Canterbury. Haslam offers to foot the bill for a week at Canterbury.

Flashy remains in town until after Monday's disappointing hanging at Newgate Prison. Departing, Flashy meets Tighe, who knows where he is bound, reminds him of the gift, offers him £300 for a win, and sends him off to Canterbury in a cab. After the match, Haslam gives a sumptuous party, during which he announces he must attend to business in Asia and, in the spur-of-the-moment it appears, invites the Flashmans along for a splendid six-month voyage. When Flashy declines, citing duty to the Life Guards, Haslam suggests that Morrison and Elspeth go. Despite a doctor's prescribing rest and sunshine for the old codger's nerves, Flashy refuses.

Having failed all week to get Mrs. Lade alone, on Friday, when everyone is supposedly in town or convalescing, Flashy romps with her in the drawing room but is glimpsed from the rear by Haslam, who hastens Elspeth away. Climbing down the ivy, Flashy establishes an alibi: he is walking briskly before the match. Elspeth's diary reveals shame and remorse over Haslam kissing her against her will, and relief to find Flashy in the garden, flush with exercise. Flashy is barely civil with the bedraggled Lade when they pass her.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The early part of Chapter 2 builds evidence that no one in London seems to know anything about Haslam, but he seems to know everything about everyone and becomes a high-spending fixture of society. The exotic strains in Haslam's blood aggravate Flashy more than anything he says or does. Flashy has more than his fair share of prejudice against non-whites—and even non-Britons. Flashy is amused that Haslam gets on so well with his father-in-law and describes their debates over social reform laws that the old man is sure will ruin him financially. Morrison is an orphan-robbing Presbyterian and true Dickensian scoundrel.

The next cricket match downplays the sport but puts Flashy deeper in Tighe's control. Haslam suddenly must return to Asia on business and appears to think spontaneously of taking the Flashmans and Morrison) along. In retrospect, Flashy suspects it is all choreographed. Appointment to the prestigious Household Cavalry provides an excuse



for refusing and Morrison is not keen on going to Asia with Elspeth, despite a doctor's saying it is the only way to heal his nerves.

The trip appears off until, at the end of the week, Haslam catches a glimpse of Flashy's rear end while "mounting" Mrs. Lade and, so claims Elspeth's diary, makes a pass at Elspeth. Elspeth's naiveté is delicious in accepting Flashy's explanation for why he is out of breath. Flashy's relief that Haslam acts as a perfect Victorian gentleman in overlooking his indiscretion proves profoundly wrong later in the book as Flashy is experiencing some of the horrors for which the hanging at Newgate Prison later serves as a backdrop.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Haslam shows no sign he knows what has happened as they discuss fast bowlers, but turns serious and dares Flashy to face him in a single-wicket match at his house. Haslam bets £1,000 to win or draw against Flashy's allowing Elspeth to go to Asia if he loses. Furious at being cornered but confident of victory, Flashy accepts—for £2,000. Walking that evening, Flashy is stopped by Tighe, who stands to make £50,000, betting £1,000 on Haslam to win. Flashy is told to drop his indignation, because witnesses are willing to make a scandal, swearing that he has taken money from Tighe. It would also become dangerous for Flashy to walk at night in London. In the morning, Judy reports that the Duke is also sending thugs after Flashy.

Thus Flashy is in no mood for cricket as they take the field, surrounded by society folk and the local riffraff, among whom Flashy spots Tighe. Haslam bats first and does well, scoring 21 and wearing Flashy out chasing balls, until Flashy "accidentally" hacks Haslam's knee and downs his wicket. Haslam is a pathetic bowler but catches Flashy's first hit for an out. As they reverse positions, Flashy decides not to throw the match and holds Haslam to a mere ten runs. Batting 32 against Haslam should be easy. Both are exhausted by the time Flashy nears a tie and realizes it is better to be a cuckold than a cripple. He tries to hand Haslam the game but cannot. Unable to stall running any longer on a long hit, Flashy is closing in on the winning run when a ball from behind knocks him out and he comes to seeing his wicket knocked off. As Elspeth ministers to Flashy, Haslam beams that they will sail directly. Having bet on Flashy to win, Tighe will be out to get him.

Elspeth's diary effuses about her husband suddenly deciding to come on the cruise to show his devotion to her. Haslam reminds Flashy of what he is giving up in the Life Guards. Flashy has business in London but will join them in Dover. He has no time to accept the Duke's invitation. Flashy is very popular.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 completes the cricket theme as Haslam challenges Flashy to a one-on-one single-wicket match. The lengthy description makes clear that it is a physically demanding trial. If Haslam wins or draws he takes Elspeth and her father to Asia. If Flashy wins, he earns £2,000. This grows to £7,000 when Tighe orders him to throw the match; unless Flashy loses he will be exposed for taking bribes in the past, and Tighe's goons will find him one night on the streets. Before play commences, Flashy learns that the Duke has put goons on him as well. Within steps of winning the match, Flashy is knocked out with a long throw from behind and is put out. A draw means he loses Elspeth and gets crippled by Tighe. It is left to Elspeth's diary to cheer his sudden

decision to sacrifice all and accompany her on the voyage. Haslam makes a half-hearted attempt to talk him out of it.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Flashy skulks about London for ten days watching for "pluggers," and obtains through Uncle Bindley an official assignment in Singapore. Aboard the luxury brig, *Sulu Queen*, Haslam is a perfect host but Flashy is troubled that none of the crew is white. Haslam explains that ten guns are needed protection out where the British and Dutch navies are sparse. The voyage down the African coast is the pleasantest of Flashy's life. As they enter the Indian Ocean, Haslam changes, donning native clothes and sporting a beard. Off Madagascar, Haslam explains the savage land where he trades a bit. The queen is monstrous, torturing people for pleasure. Anyone cast ashore is used sexually and then horribly killed. When Haslam goes ashore at Tamitave, Flashy studies the village, fort, and stockade through a spy glass.

They sail off in the morning, pressing on to Singapore. Had Flashy known what lay ahead, he would have jumped ship in Madras. Singapore handles the shipping of all nations. Eastward along the Beach Road, on the "Mayfair" side of town lie pleasant mansions. Elspeth hurries to find "Society People," and, after months at sea, Flashy needs depravity. He gets directions to the native quarter, which is seedy but not worth exploring, and finds China Town brilliantly lit and promising—but he runs into Haslam, who warns about the Black-faced gangs and recommends the Temple of Heaven restaurant. He offers to introduce the Flashmans to Whampoa.

Two nights later they meet a huge, fat Chinese Aladdin beside whom Elspeth sits during an atrocious Chinese banquet. They are joined by the American consul, Balestier, and Catchick Moses, an Armenian Jew. Flashy feels a chill when Whampoa talks about beauty like Elspeth's being dangerous and that night suffers nightmares. In the morning, they quarrel and Flashy passes on a picnic, preferring to check out the Temple of Heaven. There he enjoys a European meal with champagne, hints to the maître d' that he needs female companionship, and is stunned to meet Madame Sabba, who he begins fondling in the palki. They stop, she steps outside—and Flashy realizes he has been ambushed. As silent black shapes race towards him, he reacts, more clumsily than Afghan experience and "native cowardice" should allow, and races full-speed, seeing no one who might help.

Tripping over a handcart, Flashy is hit by a silver hatchet and sees a second poised to fly when the attacker is killed by a needle in the throat. Flashy awakens surrounded by a hideous native (Jingo), a huge red-bearded Scot-accented Arab (Paitingi Ali), the boyish-faced Stuart, and some navy chaps. The leader, James Brooke (J.B.), laughs at the shoulder wound and takes him to Whampoa, who reveals that Haslam has stolen Elspeth.

The "ruthless" abduction is detailed in Elspeth's diary, where she mourns accompanying Haslam to punish Flashy for arguing with her. After abandoning Papa ashore, Haslam



declares he cannot live without Elspeth and is willing to cut himself off from civilization to make her Queen of his possessions and of his heart. He has seen encouraging signs. When he will not repent, she kicks his shins and pretends to swoon, as taught in school. As a certified life guard she is ready to swim ashore but is caught and confined below deck. She hopes that Flashy rescues her soon.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Chapter 4 depicts the Flashmans' trip halfway around the world. Alluding to other voyages he has taken, Flashy rates it comfortable and seems to enjoy watching Elspeth's enthusiasm at seeing new things. Lying off Madagascar, Haslam gives Flashy a thorough understanding of life and death on that hellish island. Note that Flashy studies the fort. Flashy skips over the crossing of the Indian Ocean, lightly describes Singapore, and is getting enthusiastic about the story of his ride in a palki with a very sexy Chinese woman when he realizes he has been ambushed. He flees at top speed, trips, and would have been killed, were it not for J.B. and his men passing by and effecting a rescue. Significantly, the first thing J.B. says to Flashy is not to act like such a coward over a tiny shoulder wound. In spite of this, learning that he is the great Afghan war hero, J.B. will virtually make him second in command, and Flashy will have to use all of his survival skills—some of which he has just shown in Singapore—to balance the situations into which he is put. In the nightmare sequence after eating the Chinese dinner, Flashy recalls other situations he has been in, which bring back memories to those who have read earlier titles in the series. For those who have not, the mentions do not break the narrative.

This band of colorful characters, including a Scot-accented Arab, who mixes brogue with pious exclamations (e.g., "bismallah!" — in the name of God), populate the middle third of the novel as they hunt down Elspeth's kidnapper, who turns out to be nothing like the Eton-educated gentleman he has appeared thus far. Recall early on that Flashy finds it odd Haslam has no mistresses and never drinks alcohol.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Whampoa blames himself for doing nothing when he sees how Haslam looks at Elspeth. Moses condemns himself for not wondering why Haslam has been liquidating assets for a week and laments that if Singapore's fails to get Elspeth back, trade could be ruined. J.B. reminds them that Elspeth could be ruined and they wait for news. Morrison tells about being drugged and left behind and waking to see the Sulu Queen heading due east, which another ship confirms. J.B. is determined to pursue her but others point to the vastness of the ocean, uncharted islands, and token naval presence. HMS Dido is due in 2-3 days. Whampoa is certain that Haslam will remain in the Indies and has everyone looking for the brig. J.B. is sure she is heading for Borneo.

Listening, Flashy fails to play the distraught husband. He is still recovering from his own ordeal and can spare little emotion even for Elspeth. He cannot imagine how any man could give up such wealth for a woman, but Haslam seems to have planned it all along. Flashy loves and misses Elspeth, but they've spent most of their married life apart. Worse things could happen to her than getting "rogered" by Haslam; she will probably enjoy it. She will miss England but be well taken care of, provided Haslam does not tire of her. On the other hand, Flashy feels his male pride injured and will not be a laughing stock. Suddenly no fate is too horrible for Haslam.

J.B. feels Flashy's pain and studies the map, certain he must pull into Borneo. Keppel will commit Dido's 18 guns and 200 blue jackets to the cause. As the debate continues, Whampoa reports that Haslam appears to be the Muslim pirate Suleiman Usman of Maludu. Their comings and goings never match. Their names are similar. A non-pirate is unlikely to kidnap. Usman will be found between Kuching and Serikei Point and he will have drawn in the great pirate fleets of the north shore. The Black-faces' attack of Flashy comes after he dines at the restaurant Haslam recommends. Not ready to run off to war with J.B. and his odd friends, Flashy is put to bed and is thinking things over when Whampoa summons two voluptuous girls to sooth his pains. Flashy knows better than to refuse an Asian's hospitality.

After four days of recuperation, Flashy would rather let professionals recover Elspeth than do it himself as expected but joins Henry Keppel's Dido. While she prepares, J.B. rushes ahead on Harlequin, talking flags and guns and swinging swords. Stuart explains that J.B. is the "King of Sarawak" and "White Raja," the greatest man in the East, the scourge of pirates, the best fighting sailor since Nelson, a protector, ruler, and saint governing under the Sultan of Brunei, not Queen Victoria since being cashiered four years ago. He starts off with 19 on the brig Royalist, facing tens of thousands of pirates in hundreds of war boats. J.B. gets results, so when he says jump in Singapore, people jump. A knight-errant, J.B. will get Elspeth back. J.B. admires the hero of Afghanistan and has long talked of allying to clear the China Sea. Flashy worries that J.B. is like other dangerous wild men he has known.



Dido reaches the mouth of the Kuching River and sails up it through steamy, feverish air past the villages of the brave, cheery, cruel, and loyal Sea Dyaks to a fortified town. Dido anchors and Paitingi swings aboard, saying that Sulu Queen has been sighted heading upriver to Fort Linga. In J.B.'s bungalow, "The Grove," talk is not about strategy but cultivating roses and Angie Coutts, whom J.B. admires for enlightened opinions and Flashy says is "a real stunner." She once painfully rebuffed Flashy in London. Stuart confides that J.B. pines for her but a battle injury (not in the lung) makes pursuit impossible. The men gather for a formal dinner at which J.B. lectures boringly about excluding missionaries, Britain's mistakes in India in treating natives as inferiors, and religion.

Throughout the meal, various natives enter, touch J.B.'s hand, and retire to the wall. Afterwards, he converses with each in turn in Malay. Stuart explains that this is how he rules Sarawak. When the last leaves, J.B. calls for a map and Flashy goes tense. To rescue Elspeth, they must defeat Sharif Jaffir at Fort Linga, Sharif Sahib at Patusan, and Shari Muller and his Skrang pirates at Undup. At the end is Usman and Elspeth. Chivalry demands they hurry. Usman will assume that J.B. will need a week to prepare and leave a third of his force to protect Kuching. Usman outnumbered J.B. ten-to-one and can set ambushes the length of the river.

J.B. intends to attack in two days with his full force, a move to which everyone vehemently—and sanely—objects. J.B. reminds them of earlier victories when the odds are against them and declares this a unique opportunity to wipe out the pirates. They are not convinced—especially Paitingi—but fall in line. Flashy recalls other fanatics he has known and wonders how he can weasel out of the coming horror. Flashy's suggestion that he ransom Elspeth is met with derision. J.B. explains that Usman is married and fumbles for a way to say delicately that Elspeth will not be raped. Usman doubtless knows what will happen if she is harmed and his English education must have left some shred of honor.

In her diary, Elspeth refers to Lord Byron's poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon," and judges herself worse off because dungeons cannot sail away from one's beloved, and she lacks the prisoner's beloved mice to keep her company. Her dread at Flashy's fate she puts above the prisoner's loss of parents and brothers. She then notes that after an absence of seven days, probably out of shame, Haslam visits. She has taken to dressing in cool and becoming "sarongas," but lacks a proper toilette, which is heartless on his part. She demands to be taken home, and refuses his offer of items of comfort. When he drops to his knees and proclaims his love, Elspeth protests and faints. Haslam returns to duty. Elspeth fears she is forgotten and wishes she were plain like her sisters. Grizel de Rothschild deletes two lines of probably unflattering references.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Lengthy Chapter 5 opens with the cream of Singapore society wringing their hands at having failed to question Haslam's background and recent liquidation of assets. They have all been preoccupied with their own business interests and he had been a



profitable partner. London society, of course, had also neglected due diligence. J.B. emerges as the gallant leader of a rescue mission that he alone believes is feasible, because he is certain Haslam will head to Borneo, J.B.'s own bailiwick.

Flashy has a hard time getting worked up about his wife's situation, which he figures is probably not bad. Many times in the second half of the novel will Flashy confess how much he loves Elspeth despite her brainlessness (or perhaps because of it) but does not see a need to risk his own life for her. It becomes an ongoing inner debate, and in the end love wins out.

Whampoa reveals that it appears Haslam and the infamous Muslim pirate Suleiman Usman of Maludu are one. It sounds like secondary characters wondering why Clark Kent and Superman or Bruce Wayne and Batman never appear together. If this is true, J.B. can pinpoint where Elspeth is being held: up the Kuching River beyond Fort Linga.

Flashy is allowed to recover from his ordeal, helped by two Chinese call girls whose services he knows better than decline, but their energy over four days nearly kills him. As preparations are made to go to the Kuching River, Flashy remains a reluctant participant, but learns that J.B. has been looking forward to fighting pirates beside the hero of Afghanistan. He hears J.B.'s larger-than-life story, "King of Sarawak" and "White Raja," visits his house, and sees him governing the natives one-on-one. Flashy looks for a way to duck out but finds none.

Chapter 5 includes two subtly-handled literary allusions. When discussing religion (after having debated colonialism), J.B. mentions having written a tract against Article 90 of the "Oxford Tracts." This is a controversial subject in England in 1844, but clearly not part of Flashy's world view, for he dismisses it with a "whatever they are." It refers to the famous John Henry Newman's examination of the Church of England's foundational 39 Articles, a study he publishes shortly before beginning his conversion to Catholicism.

The second reference is to Lord Byron's long poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon." Elspeth judges herself worse off than the man chained in a dungeon with two surviving brothers, hearing them die, and accepting freedom indifferently because he has grown used to his second home, no matter how horrible it is. She mentions the mice that keep the prisoner company (she dislikes mice) and observes that dungeons cannot sail away from one's beloved as the Sulu Queen could. Although she ignores Byron's water imagery, Elspeth's diary entry shows how carefully she reads and how much she retains. Flashy often makes fun of her empty-headed love of poetry. She then describes her seven days of captivity and one visit from her captor. He hints at loathing Flashy as a suitable husband, a theme that will be brought out in great detail later.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Flashy has only disjointed memories of dropping down the river into the sea and preparing a ramshackle fleet of 80 vessels, including darting spy boats, sampans, long-boats, stately praus and cutters, Dido's pinnace, J.B.'s flagship the sloop Jolly Bachelor, and the paddle-steamer Phlegethon. Weapons range from bows, arrow, and poisoned darts to blades and firearms of every kind, six-pounder naval guns, and Congreve rockets mounted on three praus. On 5 August 1844, they sweep out at dawn into the China Sea. Flashy stays at J.B.'s side, figuring it is the safest spot.

J.B. explains that pirates are not criminals in the English sense; it is a way of life that must be steered towards peaceful, honest pursuits. Fear and profit makes even good men like Makota join the pirates. J.B. begins by protecting Sarawak. He is too quiet to be a hero and wants the good of Borneo's vast unexplored interior. Visiting dignitaries do not understand his purposes and some see him as Blackbeard Teach in a clean shirt. For Borneo's sake J.B. hopes it will some day be British; until then he protects it. On top of all, J.B. declares, this is fun.

When the fleet enters Batang Lupar's estuary, J.B. assigns Flashy to Paitingi's spy-boat to get a "feel" for it before battle. They fly across the oily water through a mist and stop silently as war-gongs mark the passing of three great scarlet hulls, each decorated with hundreds of skulls and trailing pennants, and each carrying 1,000 men. Usman is calling in his allies. When this convinces J.B. to press the attack immediately, Paitingi explodes in disbelief and rage. Aboard Phlegethon J.B. lays out the strategy: use the rocket-praus to burn these ships at anchorage, capture the fort, and move on. This is too offhand for Flashy, who wishes someone would throw J.B. overboard and save them all. J.B. gets his way, however, and the small boats depart. Flashy believes Phlegethon will be a safe grandstand seat.

Rounding a turn, they see one of the ghost ships on fire and two others under rocket attack. The stockaded fort surrenders without a shot. Revolted at the torturing of female slaves, J.B. orders the summary execution of the renegade Makota and another pirate, who wants desperately not to be strangled. Promising more action at Patusan, J.B. offers Flashy a revolver and a cutlass. Five forts, each holding 1,000 men, lie ahead. Rockets and canons will work some, but old-fashioned charges will be needed. They recall Flashy's legendary battles and their own recent ones, enjoying the memory of comrades fallen.

Flashy wants to flee but there is nowhere to go. Night in the jungle is terrible with its sounds and smells. Flashy falls asleep with his Colt in the engine room, thinking about Madame Sabba ten days earlier. He curses Elspeth's wantonness, vows to divorce her, wishes he had not married her, and is horrified at the thought of anyone ravishing or



torturing her. He wonders what he would do if it were his skin or hers and is so terrified that he turns to prayer until he decides it is "wasted piety" and goes to sleep.

Elspeth writes of oppressive heat, insects, and loud gongs after dark. Allowed briefly on deck, she writes Rough Notes and sketches the extravagance of nature, the gathered warships, and the "Dusky Argonauts" who man them. She learns that a commander who looks like an Aztec god is "Sheriff Saheeb," doubtless a Justice of the Peace. As taught at school, she has been counting the arms and vessels. Elspeth is embarrassed to say that a droll orangutan that she sees looks very much like her father.

Chapter 6 Analysis

In Chapter 6 Flashy describes in minute detail the ramshackle fleet the J.B. raises to go after the pirates and save Elspeth. The level of description is on a par with his opening thoughts about cricket. Particular attention should be paid to the swift spy boats on which Flashy will be stationed, injured, and taken captive in the next chapter. As the battle scenes unfold, it is fitting that the paddle-steamer Phlegethon brings up the rear. She is named after one of the five rivers in Hades in Greek mythology and then in Dante's Inferno becomes the river of boiling blood. It sets the mood nicely, particularly when the three pirate ghost ships decorated with human skulls slip through the thick mists.

J.B. takes time out to explain why he fights pirates, what piracy is in Borneo, and how he hopes the island will someday prosper under the Union Jack. Flashy is ready to condemn him as another idealistic Christian fool, but then J.B. laughs heartily and proclaims it also very much fun. J.B. is the epitome of bombast and enthusiasm.

The first battle is an uncontested rout and the three fearsome mystery ships are left burned out hulks. Saying with perfect composure (for a change) that it is hard to be composed at such "sorry business," J.B. orders the execution of two pirates. The one confesses to torturing women slaves, salutes J.B. a last time, and is swiftly strangled by Jingo. When the second panics at this fate, Jingo plunges a sword downward through his chest.

Experiencing the horrors of nighttime in the jungle, Flashy agonizes over Elspeth, as he has before, being torn between conflicting emotions. He blames her flirtatiousness (neatly paired with his sadness over missing out on Madame Sabba's charms). He pities Elspeth and convinces himself she better-off than he. He contemplates the bitter blow his male ego, inflated as a war hero, will take if he returns without her and friends make comments. At heart, Flashy realizes he is a coward and doubts he can choose between Elspeth and his own skin in a pinch. Flashy even turns to rambling, bargaining prayer before realizing that is foolish. This pattern recurs again under stress in Madagascar.

In her diary, Elspeth emphasizes the oppressive heat and humidity and annoying drums of the jungle. Observing Sharif Sahib, she takes comfort in having a representative of the law at hand, hearing "sheriff" for sharif, the Arabic for "eminent" or "virtuous," which

when used as a surname denotes linear descent from the Prophet Muhammad. Since in Chapter 5, J.B. lists all of his adversaries—Jaffir, Sahib, and Muller—as sharifs, it is likely that the term has devolved to an honorific. Note that Jaffir is an authentic first name in Arabic; Muller is a corruption of Mullah, the title proper to Muslim teachers; and Sahib means "master" a term of respect for Europeans in Asia. Elspeth's description of Sharif Sahib as a great yellow Aztec god matches that of one of the few men Flashy kills in battle in Chapter 7.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Thick fog blankets the river as Phlegethon and the rocket-praus approach a huge log-boom and screaming warriors. Rockets turn the narrow river into an inferno. Spy-boats move in on the boom and after ferocious hand-to-hand combat, open a gap for the Jolly Bachelor. and into the fray and through the new gap in the boom. Gunfire is intense and casualties heavy, but J.B. keeps up morale by leading his men in spirited song.

Flashy huddles in full panic when J.B. orders him to storm the fort. The "Old Flash" of Afghanistan emerges and he springs ashore, shouting, but he gradually blends into the relative safety of the middle of the pack. The blue-jackets advance as a solid wedge, stamping-slashing-thrusting. While sailors loot Sharif Sahib's "personal bamboo palace," Flashy seeks a safe bolt-hole. To his amazement, he wanders into the harem. His expression makes the scantily-clad ladies scream in unison and flee, but he captures one. Shots ring out and feet run back and forth. Flashy finds himself having sex with her and is pleased when she faints in ecstasy. When Flashy emerges, his men have not missed him. Outside the fort is a nightmare of corpses and smoking ruins.

As he has following 50 battles, Flashy is happy to be alive. Feigning "manly anguish" over the many lives lost, Flashy tries in vain to talk J.B. into giving up, and two days later, spies report that the Sulu Queen is 20 miles upstream. It is hard going against a faster current and obstacles laid by the pirates. The iron-sheeted Phlegethon drops out and Flashy is assigned to Paitingi's spy-boat by day and sleeps at the foot of Jolly Bachelor's ladder by night. Muller's war-gongs throb constantly.

They attack Undup at dawn on the third day, and Flashy rides with Paitingi in pursuit of Muller, who swims for his life and disappears in the forest. They learn that the Sulu Queen is up the Skrang River, navigable only a few miles. To inspire his worn and bloodied men, J.B. proposes a traditional full-dress dinner party, in order that those who fall may first enjoy their champagne. J.B. forces each to sing, including Flashy, who renders "Drink, Puppy, Drink." Flashy wonders why the men put up with J.B.'s foolish antics.

Overnight, pirates are thwarted in a surprise attack and the armada pushes on at 5 AM in dense rain. Progress upriver is slow. All dress obediently for dinner at 7 PM, which seems surreal to Flashy. The rain ends but it stays hot and muggy, and the men are in a state of "wild desperation." J.B. dismisses the idea that the Sulu Queen is hidden in a side creek and orders Paitingi not to get ahead of the next spy-boat by more than a pistol-shot and laughs at his premonitions. Stillness makes men jumpy, Paitingi in particular, and he races ahead against orders, sure that the pirates are preparing a trap. Paitingi intends not to let additional boats fall into it.



Paitingi orders a 180° turn that nearly capsizes the boat. Downriver, the forest comes alive with war-gongs and a horde of rafts and canoes, while from the shores arrows and darts fly overhead. Paitingi exults in foiling the pirates' plans. Flashy has never before been trapped on a boat. A dart hits him in the side. When Stuart tears it free, Flashy writhes in pain and falls overboard. This saves his life, for the rest of the crew perishes. The river runs red with blood as Flashy floats down it, holding his gut and clinging to a piece of wreckage. He glimpses Stuart and Paitingi's gallant deaths before something smashes into him and forces him under, and he feels himself drowning.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 7 details the intense fighting that concludes the Batang Lupar Expedition of 5-19 August 1844. The first map preceding Chapter 1 and historical end notes are particularly useful in picturing the battle. Flashy makes clear that he must be forced out of his natural cowardice to do anything. He is amazed to see J.B. standing in the bow as poisoned darts fly by, singing, and pressing his men to join in.

As with most of the literary allusions in the novel, J.B.'s song is embedded deeply in the narrative. The verses include the phrase "hearts of oak," taken Thomas Campbell's poem, "Battle of the Baltic." It deals with Nelson's great victory, and J.B.'s fighting skill has already been likened to Nelson's. In the heat of battle, Flashy recalls the phrase—whether from the song or from the poem cannot be told—and is moved to heroism. Singing becomes a motif. At a formal dinner party on the eve of battle, J.B. forces his reluctant men to sing, leaving Flashy to wonder what hold he has over them. Flashy himself renders "Drink Puppy Drink," a tune he will later plunk out on a piano on demand of the dreaded Queen of Madagascar. It appears to be the extent of his repertoire.

The "Old Flash" of Afghan fame emerges briefly when Flashy is ordered to lead a charge on Sharif Sahib's "personal bamboo palace." He finds himself in a room that he comments is straight out of Richard Burton's *Arabian Nights*—specifying the illustrated version available only on the Continent. Burton is a historical figure matching Flashy's dashing public image and sexual tastes. Finding himself surrounded by frightened naked women, Flashy grabs one and, while cowering from milling pirates, surprises himself by having sex without realizing he has begun. Invoking Burton helps create the air that the scene requires.

In the final battle, Paitingi, the colorful Arab-Scot, senses that the seemingly infallible J.B. is finally wrong. The Sulu Queen is not grounded dead ahead but hidden in a side stream and Usman's goal is to draw J.B.'s full force into a fatal ambush. Paitingi decides, therefore, to sacrifice his crew in order to save the rest. His final cry of "Allah-il-Allah!" is a corruption of the confession of faith with which every Muslim faces death. Since Flashy speaks Arabic, this mistake is odd. A wound in the side sends Flashy overboard, providentially, for he is the only survivor, floating downstream amidst corpses and wreckage, until something forces him under and he feels himself drowning.

Omitting the usual excerpt from Elspeth's diary allows for a more dramatic conclusion to the fast-paced chapter.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

As Flashy wakes up, Haslam bemoans pulling him from the water two weeks earlier. Flashy is alive only because of his ex-wife, whom Haslam has rescued—not kidnapped—from an unworthy brute who betrays her with Lade. Haslam talks of love at first sight and raves about J.B. being the bloodiest pirate of them all. Flashy realizes that Haslam's wooing is in vain, claims to understand his feelings, and insists that he is a devoted husband.

When Flashy challenges him to let Elspeth decide, a sarong-wrapped Eastern goddess walks in, with Elspeth's blue eyes and bewildered lips and flings herself at Flashy. Haslam leaves; they catch up on news, and are in the midst of sex when Elspeth reproaches Flashy for Mrs. Lade. Flashy swears that it is a lie and switches to concern over what Haslam might have done to Elspeth, who brings the subject up again after sex. Flash acts shocked that she knows—much less uses—the term "mount." This is typical of Elspeth's scattered brain, that she had and has no sense of peril. At any rate, Flashy is glad to see her well and normal for her.

Confined to cabin for two days, Flashy succumbs to his usual despair and drawing of sinister conclusions. By the end of the week he is dangerously miserable. When the Sulu Queen anchors, Flashy figures they are in Mauritius, British soil, and with no time to plan an escape, is past everyone and into the water. He reaches the wharf exhausted. A black naval officer cannot understand Flashy's story but listens to Haslam's version when he arrives. Haslam tries to get Flashy to shut up as the Commandant arrives, wearing the kilt of a 42nd Highlanders. He declares Flashy *corvée* (an unpaid vassal) and orders him dragged away in shackles. He has jumped from the frying pan into the fire on a land straight out of Gulliver.

Flashy worries about Elspeth being dragged ashore but is sure that Haslam has exaggerated the island's superstition, slavery, she-monster queen, and hatred of foreigners. Flashy is lucky not to know that there is no hope of rescue, for when Queen Ranavalona comes to the throne in 1828, having murdered her relatives, she cuts off all trade, bans Christianity, revives slavery, and kills everyone who is not of her tribe—a million people. When he calls for his lawyer, Flashy is beaten. He is finally fed a revolting mess along with a gang of black prisoners.

Tamitave is a small settlement of wooden houses and a fort. Malagassies appear to be a racial mix, well-built, but lazy and stupid. Throngs of slaves carry aristocrats, who parody European fashion and manners. They have bizarre customs, no organized religion, and are superstitious. They seem to want to be different from the rest of the world. The guards belong to the Queen's tribe, the Hovas. Of all the terrible journeys Flashy has made, the 140-mile march in chains from Tamitave to Antan' is the worst. All he thinks of is survival. Only part of the way is paved, the Queen's Buffalo Road.



Nearing Antan', Flashy realizes that they would not take him this far to kill him. The first sight of the capital is breathtaking. A four-story wooden palace dominates a hilltop. Beside it is a shimmering building that nearly blinds with light. Women are carried by in Empire dresses and feathered hats, heading for a great natural amphitheater, Ambohipotsy, where a quarter-million people watch humans boiled to death or hurled off 300-foot cliffs. By contrast, Antan' is a "pleasant, airy, civilised-looking city." They are housed in a clean warehouse and fed, and Flashy reminds himself of his dignity.

In the morning, they are marched to a crowded square, where Flashy hails the only white man he sees. Jean Laborde tries to calm Flashy, says he has been on the island 13 years and is a citizen, but that by law, all castaways are slaves—forever. Advising Flashy not to despair, Laborde punches him in the face and walks away. Flashy is horrified as the bidding begins.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Chapter 8 reveals that Flashy does not drown but is rescued by his arch-enemy, Haslam and is back aboard the Sulu Queen, his wound having been healing for two weeks. Haslam charges Flashy with unfaithfulness to Elspeth, whom Haslam has loved since their first meeting. Witnessing Flashy's adultery removes Haslam's moral constraints and inspires Haslam to rescue her. Flashy, who earlier admits he has much practice at wheedling out of embarrassing situations, acts shocked and offended and insists on his absolute innocence. He sees that their captor has failed to win Elspeth over and asks that she be allowed to decide.

Elspeth's reaction is immediate and passionate, and Haslam has the good taste to fade away. He has obviously talked to Elspeth about Mrs. Lade, for she brings her up twice, saying how badly such an affair would hurt her. The second time, Flashy dodges the question by going on the offensive, asking how a lady could know—and use—the verb "mount" to mean sexual relations. Elspeth does not back down, knowing she has been mounted a good many times.

Flashy grows nervous in captivity and jumps from the frying pan into the fire at first opportunity. He speaks proudly of eluding the crew and swimming ashore but is slow on understanding Haslam's efforts to rescue him from slavery. He is just as dimwitted in picking up on Jean Laborde's efforts. The history of Queen Ranavalona is outlined a bit more fully and the spectacle of her cruelty, instantly reminiscent of the Coliseum in Rome, makes Flashy's predicament crystal clear.

Looking back a half century on his experiences, Flashy is able to quip that Messalina and Attila the Hun—that is, the violent oversexed wife of the Roman Emperor Claudius and the chieftain who pillages Eastern Europe—would write to the newspapers to complain about Ranavalona. He also compares the festive atmosphere during the hanging at Highgate with the pit at Ambohipotsy. Clearly there is a difference in degree (once England does away with quartering and other tortures), but Flashy suspects the

English would cotton to the spectacle. These horrors, the Queen, her courtiers, and the mysterious Laborde become Flashy's companions for the last third of the novel.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Only those who have stood on the block can understand the horror of slavery. Most humiliating is not being even bid on. Laborde explains later that as a castaway, Flashy belongs to the crown. As he washes and shaves, Flashy tells his tale and is advised to arrange to train the Queen's troops. He must never give offense or let her suspect that they have spoken—hence the public blow. Displease her and Flashy will face forced labor or the pits. Laborde will speak to the decent Price Rakota about Elspeth. There are countless details to remember to avoid a horrible death. Flashy can mention Elspeth to no one.

At dawn, officers march Flashy to a Venetian-style palace that towers beside another smaller one covered in silver bells. The main palace is like a Gothic cathedral inside, thronged with courtiers in varied, fancy dress, imitating European society. Flashy is locked in an ante-room with a view of the gallery. A bell rings and a procession forms, centering on a stately figure shielded by a gauze canopy. The sycophants go crazy. Servants remove her cloak, bathe her ebony form, and restore the robe. She then retires to receive homage in her reception room, complete with a gilded couch, a luxurious bed, sunken bath, and pictures of Napoleon's victories. When Flashy is presented, Ranavalona seizes him with her small, cruel eyes and, seeing his involuntary erection, slips off her cloak. Puzzled by a kiss (Malagassies rub noses), she leads Flashy to the bath, drags him to the bottom. He finds sex while half-drowning stimulating. He plays "Drink, Puppy Drink" on the piano before being dragged to bed and mounted. For weeks, he hopes she will tire of him, but she is insatiable and finds him wonderful.

Flashy also becomes a staff officer and military adviser following an interview with Mr. Fankanonikaka, personal secretary to the Queen, who knows about the secret meeting with Laborde. He hopes that Flashy may "roger" a boy-child into the Queen and turn Malagassy troops into proper soldiers like the Horse Guards in England. Flashy is given the invented rank of "sergeant-general" and is quartered in the back of the main palace.

Laborde visits, speaking loudly for the benefit of eavesdroppers and slips Flashy a note saying that Elspeth is safe. Flashy swallows the note, believing that Ranavalona's son is likely to ravish his wife. Elspeth writes about her relief at being freed her from Haslam and the indescribable scenery en route to the capital. She reluctantly accepts that as an important military advisor, Flashy cannot visit her, but is comfortable in the palace where the amiable prince seems "fetched" by her. Elspeth is determined to uphold England's honor.



Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 introduces Flashy the slave to Queen Ranavalona in the raciest scenes in the novel. He is prepared for the meeting as much as possible by Jean Laborde, last seen punching him in the face, but now bribes jailers to help him clean up a bit and explain the countless bits of protocol that are the difference between life and death at court. Flashy is offended by being the only slave not bought at auction, but Laborde explains that castaways are automatically crown property. That had been his fate until proving useful as an advisor and set free. Escape is impossible and unthinkable to Malagassies, who consider their island the whole world and perfect.

Led to the palaces, whose structures and caricature-like behaviors he describes in bemused and colorful detail, Flashy observes from afar and surreptitiously the annual ceremony of the Queen's Bath. Although he declares that he has never met a worse woman in his life, compares her realm unfavorably to Nero's Rome, and repeatedly decries her "Gorgon stare"—referring to the ability of the mythical monster Medusa and her sisters to turn men into stone—Flashy cannot resist Ranavalona's naked body, glistening after her bath. Led in for her inspection, seeing the silk clinging to her breasts brings on an involuntary erection that Flashy realizes must be the ultimate *lèse-majesté* (crime of injuring a sovereign's majesty—essentially treason), he considers options for letting "love conquer all." Considering the danger, this shows an intensely strong libido. Flashy gets hit for kissing Ranavalona on the mouth, because Malagassies show affection by rubbing noses, but the voluptuary Ranavalona learns to enjoy it on second try. Having recently described the horror of his near-drowning in Borneo, Flashy finds that thrashing about in Ranavalona's pool and near-drowning enhances sex. His ditty, "Drink, Puppy Drink," which he sings in Borneo for insistent J.B., pleases Ranavalona more than "God Save the Queen," and he grows quite familiar, pulling her onto the bench for a duet and fondling her. He is amazed to be hefted into bed and "galloped" as the passive partner. He recalls rough sex he has experienced in the past, but this is of a different order. Of the bath that starts the scene, he drolly remarks that "Vicky" (Queen Victoria) lacks the endowments to pull off such a spectacle.

Flashy is then handed off to Mr. Fankanonikaka, personal secretary to the Queen, who becomes a prominent character, easily detected by his colorful patois. Wanting Malagassy troops to be as battle-ready as Hector (mythical hero of the Trojan War) and Lysander (the famous Spartan naval commander who defeats Athens in the Peloponnesian War), Fankanonikaka appoints Flashy "sergeant-general" in charge of training. Fankanonikaka recalls the Horse Guard from his student years in London, which is the elite unit to which Flashy is named but turns down for the voyage to Asia.

Fankanonikaka also recalls the racial prejudice a young black boy receives in England in his day, an attitude mirrored in Flashy's observations about black Malagassies putting on European airs at court, imitating the fashions, fawning, bowing, and mincing. Elspeth's diary entry shows displeasure at being treated familiarly and stared at by blacks. Earlier, Flashy has registered concern at the non-white crew of the Sulu Queen and not objected to J.B.'s disquisitions on the inability of non-whites to govern

themselves. The attitude continues through the end of the novel. Having been on the auction block, Flashy claims to understand the horror of slavery, but still considers himself superior to the blacks who were sold. He "dines" on his wretched prison slop while they "snuffle" over it. One has to remind oneself that in that period Britons routinely use racial epithets that today are offensive.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Experience having taught him to accept what cannot be changed, Flashy trains the army, perfecting their drill, oppressing subordinates, and kissing up to influential senior officers. Fear and intrigue naturally characterize a court where civilization is a veneer over savagery. Flashy has seen death sentences decreed after dinner and a nobleman killed when he cannot retrieve coins from a coiling cauldron. Courtiers assume that Flashy has influence, but he romps only to avoid death. At times he feels affection for Ranavalona—when her eyes are closed. Her idol keepers' advice keeps the blood flowing.

Madagascar seems eager for Prince Rakota to rule. Kind and cheerful, he tries to restrain his mother's bloodthirstiness. No altruist, Flashy wonders why Laborde and Rakota help him and Elspeth, with whom he is reunited briefly at the suburban garden party while Ranavalona is enjoying a bullfight. Fankanonikaka, Laborde, and Count Rakohaja take him there to report on the army and afterwards let him see Elspeth, whose prattling shows she has no notion of the situation. Flashy sees only danger in telling her. Heading back, Laborde cautions self-control and discretion, and hope stirs in Flashy.

Chapter 10 Analysis

In brief Chapter 10, Flashy describes his taking over training of the Malagassy army in terms of the Prussian king, Frederick the Great; the great conquering French general Napoleon; and Sandhurst, Great Britain's famed military academy, whose discipline Flashy boasts he exceeds. The importance of this section of the novel is that it establishes that Flashy, though a slave, has complete control over the forces stationed in the capital. His visit to the suburban palace emphasizes how much stock seems to be placed in him. Being no altruist, he suspects something is afoot. Note the Prince's interest in the home guard.

Flashy also learns more about Madagascar's caste system, which is stricter than India's but curiously not based on religion. Flashy observes that as a white slave, he occupies the tenth of eleven possible social levels and that, oddly in a black society, black slaves are at the bottom. This is one of his more enlightened statements on race. He senses that Malagassies would welcome Prince Rakota's humane views and wonders why his mother does not eliminate him.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Flashy's spirits soar and plunge while doing his duty to army and Queen, cultivating Fankanonikaka, and reminding himself that England still exists. He learns that twice a month foreign ships put into Tamitave and figures that getting Elspeth out is the biggest challenge. Chancellor Vavalana resents Flashy "mounting" the Queen. As her summons become less frequent, Flashy is both relieved and worried. She likes to chat about the troops but never says anything that might help him understand her. He worries that she will learn about Elspeth, who seems to have realized this is not a holiday.

The Prince invites Flashy to the Queen's gala, an event staged for the cream of society every few months in the palace courtyard. The drunken military band is deafening as guests spill liquor on each other, trip over one another, and fall into the plants, profusely apologizing for their clumsiness. They are entered by 100 ugly girls undulating in white saris. As the Prince and Princess arrive, Flashy notices a demure "slant-eyed yellow gal" flirting, but his pursuit is interrupted by the brief appearance of Ranavalona. Flashy is in the bushes with the woman when Rakohaja kicks him in the ribs and steers him to a summer house where four men await: Laborde, Fankanonikaka, Baron Andriama, and Prince Rakota.

Flashy is right, smelling conspiracy. The Flashmans will get safe passage home if Flashy helps pull off a bloodless coup by sending the Hova Guards on another training march, 30 miles to Anka under subordinate officers. A British warship has delivered a protest over enslaved Europeans, and when Ranavalona rejects it, there will follow a squadron and a landing party. The one-hour coup will take place on the second night of the march and the people will rally to Rakota as a liberator. Rakohaja cautions Flashy not to betray them, lest he tell the Queen about Flashy's indiscretions earlier that evening. Her could be skinned alive, like a predecessor.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Chapter 11 shows Flashy settling into his new life but still yearning for England. He is invited to the "proper orgy" that celebrations of events in the Queen's life and reign turn into every few months. He describes drunken society life in lively, tongue-in-cheek terms, reviving observations begun on the day of his first presentation to the Palace.

Observing that Malagassies sit out dances by falling on one another for sex in the shrubbery, Flashy pulls down attractive Mlle. Bomfomtabellilaba, only to be dragged off to a meeting of collaborators determined to bring down Queen Ranavalona. It seems that Laborde has been fitting the pieces together on this particular attempt; others have failed in the past and participants have been brutally extinguished since the day he sees Flashy at the slave market. Flashy has already forced the Hova Guardsmen to march



out of town as part of their training; in doing so again will raise no suspicion. Flashy learns that outlaws facing the death penalty live in the forests and would support the coup, as will the people, the future King believes. Flashy notices how lightly the conspirators regard Rakota, who is likely to be a figurehead. Rakota is a true patriot, worried that his mother's actions will bring Anglo-French military retribution and the loss of independence. Flashy can appreciate this. With little choice, Flashy accepts the assignment, and is then cautioned not to betray them, lest the jealous Queen learn about Flashy's amorous indiscretions that evening. He could be skinned alive as was a careless predecessor. Having said this, Rakohaja declares himself famished.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Flashy can lie and dissemble but gets nervous over conspiracy. He imagines spies everywhere. Junior officers hung over from the Queen's party drill their men into a shambles and are sent off to Ankey. Flashy is thinking drowsily about life after slavery when a Hova platoon rousts him and takes him to the throne room where a tortured Andriama shows that the plot is uncovered. Vavalana disbelieves Flashy's claim about Ankey, assumes Andriama is involved, and despite Flashy's frantic protestations of loyalty, Ranavalona orders "Tanguin."

As Flashy grovels and begs, flakes are shaved off a tanguin stone onto dried scraps of chicken skin. The Queen gives Vavalana \$24, and the mixture is rammed down Flashy's throat. Fankanonikaka gives him rice-water to drink. The pain is unimaginable but before he can scream, Flashy vomits in the pattern that proves him not-guilty by ordeal. Ranavalona has tears in her eyes as she hands Flashy \$8 for surviving, and then sends Andriama away, wailing. Fankanonikaka hurries Flashy to his office, warns of the danger when Andriama talks, fears Vavalana is eavesdropping, and reveals that he doctored the rice-water to help Flashy vomit. The coup must start fast.

Flashy leaves to alert the Prince and Rakohaja, requisitioning a dozen horses, ostensibly for the Guard officers, and telling Fankanonikaka to slip Andriama poison and not to fret. He bullies an under-officer into complying with the order and rides with two horses nonchalantly through the unguarded gate and off to Rakota's, where he wakes the doorkeeper to send for Elspeth, who supposedly has been summoned to the Queen. Elspeth is slow appearing, shrieks with happiness, and is whisked away from approaching Hova guards.

Chapter 12 Analysis

In Chapter 12, Flashy portrays himself as a "nervous actor in 'Macbeth,'" Shakespeare's play about plotting and intrigue. In carrying out his portion of the plot—diverting the strategic Hova Guardsmen—he orders the hung-over officers march their troops and claims it looks like the Battle of Borodino, the titanic, bloody, and indecisive clash between Napoleon's army and Russian defenders outside of Moscow in 1812. No one who catches the reference can quibble with the need for special drilling time. Having done his bit, Flashy spends a day worrying about his co-conspirators.

Flashy has full right to worry, for he is brought to the Silver Palace to see Count Andriama in custody and showing signs of having undergone the dread ordeal of "tanguin." Flashy has obviously heard of this byword of terror, for he panics and offers to reveal everything, but no one understands his English. He describes in frightful detail the making of the potion, its administration to him, and the agonies it causes. He is too



dazed to realize more than that he survives. From the perspective of 50 years later, he notes cheekily that it is the same logic as British police courts, but faster and more uncomfortable for the defendant. He conveniently omits that the British for centuries practiced trial by ordeal. He has already described Ranavalona requiring a nobleman to pull coins out of a boiling cauldron in order to prove his innocence, and then sawing him in half when he cannot. The Queen sends Andriama off to tortures that will make the hellish Spanish Inquisition seem mild by comparison. No matter how tough he is, Andriama will tell the whole truth and implicate everyone. Flashy dashes off to alert the ringleaders that the coup must be moved up. The pace of the novel and level of suspense accelerate as the climax approaches.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Flashy is good at finding back doors when he needs a hurried escape, and he drags Elspeth, warning her to be quiet, telling her she must be "hustled or dead." Running through shrubbery, he hears that they have come to arrest him and tells Elspeth they are running for their lives. He is frenzied to keep her quiet, and lies on top of her in the shadows when noises bring an inspection. Elspeth stifles a scream when an under-officer steps on her hand, and half-carries her to the bushes when he leaves. Unable to get past a sentry, Flashy has Elspeth create a diversion so he can ambush him. They plunge to the gate and onto horses and make for the trees. Fortunately, Elspeth is a decent horsewoman, but fears she will swoon. She demands an explanation and rejects the things he tells her as absurd, since she has been treated so well. Finally, she accepts that they must escape and becomes a perfect, cool "soldier's wife." The gates are, fortunately open, and the sergeant-general is waved through.

Once out, they face only a four-day ride to the sea, where a British warship awaits. Surely no Malagassy will overtake them. They reach the well-provisioned horses sent ahead ostensibly to the Guards. Flashy lets Elspeth sleep a few hours, cares for her finger, and listens to her diary's impressions of Madagascar's butterflies and wild flowers. They are still debating reality as they begin another day's ride to Angavo. By then she is shocked and indignant that Church and State have not intervened, but is certain Ranavalona's bad advisors, not she or genteel Rakota are to blame. Flashy assures Elspeth that the Queen is plain and ill-natured, from the little he has seen. When Elspeth asks if Flashy has missed her, he takes her as he had the first time in Scotland. She has never seen him kill before and shivers at his bravery. She brushes off his admiration of her bravery but appreciates being his "old girl."

They head warily onto the Ankey plain, knowing the Hova Guard regiment is ahead, but manage to outflank them. Flashy is sure no one can beat them to Tamitave and the British ship. Their progress slows in the mountains, where Elspeth's childlike wonder at the scenery worries Flashy. They make good time after reaching the Queen's buffalo road, a paved shortcut to the sea. Things have gone too smoothly as they take time to sleep nearing Tamitave. Elspeth awakens Flashy to point out Hova Guardsmen approaching fast 20 abreast in a single line. The Flashmans flee on two horses. Flashy wonders how he will get Elspeth out to the ship anchored in the roads. It is the most horrid of his many "strategic withdrawals." When the sea comes into view, Flashy panics, seeing no ships and knowing what the Queen will do to him.

They hide in a grove when the mist clears, revealing two French and one British warships and rejoice as gunfire is exchanged with the fort. The British frigate alone sustains no damage. Longboats bring ashore men to storm the fort and the Hovas have to decide between capturing the Flashmans and attacking the invaders. Some 300 yards of open sand separate the Flashmans from the boats, all within range of the fort.



Two Hovas approach the grove and Flash nearly gives birth with fear. The horses and gunfire make them flee, however, as the Flashmans dash to the shore, roaring for help. The Anglo-French marines ignore them as they head for the outer palisade. Elspeth asks to sit and falls into a dead swoon. A red-faced British officer demands to know what a woman is doing in the midst of a naval operation. Casualties are being evacuated in chaos as the black-and-white Malagassy flag comes down and becomes the object of great squabbling over national bragging rights. When a diminutive, excitable French officer spots a lady in a swoon, he calls for a medic. The British second-in-command becomes responsive when he learns Flashy is the hero of Afghanistan. The officers quarrel over who will carry the refugees home. As Malagassies pour out of the broken palisade and attack the rearguard, Lt. Kennedy orders the beach evacuated and cannonading resumed. When the quarrel over the flag resumes, Flashy slashes it so it rips in half, and garbs one part to cover Elspeth's bare legs from the leering French sailors. Elspeth sighs over what good care Harry takes of her.

Elspeth's final diary entry, in July 1845, reports that an uprising of Sikhs in India demands that all officers "of proved experience" be sent to Bombay, so naturally she and Flashy are again separated. Flashy had been quite violent in objecting to the assignment and calls the Governor of Mauritius many names that Elspeth will not write down, but in the end takes the "Path of Honour, which he loves so well." Elspeth is comfortable aboard the *Zelée*, taking her to Toulon, surrounded by attentive officers and midshipmen. Grizel de Rothschild impatiently declares Elspeth vain and affected to the end and not filled with proper "wifely concern."

Chapter 13 Analysis

In the final chapter, Flashy and Elspeth escape from Antan', reversing the trail Flashy takes as a slave (and presumably Elspeth as a guest of the Prince) months earlier. Elspeth takes a while realizing that she is running for her life and easily lapses back into enjoyment of the fauna and flora of Madagascar. Flashy begins by alluding to many close escapes from police and irate husbands and is glad at least to have his pants up and shoes on. The suspense is high as they scurry from the corner of the house—where Elspeth has to stifle a scream when her hand is stepped on painfully and a finger sounds broken—to where the horses are left, untied outside the property. Elspeth provides a fine decoy when Flashy must overcome a guard they cannot go around. Flashy appreciates how Elspeth holds up during the ordeal, even if her chatter sometime drives him crazy. He notes that the escape is going too well for disaster not to strike—and it does.

The Flashmans find themselves pursued by Hova Guardsmen who appear out of nowhere and arrive at the fringes of the beach to see no promised ship awaiting. They huddle under cover as the fog raises and three warships swing shoreward to fire on the Malagassy fort. Flashy is filled with patriotism approaching jingoism, seeing the Union Jack flutter and the British frigate alone avoiding damage from shore guns. He is



suddenly much opposed to the "frogs" (Frenchmen), who are two-thirds of his rescue party and Laborde, another Frenchman, has been his sole protector.

The beach scene is played for humor, now that the danger is past. The British and French fight over the honor of carrying home the Malagassy flag. Officers are as undignified as enlisted men in the contests, calling one another ridiculous names with a veneer of culture that recalls Ranavalona's courtiers. The escapees sit on the beach unnoticed, and then Elspeth in a swoon becomes the object of great gallantry. Flashy not only proves a new Solomon by cutting the flag in two, but appropriates half to cover his wife's bare legs. She coos that he takes such good care of her.

The Thomas Campbell poem, "Lord Ullin's Daughter," with which Elspeth closes her diary is the least fitting of her literary allusions. It is left to her to reveal that Flashy is sent off to India to fight the Sikhs rather than accompany her back to England. He puts up quite a fight and tries to resign his commission, but is refused. Having had little interest in Madagascar and even less understanding, Elspeth leaves the fate of the conspirators unresolved, and putting a happy end to the story of his Lady—even after blaming her coquettishness for all that has befallen them—keeps him also from providing any insight.



Characters

Harry Flashman

The novel's narrator and chief character, "Flashy" returns to London as the hero of Jallalabad, holding four medals for looking noble at the proper time. The six-foot, 182-pound Soldier, now in the reserves, cuts a dashing figure. He has been married for five years to the beautiful but ditsy former Elspeth Morrison, and lives with her, her cranky Scottish father and his own father and father's lover. Throughout the novel, Flashy assures the reader that he is not what he appears. Survival trumps gallantry, flight is better than fight, religion is a waste of time, and any opportunity for sex is welcome.

The action begins when a former schoolmate who Flashy had bullied, recognizes him in a cricket pub and invites him to play in a special match. There by sheer luck he bowls the best game of his life and achieves the world's first "hat trick." During the match, Elspeth is befriended by rich Don Solomon Haslam, who Flashy finds unsettling. They mix in society, however, and Flashy can find nothing wrong in Haslam's behavior. To Flashy's consternation, a notorious London bookie begins pressing on him money from his winnings. Invited to another match in Canterbury, Flashy receives more unwanted money from Tighe and is caught indiscreetly with Mrs. Lade. Challenged by Haslam to a one-on-one match, Flashy is told by Tighe to lose and threatened in body and reputation if he fails. When Flashy can achieve only a draw, he sees the wisdom of going to Asia with Haslam and Elspeth, who is already obliged to go.

In Singapore, Flashy and Elspeth quarrel; she goes on a picnic with Haslam, and Flashy is nearly killed by a Black-face gang after arranging to spend the night with call girls. Rescued by James Brooke, Flashy learns that Elspeth has been abducted and that Haslam is in fact the notorious Borneo pirate Suleiman Usman. J.B., a great fighter of pirates, insists gallantly on rescuing the fair maiden and Flashy has no choice but go along. J.B. expects him to live up to his Afghan reputation, but Flashy only once rises to the occasion: storming a harem and amazing himself by having sex without knowing it, as he cringes in fear. Flashy finds himself in the lead spy-boat as they close in on Haslam's Sulu Queen, is wounded and falls overboard, and thus becomes the only crew member to survive. Sulu Queen picks him up and sails to Madagascar.

En route, Flashy and Elspeth are reunited and Haslam seems to give in. Anchored off the coast of what he believes to be British-owned Mauritius, Flashy sees the opportunity to escape and swims ashore. As a castaway in Madagascar, however, Flashy automatically becomes a royal slave. A fellow European and longtime resident on the island, Jean Laborde, gives Flashy a long list of survival tactics and promises to look after Elspeth. Flashy becomes the love-slave of lusty, malevolent Queen Ranavalona and is appointed "sergeant-general" in charge of training and drilling her army.

Conspirators against the Queen induce him to march the Guard away from the city so they can strike, in return for his and Elspeth's freedom. When the coup is uncovered,



Flashy undergoes trial by ordeal, which he survives, and races to collect Elspeth at the suburban palace and they ride to the coast, where he believes a British man-of-war is anchored. They arrive, pursued by Guardsmen, to find a Franco-British naval operation underway. The allies argue over who will get the honor of caring for the swooning lady. They sail to Mauritius, where Flashy receives orders to Bombay to help put down the Sikhs. Furious at having to return to duty, Flashy tries to resign his commission, but all experienced officers are needed.

Don Solomon Haslam / Suleiman Usman

Haslam is a mystery figure in two worlds. In London, no one knows anything about him beyond that he is rich and generous, as he appears in society, befriending Harry and Elspeth Flashman, and getting them to come with him to Asia on vacation while he attends to business. In Singapore, he is deduced to be Usman, a notorious pirate working out of the north shore of Borneo. Fellow businessmen pay no attention to his activities. Note that Solomon is the English version of the Arabic Suleiman, and Haslam sounds passably like Usman.

Flashy describes Haslam as "portly, you might say, if not fat, with a fleshy, smiling face, and fine teeth which flashed white against his swarthy skin," tall, massively built, swarthy, smiling expensively and nattily dressed, with a hint of Oriental blood and undoubtedly "part-nigger." He walks with "mincing Latin grace." Elspeth disagrees: Haslam is "entirely English" but with a Spanish mother. He earns £50,000 a year from estates and revenues in the Far East Indies. He does not keep mistresses and never touches alcohol. Later, it is learned that he is a prince of the House of Mogandanu, descended from the Prophet Muhammad, and married for five years to the daughter of the Sultan of Sulu.

Haslam is first seen giving archery lessons to Elspeth, calling himself Mars to her Diana, and they become close mingling in London society, he often throwing lavish parties. He puts them up in Canterbury when Flashy is invited to play cricket and suggests they accompany him to Asia on his luxury brig Sulu Queen. Flashy resists. Not particularly a good cricket player, Haslam challenges Flashy to a one-on-one match and by knocking him out with a long throw avoids a loss. This obliges Elspeth and her father to take the trip and, needing to absent himself from London a while, Flashy goes along. Haslam is less than pleased but polite.

Rounding the Horn of Africa, Haslam seems to "go native," submerges himself in work in Singapore—in fact liquidating his assets in anticipation of fleeing with Elspeth—and arranges a picnic that begins his flight. His arch-enemy, James Brooke, correctly predicts that Haslam will hide out the Batang-Lupar river system, and goes in hot pursuit. The trap laid for them is sprung prematurely, and the Sulu Queen escapes, picking up a wounded and drowning Flashy, and keeping him separate from his wife. Losing the contest for Elspeth, Haslam drops anchor off Madagascar and follows Flashy ashore when his prisoner makes a foolish escape that leaves him enslaved on the island. Being merely tolerated as a trading partner by the maniacal Queen, Haslam is



unable to keep Elspeth from being taken ashore. He then disappears from the last third of the novel.

Queen Ranavalona

A historical figure, Ranavalona is Queen of Madagascar, who Harry Flashman deems "a diabolical despot who was undoubtedly mad, fickle, dangerous, and fiendishly cruel." He adds that she is the worst woman he ever met. Ranavalona has reigned since killing her husband the King in a coup and since has murdered most of her relatives and half the population of Madagascar not related to her. Having banned Christianity, she executes any believers found. Ranavalona is gratified by causing pain and strives to sharpen her ability to inflict more. It is a rare day that she does not pass out arbitrary death sentences. Watching bullfighting is her favorite pastime and she grieves whenever bulls are harmed or killed.

Ranavalona is also sexually insatiable. As she does with many of the foreign slaves that are cast-off on Madagascar, Ranavalona takes Flashy as her lover. In her 40s, Flashy finds her "neither pretty nor plain," round-faced, jet-black, long-haired, and plump. Small, cruel, unblinking, snake-like eyes are her most striking feature. When he first meets the Queen, she takes him into her swimming pool and copulates like a "lecherous porpoise." She demands he play the piano and sing, joins along, and throws him physically into bed, mounts him, and wears him out. Declaring that he is wonderful, she has her secretary name him sergeant-general of her army in charge of training. This proves the key to his eventual escape from the island.

When a bloodless coup against her is discovered, she is forces Flashy to undergo the painful and usually fatal trial by ordeal, tanguin. Glad he survives, she has tears in her eyes—and then orders another conspirator, not so lucky, to the torture cells. What happens to Ranavalona after Flashy's escape is not mentioned. Flashy seems to have a tiny spot in his heart for her, despite all her crimes and maltreatment of him.

James Brooke

A historical figure, called the King of Sarawak, "White Rajah" of Borneo, Grand Panjandrum, tuan besar ("great lord") and summed up as being all the law and prophets in the China Sea, Brook (J.B.) saves Harry Flashman in a Singapore alley and is inspired by his story to lead a rescue of Flashy's wife Elspeth. J.B. looks about 40, boyish has dark-blue eyes, curly black hair with touches of gray, long side-whiskers, a tough-set mouth, and wears a pilot hat at rakish angle. Flashy does not know what to make of J.B., although he has run into such idealistic swashbucklers before—and usually gotten into trouble by them. During the advance up the Undup River searching for the Sulu Queen, J.B. insists that she will ground and the pirates will have to turn and fight. His lieutenant Paitingi Ali, disagrees and, smelling a trap, sacrifices his boat and crew to spring the ambush prematurely. As a result, after a harrowing battle, J.B.'s fleet survives to fight pirates another day.



Tom Brown

Harry Flashman's Rugby schoolmate, Brown recognizes the hero of the war in Afghanistan in the "The Green Man," a nostalgic cricket pub. Flashy fears that Brown will be holding a grudge, but Brown is a forgiving Christian and invites Flashy to play on a joint alumni/current student team challenging Kent. Brown is distraught when Flashy says he will begin training by visiting a brothel and is cool towards the "fornicator" during the match.

Mr. Fankanonikaka

The personal secretary to Queen Ranavalona, Fankanonikaka is probably the most colorful and eccentric character in the novel. A "jolly little black butterball" educated at Highgate School, whose race discrimination he still resents, Fankanonikaka interviews Flashy after his sexual introduction to the Queen. Imperfectly bragging of his perfect English, he asks how Flashy falls into Usman's hands, and allows him to deny knowing Jean Laborde before showing he knows everything about their supposedly secret meeting. Fankanonikaka hopes Flashy may "roger" a boy-child into the Queen and turn Malagassy troops into proper soldiers. He invents for Flashy the unique rank of "sergeant-general" and assigns him to quarters in the back of the main palace. Fankanonikaka is part of the conspiracy to replace Ranavalona by her virtuous son Rakota. When Flashy undergoes the ordeal of tanguin, Fankanonikaka slips a purgative into the rice-water to help him vomit—which is the sign of innocence. Nervous, Fankanonikaka writes a requisition for horses for Flashy, who rides to tell ringleaders that the plot must be moved up. Fankanonikaka's fate is not mentioned.

Felix

The "greatest gentleman bat in the world," Felix calls on the Kent team to give Harry Flashman three cheers before he faces giant Alfie Mynn, and catches a drive to put him out, ending the inning. When Flashy's turn comes to bowl, he gets Felix out with a skidder.

Elsbeth Morrison Flashman

Flashy's dim-witted, loving, and sexually appealing wife, Elspeth has golden hair and peach-soft skin. Brought up in Paisley, Scotland, she marries Harry Flashman after her father catches them together in the bushes. Flashy suspects his wife cheats on him, as he regularly cheats on her, but he has loved no one as he does her. Elspeth takes a liking to her father-in-law's mistress, Judy, who lives with them at Mayfair and accompanies them on holiday to Canterbury, where Judy sees Flashy having sex with Mrs. Leo Lade and does her best to fan the flames of discord.



A mysterious, rich stranger, Don Solomon Haslam, instantly falls in love with Elspeth when he sees her at a cricket match and takes her aside to teach her archery, being as he says Mars to her Diana—and using that nickname in conversation. When Haslam learns of the Lade affair, he decides that Elspeth is too good for her randy husband and conceives the plan to steal her away. Elspeth's diary show that she is well-treated but resents her imprisonment. She fends off Haslam's advances and rejects his theory that through adultery, Flashy has forfeited being her husband. When given a choice, Elspeth instantly chooses Flashy and Haslam seems to relent.

At Madagascar, Flashy escapes from the ship, which results in his becoming a slave and through the entreaties of Jean Laborde, Elspeth is taken off and brought to the Crown Prince's suburban palace and treated as a guest. She believes that Flashy is doing important military work for the Queen. When the coup in which he is involved falls through, Flashy has a hard time getting Elspeth to flee silently, but has to admire how she holds up through the ordeal. He blames their misadventures on her love of male attention, but seems very happy that stupid, lovely Elspeth is his wife. He is angry when ordered to India to put down the Sikh rebellion, rather than voyaging with Elspeth, who French naval officers are happy to serve.

Sharif Jaffir

Suleiman Usman's ally, Jaffir commands the pirates at Fort Linga on the Batang Lupar River. It is the first fort to fall to J.B.'s forces.

Jingo

Part of James Brooke's inner circle, Jingo is the Iban marksman who saves Harry Flashman's life in Singapore, firing a radjun-poisoned needle from his blowgun. A headhunter, Jingo wants the black-faced assassin's trophy. Flashy finds Jingo's appearance "hideous," with an ugly face, always wearing no more than a loin-cloth, and carrying his deadly blow-pipe spear. When J.B. pronounces the death sentence, Jingo is the executioner, by garroting and stabbing.

Judy

The mistress of Harry Flashman's father, who lives with them in Mayfair, Judy is close friends with Elspeth. At Canterbury, Judy catches Flashy cavorting in the garden with Mrs. Leo Lade. Flashy loathes her knowing smile and "minxing." Judy next learns about the incident in the drawing room and tells the Duke, setting up a great domestic fight and his threatening to sic his pugilists on Flashy. This results in the great Asian adventure.



Henry Keppel

A historical figure, Keppel is the captain of HMS Dido, who accompanies Harry Flashman and James Brooke from Singapore to Borneo to wipe out Suleiman Usman and to save Flashy's wife Elspeth. Keppel is called a "red-haired devil" by the native Dyaks. The endnotes claim that Keppel is one of the "foremost fighting seamen of the Victorian period," specializing in river warfare. In this novel he does not emerge from under J.B's thumb.

Jean Laborde

A historical figure, Laborde is a French soldier of fortune about 40 years old, handsome, and "nervous as a cat," and living in Madagascar as a freedman after perhaps a decade as a slave. In 1844/45, he is Queen Ranavalona's engineer and canon maker. His is the only white face that Harry Flashman sees in the crowd when taken to the slave market. When called to, Laborde comes over and tries to calm Flashy. For the benefit of an army of onlookers, Laborde punches Flashy in the face and walks away. When Flashy alone is not sold, Laborde visits him in his cell to ready him for survival as a royal slave, giving him a rundown on Queen Ranavalona's peculiarities. Laborde also arranges Elspeth's safe care by Prince Rakota, who turns out to be part of a conspiracy to overthrow his mother. Laborde claims to have begun planning the coup the moment he lay eyes on Flashy in the slave market.

Mrs. Leo Lade and the Duke

A tantalizing woman who spends her time on the arm of a doddering old Duke at society affairs, Lade flirts with Harry Flashman at the cricket match at Lord's. In her diary, Elspeth Flashman calls her "odious" and "déclassé." Heavy but "nimble as an eel," Flashy finds her great sexual fun at Canterbury, but their discovery by Don Solomon Haslam and revelation to the Duke, who has "pugilists" on his staff, gives Flashy reason to consider getting out of London. Haslam uses this moral failure as a pretext for kidnapping Elspeth. Hearing about Lade from Haslam, Elspeth repeatedly begs Flashy to deny it, which he always vehemently does.

John Morrison

Harry Flashman's Scotch Presbyterian father-in-law, Morrison spends his life "squeezing and sweating his millworkers," complains about "footing the bill" for Flashy's London household with whom he moves in. Morrison takes a liking to Don Solomon Haslam and is taken along for his health, on the voyage to Asia that produces all the adventure and near-tragedy in the novel. Morrison's dialog is a delightful Scottish brogue expressing reactionary capitalist ideas.



Catchick Moses

A historical figure, Moses is an Armenian Jew in Singapore. After Elspeth Flashman is abducted, Moses laments that he did not suspect Haslam's liquidating all of his assets and worries that if Singapore does not get Haslam back it will ruin trade. The China Sea is too vast with too many uncharted islands to make it feasible, Moses fears.

Shari Muller

Suleiman Usman's ally, Muller (a corruption of the Arabic mullah) commands the Skrang pirates at Undup. He is a "persevering big villain" wearing quilted armor and a black turban. When Muller's stockaded bamboo castle and fort are set ablaze, he is pursued by Paitingi and nearly caught, but dives overboard and flees into the jungle.

Alfred (Alfie) Mynn

A historical figure, Mynn is the premier cricket batsman of the early 1840s, a Goliath of a man wearing a scarlet waist-scarf and straw boater. He is worshiped by the young. He plays for the Kent team that takes on the Gentlemen of Rugby at Lord's, terrorizing Harry Flashman for three balls before Flashy hits one that Felix miraculously catches. When Flashy bowls to Mynn after retiring Felix and Pilch, he convinces the umpire that Mynn has committed a foul and should be called out. Mynn gives him his boater—the world's first "hat trick." Months later, Mynn invites Flashy to bowl successfully for Mynn's Casuals in the Grand Cricket Week at Canterbury.

Paitingi Ali

Part of James Brooke's inner circle, Paitingi is a red-bearded, Scot-accented, green-turbaned Arab who Harry Flashman first meets in a Singapore alley where he is nearly killed by a Black-face gang. Paitingi is a half-caste (Arab-Malay father and Caledonian mother) who spends 50 years trying to reconcile Christianity and Islam. Paitingi and J.B. rail at one another as only close friends do. Paitingi's first battle is against Napoleon at the Pyramids in Egypt. Paitingi takes the lead spy-boat up the Undup River searching for the Sulu Queen, but becomes convinced that she is hidden in a side creek. Smelling a trap, Paitingi races ahead of the rest of the boats and rapidly spins his craft around to force the ambush to be sprung. He and his entire crew perish, but the rest of J.B.'s fleet survives. Flashy is wounded and topples overboard to be picked up by the Sulu Queen.

Fuller Pilch

A historical figure, Pilch is Flashy's childhood hero, the outstanding cricket batsman of his age. In the game at Lord's, Flashy is lucky to "catch him out," after retiring Felix. When Pilch is followed by Mynn, Flashy achieves the world's first "hat trick."



Count Rakohaja

A tall, lean Hova aristocrat with a scar on his cheek, Rakohaja is the Malagassy army general who recruits Harry Flashman for a bloodless coup against bloodthirsty Queen Ranavalona and blackmails him into keeping the secret. Rakohaja is captured and forced to undergo the local trial-by-ordeal. He subsequently disappears into the torture cells that make the Spanish Inquisition seem pleasant by comparison.

Prince Rakota

A historical figure albeit with a modified name, Rakota is Queen Ranavalona's designated heir and moral opposite, the son not of the assassinated king, but of one of Ranavalona's lovers (later torn apart). At Jean Laborde's request, Rakota protects Elspeth Flashman, and stands ready to take over if the courtiers manage a coup. Rakota is described as golden skinned with dark curls. He is 16 at the time of the novel and "virtuous," which, having once been 16, Harry Flashman finds unlikely. Rakota's dumpy little wife has a better mustache than he. Rakota is commander-in-chief of the army under his mother and the center of a revolution that fails. It is clear that had it succeeded, Rakota would have been a figurehead and puppet.

Sharif Sahib

Suleiman Usman's ally, Sahib commands the pirates at Patusan. His rich wardrobe is looted during J.B.'s raid.

Stuart

Part of pirate-hunter James Brooke's inner circle, Stuart is a fair-faced boy left to watch over Harry Flashman as preparations are made to go to war in Borneo to reclaim Elspeth. Stuart is amazed that Flashy has not heard of J.B. and fills him in on the King of Sarawak and White Raja and other historical facts vital to the story.

Daedalus Tighe

With a red face, button eyes, and a flashy weskit, Tighe, is a self-proclaimed "Accountant to the gentry." In fact, he is a notorious London bookie who after congratulating Harry Flashman on his "hat trick" at Lord's, presses on him a portion of his winnings. Tighe pays Flashy again for a victory at Canterbury and then places a large bet against Flashy in his one-on-one match against Don Solomon Haslam. He threatens social disgrace by revealing that Flashy has accepted £350 in bribes from him and a severe beating if Flashy does not throw the match. Tighe is on hand when Flashy manages only a draw, and his menacing presence convinces Flashy to accompany Haslam on his voyage to Asia. Tighe speaks an amusing dialect combining Cockney



English's misplaced "h" sounds and the German transposing of "w" and "v" sounds. Vincent is Tighe's prime assistant.

Vavalana

Queen Ranavalona of Madagascar's Chancellor, Vavalana has a skinny bird-like face, grizzled hair, and croaking voice. He hates Ranavalona's private secretary, Fankanonikaka, and resents Harry Flashman "mounting" the Queen at her own request. Vavalana tattles on everyone to the Queen and is assumed to be responsible for breaking up the coup against her.

Whampoa

A historical figure, Whampoa is an exceedingly rich Chinese resident of Singapore, known for giving lavish parties in his luxurious country home. He wears a black silk robe, pigtail, and always carries a full sherry glass from which he sips. He entertains Harry and Elspeth Flashman and next day takes Flashy in for several days of convalescence after Flashy is attacked and Elspeth kidnapped. Using the Chinese formula "my miserable and lowly...", Whampoa always admits that nothing he has is substandard. Whampoa is the first to put together the identity of Suleiman Usman and Don Solomon Haslam. Oddly, Whampoa always addresses James Brooke, the "White Rajah" of Borneo, as "Majesty."



Objects/Places

Ampohipotsy

The great natural amphitheater outside the Malagassy capital of Antananarivo, Ampohipotsy can accommodate a quarter-million spectators, who enjoy watching Queen Ranavalona's horrendous tortures carried out. Throughout his enslavement, Harry Flashman worries about being sent there. He compares it to London's Newgate Yard, site of public hangings, which despite the festal air of the public is tame by comparisons. At Ampohipotsy people are slowly boiled to death, crucified, and flung from cliffs.

Antananarivo

The capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo means "City of a Thousand Towns," and is usually abbreviated to Antan'. It is 140 miles inland from the eastern coastal town of Tamitave. Much of the last third of the novel is set in Antan', particularly in Queen Ranavalona's palaces. The first sight of the capital is breathtaking. A four-story wooden palace dominates a hilltop. Beside it is a shimmering Silver Palace that nearly blinds with light. The plain is dotted with huts. In Antan', Harry Flashman, the vicious Queen's love slave, takes over drilling her army. He is drawn into a conspiracy to overthrow Ranavalona that is discovered and, rescuing wife Elspeth, rides hard back to the coast, hoping to be rescued by a British man-of-war anchored there.

Borneo

An island in the China Sea due east of Singapore, Borneo is in 1842 unclaimed by any European power, but pirates range the northern coast, particularly the northeastern sector, Sarawak. The hinterland is unexplored. James Brooke rules Sarawak under the Sultan of Brunei and has been fighting to turn the pirates to a more civilized way of life. When the suave Don Solomon Haslam reverts to his alter ego as Suleiman Usman, the most notorious of pirates, his normal base of operations is the town of Maludu on the northeastern tip of the Island. Haslam kidnaps Elspeth Flashman, and J.B. leads a motley armada up the Batang-Lupar River in search of the Sulu Queen to rescue Elsbeth. Flashy narrowly escapes death in a fierce battle and is picked up by the Sulu Queen and taken to Madagascar, where true horrors await him and Elspeth.

Canterbury

The site of the annual Grand Cricket Week in which Harry Flashman is invited to play. Canterbury is where Don Solomon Haslam announces he must return east, invites the Flashmans to accompany him, and catches Flashy having sex with Mrs. Lade. Haslam



wins his bet with Flashy, which forces him, Elspeth, and his father-in-law to sail with him to Asia and the beginning of their misadventures.

The Green Man

A London pub frequented by cricketers, the Green Man fills Flashy with nostalgia when he visits in the late summer of 1842 and is recognized by Tom Brown, his old schoolmate, who recruits him to play a game at Lord's.

Lord's

A cricket venue at which Harry Flashman has always longed to play, Lord's convinces him to play in a match proposed by Tom Brown in 1842. He finds stepping out on its great emerald field, surrounded by masses of fans a deeply unnerving experience, but bowls better than any time in his life and achieves the world's first "hat trick."

Madagascar

A large island off the east coast of southern Africa in the Indian Ocean, Madagascar is in 1844 independent of any European power. It is ruled by Queen Ranavalona from her palace in Antananarivo. The two coastal towns are Andevoranto and Tamitave. The Malagassy people believe that "Madagascar was the world, and perfect, and there could be no greater treachery than to think otherwise." Its caste system is stricter than India's, but with no religious basis.

Harry and Elspeth Flashman are taken there from Borneo aboard the Sulu Queen. Seeing an opportunity to escape and seek asylum (believing he is in the Crown Colony of Mauritius), Flashy is routinely enslaved and taken inland to the capital, Antananarivo, where he becomes the Queen's love object and takes over drilling her European-trained army. As a white slave, Flashy occupies the tenth of eleven levels in the caste system (oddly, black slaves are at the bottom). The divine Queen is alone at the top, then come her family, then six castes of of fearful, snobby nobles, and then the general, free public.

Mayfair

Mayfair is the fashionable district in London where Harry and Elspeth Flashman live with both fathers and the senior Flashman's lover, Judy. Elspeth's rich Scottish father grudgingly pays the bills. In Singapore, Flashy refers to the eastern part of town catering to Europeans "Mayfair."



Newgate Yard

Newgate is the London prison where public hangings draw huge crowds. Harry Flashman attends one with Conyngham and other friends, watching from the window of the Magpie Hotel. Flashy talks about the horrible executions he has witnessed around the world. The seething mob of spectators are drawn from all classes, and gather in a festive mood. They are disappointed that the prisoner seems drugged and has no last words. Flashy studies the wide spectrum of reactions as the trapdoor falls. Flashy later compares the Newgate experience with the true horrors of Madagascar.

The Rugby School

Harry Flashman's alma mater, from which he is expelled before graduating, Rugby in the late summer of 1842 fields a combined alumni/current student cricket team to challenge rival Kent, with Flashy playing for the first time since Afghanistan. Teammates Brown and Brooke are decidedly cool towards him because of his moral lapse in visiting a brothel.

Singapore

The chief city on the Malay Peninsula, Singapore is the Sulu Queen's destination after leaving England. Don Solomon Haslam announces he has work to do on the quays; Elspeth Flashman goes in search of "Society People," while Flashy after months at sea goes in search of depravity, which is hard to find in the "Mayfair" section below Governor's Hill. Prominent places include the Dutranquoy Hotel, the Raffles Club, the Chinese Pauper Hospital, and church, twice every Sunday.

After being hosted at Whampoa's ornate home, the Flashmans quarrel; Flashy skips a picnic aboard the Sulu Queen and visits Chinatown's Temple of Heaven restaurant. Thinking he is going to a house of pleasure, he is set up by Black-face assassins, is wounded fleeing frantically through the streets, and is rescued by James Brooke. Taken back to Whampoa, Flashy learns of Elspeth's abduction and a rescue is quickly arranged.

Sulu Queen

Don Solomon Haslam's modern screw-driven, twin-masted, heavily-armed brig, the Sulu Queen carries the Flashmans and Old Morrison in comfort. Rounding the Horn of Africa, Haslam reverts to his alter ego, Suleiman Usman, the notorious pirate of north Borneo. Stopping in Singapore, Haslam suggests a picnic from which Flashy moodily absents himself. Haslam abandons Morrison and kidnaps Elspeth and enters the Batang-Lupar river system and is pursued by James Brooke, the pirate fighter. The Sulu Queen escapes the trap in a bloody battle and carries Flashy and Elspeth, kept apart, to Madagascar.

Tamitave

Tamitave is the small town on Madagascar's east coast to which Harry Flashman swims to escape the Sulu Queen and to which, after a long enslavement, he and wife Elspeth race on horseback when the coup in Antananarivo fails. They are rescued by an Anglo-French naval task force that devolves into a contest to claim the fallen Malagassy flag.



Themes

Inhumanity

In *Flashman's Lady*, as in all the *Flashman* novels, the narrator, looking back over his eighty-some years, reflects on how he has seen every form of man's inhumanity to man. He is blasé in describing floggings and capital punishment in all its gruesome forms. In London, he is present at a public hanging and describes the festive crowd's disappointment that the condemned man is drugged and silent. Later, he wonders how Londoners would react to the tortures he sees on Madagascar.

On that island, ruled by Queen Ranavalona, who has systematically eradicate half the population, Flashy experiences the epitome of inhumanity. He declares that one cannot appreciate the horror of slavery until one stands on the auction block, but then glosses over the experience. The Queen regularly rapes him, but he registers no reaction because the sex is exhilarating to him. Being marched by the natural amphitheater of Ampohipotsy where a quarter-million spectators enjoy watching people tied to stakes in trenches and being parboiled and others thrown from towering cliff, Flashy experiences true horror.

Flashy sees a courtier, charged with some offense, having to reach into a boiling cauldron to retrieve coins and, when he fails, being sawn in half. Flashy himself is forced to swallow a burning poison in a trial-by-ordeal after being implicated in a bloodless coup. A co-conspirator is sent off to tortures said to make the Spanish Inquisition appear bland. He is regularly shocked at how the Queen, whose favorite pastime is watching bullfighting—rooting for the bulls, of course—tries to outdo herself in inflicting greater pain, arbitrarily, and cold-heartedly. Like everyone else on the island, he knows that at any moment the bell could toll for him. Had he written this story a few decades later, he would doubtless have compared the experience with Lenin's Red Terror and Stalin's Gulag.

Sex

In all the *Flashman* novels, the narrator, Harry Flashman writes candidly and unapologetically about his sexual prowess. He is insatiable and in the moment heedless of dire consequences. He is married to a sensual, desirable woman, Elspeth, who satisfies him completely, and thusd cannot explain why he must wander. Perhaps as compensation, he suspects that she does likewise. At any rate, she enjoys being fawned over by men, and Flashy blames her for their misadventures in *Flashman's Lady* as a consequence of her coquettishness.

For Flashman, his sexual episodes include a visit to a whorehouse that causes his Christian cricket teammates to shun him, an affair with a married woman that puts thugs on his trail, a romp with a Chinese courtesan that sets him up for a murderous ambush,



and sex in a harem under fire, which surprises him to happen without awareness on his part. A good "gallop," "romp," "roger," or "mounting" are always in order.

The tables are turned when Flashy reaches Madagascar, where he becomes the sexual slave of Queen Ranavalona. While being confined prior to her first inspection, Flashy watches her ceremonial annual bath, and inadvertently grunts his pleasure. Seeing her with silk clinging to her wet body, Flashy gets an erection that he can only hope will not cause offense. Ranavalona soon has him in her pool, where she wraps her legs around her and takes him to the bottom for lung-burning revelries, and soon afterwards takes him to her bed, where she assumes the dominant upper position and bruises him in her enthusiasm. He admits to finding the situation unusual and unexpected, but does his best to please. Ranavalona is pleased and summons him back every day or so. Flashy worries what will happen when she tires of him (predecessors have been cruelly killed) but is relieved to get occasional breaks.

Meanwhile, applying the famous "double standard," Flashy has worried that Elspeth's swarthy kidnapper is performing lewd acts on his beloved and, learning that she is the house guest of the sixteen-year-old crown prince while on Madagascar, Flashy cannot believe the prince is not taking advantage of her. Recalling what he was like at sixteen, he finds it far-fetched that Rakota is a perfect gentlemen. As they are being rescued, Flashy uses a scrap of captured enemy flag to drape Elspeth's bare legs, lest the French crew ogle her excessively.

Religion

In all the Flashman novels, the narrator, Harry Flashman is a religious skeptic, clearly raised in the established Church of England, but having no emotional ties. In Flashman's Lady, he seems more than ever hostile to moralistic Christianity. When an old schoolmate invites him to play cricket, Flashy quickly sizes him up as a pious goody-two-shoes, and for the fun of it makes clear he plans on doing his training in a brothel. Turn the other cheek and like platitudes bemuse Flashy. He finds equally troubling the "muscular Christianity" of James Brooke, the famous pirate fighter of Borneo. When J.B. mentions having written an article about the Oxford Papers, which reevaluates Anglicanism's attitudes towards the Church of Rome, Flashy has no idea what he is talking about. At least J.B. finds fighting pirates fun, in addition to his save-the-damsel gallantry.

On Borneo, Flashy meets Paitingi Ali, a red-bearded, green-turbaned Muslim half-caste who spends 50 years trying to reconcile Christianity and Islam. Paitingi speaks with a Scotch brogue nearly identical with Flashy's stone-hearted Presbyterian father-in-law, but with pious Arabic phrases interspersed. He dies with the name of Allah on his tongue. Even Suleiman Usman / Don Solomon Haslam, although a non-practicing Muslim, refrains from keeping mistresses and never touches alcohol. Later, it is learned that he is a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.



Haslam's motive for kidnapping Elspeth Flashman is moral: to free her from a fornicating husband whose degenerate reputation is known all over England. When assured that the spouses truly love one another, Haslam backs off and would have taken them to a safe port had Flashy not jumped ship in Madagascar, an island with no indigenous religion but plenty of superstitions and fetishes. Christianity has been banned; the missionaries and mass of converts brutally murdered, and underground believers upon discovery are executed, often whimsically by crucifixion. Flashy, who has experience in India, is surprised that a strict caste system can exist on Madagascar without benefit of religious prejudice. The few times that his predicaments bring him to despair, he recalls being taught that insincere prayer is worthless, he does not bother to try.



Style

Point of View

Author George MacDonald Fraser uses octogenarian Harry Flashman as a memorialist reviewing a long and seemingly illustrious career. Fraser claims to be a technical editor who adds historical and cultural endnotes to help the reader. The present novel is the eighth part of the cache of "Flashman Papers" discovered late in the 20th century by Fraser. This one has been edited, soon after Flashy's death in 1915, by his prudish sister-in-law, Grizel de Rothschild, who censors swear words and appends to many chapters extracts from Elspeth Flashman's journal that clarify the current action.

Flashy assumes that readers are familiar with his exploits both before and after the current action, and reminds them often of how his reputation as a soldier is at odds with reality. Flashy readily admits to crippling fear and following the impulse to flee danger. In this novel, having to get Elspeth out of harm's way as well as himself causes inner conflict and soul-searching.

Because the novel is told as a written memorial, there is no need for changes of perspective between the third person and the first person omniscient, although occasionally for rhetorical purposes, Flashy refers to himself in the third person. Once the dramatic moment passes, he reverts to the first person. Sometimes he slips from past tense narrative to present tense, briefly, for the same reason. Everything is put forth through Flashy's eyes after fermenting in his memory for half a century. Elspeth's contributions usually include literary allusions that show a certain breadth of reading but also confirm Flashy's contention that she cannot keep focus. It is a most effective device, made possible because she is actively involved in the story line.

Setting

Flashman's Lady spans the years 1842-45. The action opens in London, England, where Harry Flashman is enjoying the height of his fame as the hero of Jallalabad in the Afghan War. In a cricket pub, he is recognized and invited to play for the first time since school, and matches at Lord's and Canterbury are described in detail. Flashy also describes a public hanging at Newgate Yard.

The action shifts to months of luxurious sailing around the Horn of Africa to Singapore. Flashy spares the reader unnecessary travelogue. Flashy and Elspeth quarrel over trivia. Elspeth accompanies their host, Don Solomon Haslam on a picnic while Flashy seeks a bit of decadence in Chinatown. There he is nearly killed by a street gang and learns that Elspeth has been kidnapped. Flashy's rescuer, the swashbuckling James Brooke, intuits where Haslam will take her and organizes an impromptu rescue. Life and death in the steamy Batang-Lupar River system in western Borneo (Sarawak) is described in detail before Flashy is wounded and rescued by Haslam.



The novel's third major setting is Madagascar, where Queen Ranavalona reigns and terrorizes from her palaces in Antananarivo. Most of the scenes are set in the throne room of her Silver Palace, featuring piano, swimming pool, and bed. Flashy becomes her love slave and also "sergeant general" of her Guard. A failed coup forces Flashy and Elspeth to flee eastward to Tamitave on the coast, where a Franco-British naval operation is underway, and they are rescued.

Language and Meaning

Flashman's Lady is told in British English. The narrator is an octogenarian writing about his life and career early in the 20th century, but the events described fall in 1842-45. There is much 19th-century jargon used, particularly that of cricket. The book opens with Flashy grouching about how the game has changed since his playing days, and the first few chapters are thick with arcane terms. Flashy's enthusiasm for the game, however, comes through the clutter, which sometimes requires several readings to follow the action properly.

The novel is also rich in dialect. Harry Flashman's father-in-law is a rich Scottish capitalist and speaks in brogue, as does Paitingi Ali, a red-bearded, Arab-Malay / Caledonian half-caste, who helps rescue Flashy in Singapore. In England, Daedalus Tighe, a pushy and notorious bookie, speaks an amusing dialect combining Cockney English's misplaced "h" sounds and the German transposing of "w" and "v" sounds. Finally, on Madagascar, Flashy encounters Jean Labore, who speaks an odd English-French blend and Mr. Fankanonikaka, personal secretary to Queen Ranavalona, educated at Highgate School, who brags of his perfect English in an amazing mishmash of idioms and made-up words.

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 downright sexist. All of this is to be expected in an upper class Englishman who as an officer has been less than pleased with non-white troops under his command, and pursues every woman of at least marginal attractiveness. Catering to modern sensibilities would be highly anachronistic. A clever twist is having the original manuscript censored by Flashy's prudish sister-in-law after his death in 1915 and before it falls into the hands of ostensible editor, George MacDonald Fraser for publication.

Structure

Flashman's Lady consists of an "Explanatory Note" by George MacDonald Fraser, who claims to be the editor of the "Flashman Papers" that have come recently to light a half-century after their being written early in the 20th century. The present novel forms the eighth part of Harry Flashman's personal memoir, when he finds himself back from Afghanistan playing cricket again and, through the sport, involved in a trip to Asia that proves nearly fatal. Because Elspeth Flashman has an active role in this novel, excerpts from her diary close many of the chapters, adding insight and perspective.



The body of the novel consists of thirteen unnumbered and untitled chapters. A graphic resembling twin palm trees marks the beginning of each chapter. The significance to the story is not apparent. The chapters run in chronological order after Flashy pontificates about changes in the game of cricket since his playing days. This swiftly brings him to a cricket pub to meet up with an old schoolmate and an invitation to play a match. Through cricket, Flashy and wife Elspeth plunge into a harrowing adventure.

The cricket-dominated opening chapters are dense with sports terms, but also establish that Flashy is addicted to sex and averse to Christian moralism. They are befriended by a mysterious rich man who offers to take them to Asia, where he has business to which he must attend. Blackmail over sports betting convinces Flashy it would be healthy to leave London.

The Flashmans' Asian adventures are told with much colorful detail and high tension. It is filled with swashbuckling words and deeds, with Flashy making clear to readers that he finds safe places to hide whenever possible. When the Flashmans are left on Madagascar (separately), both talk at length about this unique island, coming to very different conclusions as a result of the different ways in which they are treated: he as a love slave to the bloodthirsty Queen and she as the house guest of the kindly Crown Prince. Flashy bemusedly describes how the court adopts a veneer of European civilization, but he is always aware that he could be horribly tortured and killed at any moment. The ending includes a breathless escape across the island and the slapstick comedy of French and British officers fighting over a Malagassy flag and a swooning Englishwoman.

Forty-six endnotes explain references in the text, maintaining the fiction that this is a historical memoir rather than a work of historical fiction. Two maps help the reader figuring out where the Flashmans are located. The close-up inset of the Sarawak on Borneo is particularly useful. Finally, there are three appendices talking about cricket in the 1840s, the White Raja, and Queen Ranavalona I. The value of the appendices to the volume is minimal.



Quotes

"So much for the new Flashman, eh?' says I. 'Wish you hadn't invited me to play with your pure-minded little friends? Well, it's too late, young Tom; you've shaken hands on it, haven't you?'

He pulled himself together and took a breath. 'You may play if you wish,' says he. 'More fool I for asking you—but if you were the man I had hoped you were, you would—'

'Cry off gracefully—and save you from the pollution of my company? No, no, my boy—I'll be there, and just as fit as you are. But I'll wager I enjoy my training more.'

'Flashman,' cries he, as I turned away, 'don't go to—to that place, I beseech you. It ain't worthy—'

'How would you know?' says I. 'See you at Lord's.' And I left him full of Christian anguish at the sight of the hardened sinner going down to the Pit. The best of it was, he was probably as full of holy torment at the thought of my foul fornications as he would have been if he'd galloped that German tart himself; that's unselfishness for you. But she'd have been wasted on him anyway." Chapter 1, pg. 17.

"It was exhilarating work, and I was just settling myself for the finish, and thinking, we'll have to have more of this another time, when I heard a sound that galvanised me so suddenly that it's a wonder the couch didn't give way—rapid footsteps were approaching the drawing-room door. I took stock—breeches down, one shoe off, miles from the window or any convenient cover, Mrs Lade kneeling on the couch, me peering from behind through her feathered headdress (which she had forgotten to remove; quite a compliment, I remember thinking), the doorknob turning. Caught, hopeless, not a chance of escape—nothing for it but to hide my face in the nape of her neck and trust that the visible side of me wouldn't be recognised by whoever came in. For they wouldn't linger—not in 1843—unless it was the Duke, and those footsteps didn't belong to a gout patient.

The door opened, the footsteps stopped—and then there was what a lady novelist would call a pregnant pause, lasting about three hours, it seemed to me, and broken only by Mrs Lade's ecstatic moanings; I gathered she was unaware that we were observed. I stole a peep through her feathers at the mirror above the fireplace—and almost had convulsions, for it was Solomon reflected in the doorway, his hand on the latch, taking in the scene.

He never even blinked an eye; then, as other footsteps sounded somewhere behind him he stepped back, and as the door closed I heard him saying: 'No, there is no one here; let us try the conservatory.' Dago or not, he was a d—d considerate host, that one." Chapter 2, pgs. 57-58.

"'Jingo!' a voice called, and pat on the word something whispered in the air above my head, the hatchet-man shrieked, his body twisted on tip-toe, and to my amazement I saw clearly in silhouette that an object like a short knitting-needle was protruding from beneath his upturned chin. His fingers fluttered at it, and then his whole body seemed to



dissolve beneath him, and he sprawled motionless in the alley. Without being conscious of imitation, I followed suit." Chapter 4, pg. 105.

"'We know what's to do, gentlemen,' cries he, 'and I'll answer that the task is one that strikes a spark in the heart of every one of us. A fair and gentle lady, the beloved wife of one here, is in the hands of a bloody pirate; she is to be saved, and he destroyed. By God's grace, we know where the quarry lies, not sixty miles from where we sit, on the Batang Lupar, the greatest lair of robbers in these Islands, save Mindanao itself. Look at it'—his finger stabbed the map—'first, Sharif Jaffir and his slaver fleet, at Fort Linga; beyond him, the great stronghold of Sharif Sahib at Patusan; farther on, at Undup, the toughest nut of all—the fortress of the Skrang pirates under Sharif Muller. Was ever a choicer collection of villains on one river? Add to 'em now the arch-d—l, Suleiman Usman, who has stolen away Mrs Flashman in dastardly fashion. She is the key to his vile plan, gentlemen, for he knows we cannot leave her in his clutches an hour longer than we must.' He gave my shoulder a manly squeeze; everyone else was carefully avoiding my eye. 'He realizes that chivalry will not permit us to wait. You know him, Flashman; is this not how his scheming mind will reason?' I didn't doubt it, and said so. 'He's made a fortune in the City, too, and plays a d—d dirty game of single-wicket,' I added, and Brooke nodded sympathetically." Chapter 5, pg. 140.

"Well, I've seen women in the grip of terror often enough, but I couldn't account for this passionate frenzy—until I realised that my shuddering was of a curiously rhythmic nature, that I had a quivering tit in one hand and a plump thigh in the other, and our nether garments seemed to have come adrift somehow, and that my innards were convulsing with another sensation besides fear. I was so startled I nearly broke stride—I'd never have believed that I could gallop a female without realising I was doing it, yet here we were, thundering away like King Hal on honeymoon, after all I'd been through that day, and with battle, murder, and sudden death raging all around us. It just shows how your better instinct will prevail in a crisis—some fall to prayer, others cry upon Queen and Country, but here's one, I'm proud to say, who instinctively fornicated in the jaws of death, gibbering with fright and reckless lust, and giving of his best, for when you realize it may be your last ride you make the most of it. And, d'you know, it may well be true that perfect love casteth out fear, as Dr Arnold used to say; leastways, I doubt if I can ever have been in finer tuppung trim, for in the last ecstatic moment my partner fainted clean away, and you can't do better by 'em than that." Chapter 7, pgs. 178-179.

"'Now!' roars Paitingi, dropping to his knees and clutching the gunwales, and as the port paddlers backed water the spy-boat spun crazily on her heel, her bow rearing clear out of the water so that we had to cling like grim death to avoid being hurled out. For an awful instant she hung suspended at a fearful angle, with the water a good six feet beneath my left elbow, then she came smashing down as though she would plunge to the bottom, wallowed with the water washing over her sides—and we were round and



driving downriver, with Paitingi yelling to us to bale for our lives." Chapter 7, pgs. 189-190.

"I make no comment myself—because as I watched this beastly spectacle I seemed to hear the voice of my little Newgate friend in my ear—'Interesting, isn't it?'—and see again the yelling, gloating audience outside the Magpie and Stump; they were much the same, I suppose, as their heathen brethren. And if you tell me indignantly that a hanging is a very different thing from boiling alive—or burning, flaying, flogging, sawing, impaling, and live burial, all of which I've seen at Ambohioptsy—I shall only remark that if these spectacles were offered in England it would be a case of 'standing room only'—for the first few shows, anyway." Chapter 8, pg. 217.

"Well, even from above and through a muslin screen there was no doubt that she was female, and no need for stays to make the best of it, either; she stood like an ebony statue as the two wenches began to bathe her from bowls of water. Some vulgar lout grunted lasciviously, and realizing who it was I shrank back a trifle in sudden anxiety that I'd been overheard. They splashed her thoroughly, while I watched enviously, and then clapped the robe round her shoulders again. The screen was removed, and she took what looked like an inlaid ebony horn from one of her attendants and stepped forward to sprinkle the crowd. They fairly crowed with delight, and then she withdrew to a great should of applause, and I scrambled down from my window thinking, by George, we've never seen little Vicky doing that from the balcony at Buck House—but then, she ain't quite equipped the way this one is.

What I'd seen, you may care to know, was the public part of the annual ceremony of the Queen's Bath. The private proceedings are less formal—although, mind you, I can speak with authority only for 1844, or as it is doubtless known in Malagassy court circles, Flashy's year." Chapter 9, pg. 228.

"'What d'you want me to do?' I said. For the life of me, I couldn't see why they needed me at all, unless they wanted me to strangle the black slut in her bath—the mind shuddered at the thought—no, it couldn't be that—no bloodshed, Laborde had said. 'We need someone,' Laborde went on, as though he'd been reading my mind, 'who is in the Queen's confidence, entirely above suspicion, yet with the power so to dispose of the armed forces that they will be unable to protect her. Someone who can ensure that when the moment comes, her Hova guard regiment will not be able to intervene. Those guards within the palace can be dealt with easily—provided there is no reinforcement to assist them. That is the key to the whole plan. And you hold the key.'" Chapter 11, pg. 266.

"'No!' I screamed. 'Let me go! I'll tell—I swear I'll tell!' By the grace of God I shouted in English, which no one except Fankanonikaka understood. 'Mercy! They made me do it! I'll tell—'

My jaw was wrenched cruelly open; bestial fingers were holding it, and I choked as my



mouth filled with the filthy odour of the tanguin. I struggled, gagging, but the scraps of chicken were thrust brutally to the back of my mouth; then powerful hands clamped my jaws shut and pinched my nostrils, I struggled and heaved, trying not to swallow, my throat was on fire with that vile dust, I was choking horribly, my lungs bursting, but it was no use. I gulped agonisingly—and then I was staggering free, sobbing and trying to retch, glaring round in panic, knowing I was dying—yet even then aware of the curiosity in the watching eyes of Vavalana and the guards, and the blank indifference of the creature motionless on the throne." Chapter 12, pgs. 276-277.

"'Old girl,' says I, 'you're a trump.'

'Oh, no!' says she, wide-eyed. 'i am very silly, and weak and and not a trump at all! Feckless, Papa says. But I love to be your "old girl"—she snuggled her head down on my chest—'and to think that you like me a little, too ... better than you like the horrid Queen of Madagascar, or Mrs Leo Lade, or those Chinese ladies we saw in Singapore, or Kitty Stevens, or—my dearest, whatever is the matter?'

'Who the h—I,' roars I, 'is Kitty Stevens?'

'Oh, do you not remember? That slim, dark girl with the poor complexion and soulful eyes she thinks so becoming—although how she supposes that mere staring will make her attractive I cannot think—you danced with her twice at the Cavalry Ball, and assisted her to negus at the buffet...'" Chapter 13, pg. 293.

"'That says "Ranavalona".' I told him. 'She's the queen of that b—y island, and you can thank your stars you'll never get closer to her than this I could tell you—' I was going on, but I felt Elspeth stir against me and thought, no, least said soonest mended. I glanced at her; she was awake, all right, but she wasn't listening. Her eyes appeared to be demurely downcast, which I couldn't fathom until I noticed that her dress was so torn that her bare legs were uncovered, and every libidinous Frog face in that boat was leering in her direction. And didn't she know it, though? By George, thinks I, that' show this whole confounded business started, because this simpering slut allowed herself to be ogled by lewd fellows—

'D'ye mind?' says I to Boudancourt, and taking the torn banner from his hand I disposed it decently across her knees, scowling at the disgruntled Frogs. She looked at me, all innocent wonder, and then smiled and snuggled up to my shoulder.

'Why, Harry,' sighs she. 'You take such good care of me.'" Chapter 13, pgs. 309-310.

Topics for Discussion

How does cricket figure in this novel? Based on your level of familiarity with the sport, what would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of concentrating on the admittedly complex and bewildering game?

How does including editorial comments from Grizel de Rothschild color the novel? What do you think of her censoring words in the text?

Does Don Solomon Haslam make any sense in his arguments for why Elspeth should be his?

How is music used in the novel to set moods and establish characters?

How are Daedalus Tighe, Jingo, and Judy used in the novel? Could any of them be omitted without altering the story?

How does Flashy's Scottish father-in-law contribute to the story? Is he more than a foil for fellow Scotsman, the colorful Paitingi Ali?

Is Flashy's "what Elspeth doesn't know can't hurt us" attitude justified? Do you think she believes his protestations of innocence? Do you see any indication that she is the slut he suspects? Do you believe he really suspects her or just likes to talk big?