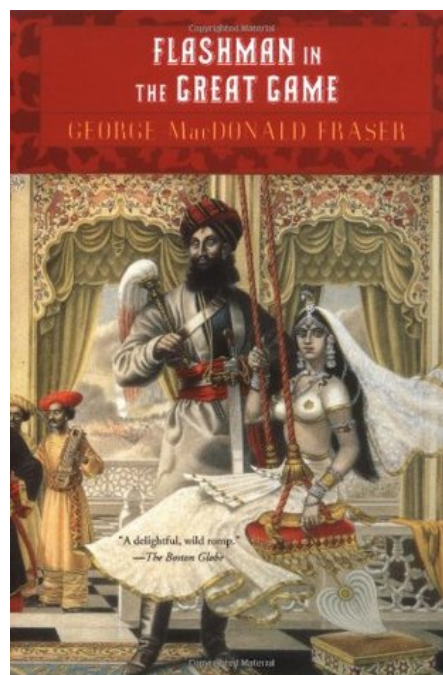




Flashman in the Great Game

George MacDonald Fraser

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One of literature's most delightful rakes is back in another tale of rollicking adventure and tantalizing seduction. The plucky Flashman's latest escapades are sure to entertain devotees as well as attract new aficionados.

Flashman in the Great Game Details

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From Reader Review Flashman in the Great Game for online ebook

Muthuprakash Ravindran says

It is difficult to classify this one in the 'Flashman' series. On the one side, this is a book in which Flashman seems more human what with his rational look into the native soldier's grievances and falling in love with a Rani (which is very unusual) and the unfolding of events during that grim years of 1857, 'Flashman in the Great game' seems a little out of place with all the other bawdy adventures of Flashman.

Nonetheless, it is a must read as Fraser tries to balance the view of the British towards the 'Mutiny' as they call it with the genuine grievances of the native soldier which caused the bloody rising in the first place. However, the 1857 events generate so much polarized views (with we Indians terming it 'The first war of Independence' versus the British terming it a mutiny), it took a lot for me to adjust to the contrarian views against what has been imbibed in me over the years.

The Rani of Jhansi has been a great patriot and over these years, I have always thought of her only from that mono-chromatic view. So it is a little shocking to read of her as a young princess with a fiery disposition and actual feelings. Probably this is the first time I read of her as a woman as well. We've put her in a pedestal that it is difficult to think of her other than a matured lady in a mail shirt with a kid on her back and sword on her hand.

That aside, the events of the 1857 war of independence is of such brutality on both sides that it is difficult to take an objective view of it at all. I started reading with that misgiving knowing where Flashman's sympathies will lie. In a way, that made it easier to observe Flashman's critiques on the behavior on both sides. I would hesitate to call it neutral, but it is not so lopsided as well.

As many have pointed out, while Flashman goes through his whore-mongering at will here as well, he also shows his softness for once towards his feelings for Lakshmibai. Mercifully, there is not much of mooning over it and he gets over it pretty fast and get on with his adventures.

Overall, with a good deal of history and comparatively less bawdier than the other installments, the book is still a must read for anyone who wish learn a little about the 1857 events or just an adventure set in the British raj.

Jamie Collins says

Sometimes I'm annoyed at the contrivance of inserting a fictional character into famous historical events, but with Flashman it works very well. I'm totally willing to believe that he got caught up in the 1857 Indian Mutiny (or India's First War of Independence, depending on your point of view) and lived to tell the tale - including surviving the Siege of Cawnpore and subsequent massacre.

Flashy is just as arrogant, cowardly and lecherous as ever; and just as wry an observer of human nature. The subject matter does make this episode darker than most. Flashman's selfish nature is toned down a bit as he's genuinely disturbed by the atrocities he witnesses.

A fascinating, informative, and hilarious read, as always with this great set of books.

Cynthia says

This one deals with the great mutiny in India in 1857/58 and the mysterious and alluring Maharani of Jhansi, a leader of the mutiny. This is a great series. And the obnoxiousness of Flashman as a character is, I think, not only exaggerated (he's really not that bad) but it also seems to let Fraser make some definite criticisms by comparison of English culture in the 19th century and how ALL Englishmen treated women and foreigners.

Ruediger Landmann says

This time it's Flashman's account of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. This has been one of my favourite instalments in the series yet; very well paced and balanced. Also, like Fraser at his best, the writing is vivid and energetic -- the description of the Siege of Cawnpore will stay with me a long time. As usual, educational as well. Reading this sent me off checking some of the historical facts, especially those around the siege, which I discovered to be horrifyingly accurate. Left me wanting to read more about the Mutiny one day. The racism is at an all-time high in this book, but that's no surprise to anyone who knows old Flashy...

Adam says

There are historical novels, which are so good that they appear to recreate historical events (e.g. Bernard Cornwell) and history written so well that it reads like a novel (e.g. Prescott and more recently, Alistair Horne). This book by George MacDonald Fraser, "Flashman in The Great Game" falls uncomfortably, rather too uncomfortably, somewhere in between these extremes.

The device used in this book is to present it as a volume of the fictional Flashman's memoirs, edited and annotated by the author of the novel. As a result the text of Flashman's memoirs is peppered with references leading to detailed end notes. These notes let the reader know whether or not Flashman's account of events in the "Indian Mutiny" are accurate, and if not how they deviate from accepted historical wisdom. I found that this device was very irritating, and spoiled the reading of a moderately exciting, and at times bawdy and humorous, story.

If this book is supposed to be a novel, a historical afterword without endnotes would have sufficed. Although I have reservations about this novel, I will try one more in the Flashman series.

SP says

I'm a big fan of the *Flashman* series. Fun, absurd, and with a sharp eye toward historical detail, George MacDonald Fraser always manages to capture the sense and hypocrisy of the Victorian age. And the author does a very deft job of inserting Flashman into some of the greatest military disasters of the 19th century without really distorting the underlying historical reality. This one focuses on the so-called Indian Mutiny -- a brutal 1857 revolt against British rule in India that is little known in this country. I've read it at least twice before, and that alone would justify my four-star rating.

Ardee-El says

Andrew Ward begins his great study of the Cawnpore massacre, **Our Bones Are Scattered**, with the following observation: __To write about the British in India is to ask what they were doing there.__

Fraser was a satirist, but he was also an empiricist. He never asks this fundamental question, and yes, this is a burlesque, but it is a burlesque of actual history.

Paradoxically, I recommend this book to others while personally struggling with its shortcomings. Why? Well, it is a thundering good read when taken on its own, and I certainly wouldn__t deprive anyone who is taking on the Flashman saga from missing this episode, but from the perspective of both a writer and someone who knows a little about this particular episode of history, I find it wanting in numerous ways.

First is how Fraser picks up the story from the preceding book. Yes, each of the Flashman novels is meant to be self-contained, and therefore Fraser may be forgiven for writing a lengthy (and not uninteresting in itself) prologue before getting on to the main adventure, but when read after **Flashman at the Charge**, all the momentum of that chronologically-preceding book is lost. What happened to __Scud__ East? Where__s the scene where Flashman realizes he__s not going to be a national hero for saving India? __For Britain and from Russia, that is. (A prime piece of irony in that the one episode of pure bravery on Flashman__s part__no matter now drug-induced__gains him nothing, but that he continues to be lionized for acts of bravery which he didn__t really do.) Much too little is made of his accomplishments of the preceding book.

Instead we__re treated to an extensive prelude that exists only to set up the rest of the book: You don__t buy Flashman eventually going undercover in India if Fraser doesn__t impress upon the reader Flashman__s fear of Count Ignatieff__who then disappears from the remainder of the book except for a brief tease of a scene toward the end that serves only to upend our expectations for a short time and to remind us of who got Flashman into all his troubles in the first place. It__s . . . thin.

Then there is his portrait of the Rani of Jhansi. The problem she presents Fraser is what he needs her to be in order for the book to work versus how she is best remembered by history. He splits the difference by making her an enigma__and if you don__t get what he__s doing here, he provides a final endnote leaving the contradiction up to the reader to decide. It__s effective in its way__it certainly propels the plot and is written in such a way as not to offend anyone who might hold her as a national heroine, but it leaves her opaque and . . . thin. She doesn__t come across as real; she__s as much a plot device as Count Ignatieff.

Finally, the mechanics of the storytelling are blatantly obvious to me: Every decision Flashman makes is the wrong one, taking him deeper and deeper into trouble. Yes, I know it__s necessary and it__s really the *raison d__tre* for the Flashman novels . . . but it destroys the illusion. It doesn__t feel organic, it feels forced.

One final observation. Anyone reading my reviews knows that besides my appraisal, I will often mention some aspect of the art of writing that the book at hand made me think of. In this case, I was reminded of someone else__s observations about the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs. (Sorry, I can__t cite when and where I read it.) The essayist pointed out Burroughs__ reliance on the chase-capture-escape/rescue recipe in concocting his fiction, which I hadn__t actually thought of when I read them, but is obvious in hindsight. It was while reading **Flashman and the Great Game** that I realized Fraser uses the exact same formula__only he uses it to illuminate history, whereas Burroughs used it to fuel his imagination. In the cold light of day, it__s equally improbable either author__s heroes would survive such events, but it__s Fraser__s attention to historical detail and the wildness of Burroughs__ imagination that make the trope work.

(And despite how two stars ?? is perceived here, I do recommend this book__as I do all the Flashman

books__only with reservations.)

Anthony Ryan says

My personal favourite outing for George McDonald Fraser's eponymous cad pitches the one time bully of Tom Brown's School Days into the maelstrom of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 (the Victorians preferred to call it a Mutiny because it sounded nicer). Flashman is as lascivious and cowardly as ever but finds himself repeatedly forced to fight for his life amid the unfolding carnage. Fraser proves himself as much a master of battle scenes as he is of comedy and also manages the difficult trick of maintaining the laugh quotient whilst providing an unflinching look at an often horrifyingly dark episode in British and Indian history. One for history and humour buffs alike.

Evan Leach says

The fifth *Flashman* novel takes place from 1856-58, and sends our “hero” back to where his career began: India. Poor Flashy is sent to investigate (and suppress) grumbling among the native ranks, but ends up smack dab in the middle of the Indian Rebellion of 1857. If you’ve made it this far into the series, chances are you are a fellow *Flashman* fanatic, so I won’t waste time preaching to the converted. I am happy to report that readers who enjoyed the first four books will not be disappointed.

One of my very favorite things about the *Flashman* series is the well-researched history on display. While the books are enormously entertaining, I always end up learning something between the adventures and the laughs. This book was no exception, as I knew absolutely nothing about the 1857 rebellion, which was a significant episode in Indian history that marked the shift from East India Company control of the subcontinent to the British Raj. As usual, Flashman is thrust into the heart of major historical events, from the outbreak of mutiny at Meerut (native soldiers objected to new cartridges which they believed were greased with pig fat, the biting of which was against their religion) to the disastrous Siege of Cawnpore.

There are the usual adventures and misadventures, both perilous and raunchy, that are par for the course in this series. There is plenty of humor on display as well, although I did notice a slight change in tone from earlier *Flashman* books. I have heard some readers say that Flashman softens a bit as the series goes on, and I detected a bit of that here. In the first book Flashy is a true bastard, but in this entry he’s...well, he’s still a bastard, but he’s a kinder, gentler bastard. He falls for the love interest much harder than in the previous novels, and there are a few times when he shows actual compassion for other human beings. Personally, this didn’t detract from my enjoyment of the book, but it was noticeable.

Flashman and the Great Game closes with a fantastic (and very funny) surprise: (view spoiler). It’s a great ending to another very strong entry in the *Flashman* series. **4.5 stars**, highly recommended!

Ian Mapp says

No need to change a winning technique - same style is used. Starts with Flashman in the UK getting his

assignment - this time whilst in Queen Victoria's company at Balmoral and then heading off to a key event in the 19 Century - getting involved in the all the key action. The author uses the process to entertain and educate and it works wonderfully.

Initially, this is Flashy sent to India in a counter intelligence position as his old foe from the last book - Nicholas Ignatieff - is agitating the locals. As predicted in the last book.

However, the key action is the Indian uprising of the mid 1850s. Its so well done. The locals had their greivances - mainly religious - but the book also does well at articulating the horror of what they did - espeically at Lucknow. It doesnt stop their - the UK forces were just as bad in their reprisals. George MacDonald Fraser just presents the facts - using the humour of Flashman, who despite his faults, always has totally humanitairan views. Even if his choice of language is less than acceptable.

But everything is balanced in these books. Flashman's wife - Elspeth - is as bad as he is. The Indiands butchered women and children but the english wanted to dole out justice with in the most barbaric fashion.

In a new device, the author comments on a real life painting and points out that Flashman is in it - mounted on a horse with his arm aloft. You can google the painting and see him there. Thats fact and fiction combining.

Another adventure perfectly and entertainingly detailed.

Tamara says

This continues to suffer from what bothered me in the last installment in the series - less interesting characterization which also leads to less interesting poltics - thus leaving a somewhat disjointed pulpy historical (albeit meticulously so) adventure book. That said, there are some moments of extremely good, distubring writing and atmosphere with the various minor characters and situations Flashman comes across in his passage through the Indian Mutiny. (The main female character is a little too much like every other feisty exotic sexy chick in a Flashman book.)

Christopher Saunders says

Fifth entry in the series sees Flashy mixed up in the Indian Mutiny, from romancing a ravishing Rani to matching wits with a crafty Russian spy, all the while avoiding murderous Sepoys and rampaging English troops. This is easily the most serious installment, with very graphic and harrowing descriptions of violence and atrocities on both sides of the Mutiny; even Flashman is compelled to act heroic and noble in spots. Lots of memorable set-pieces (especially Flashman's trip to Balmoral) but the best moment is Flashman's reaction to the publication of Tom Brown's Schooldays!

Ben Hinum says

This book covers the horrors of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny in India. At the time, India was under the control of the East India Company of Britain. The company ruled the land by using indigenous soldiers -- called Sepoys -- under the direction of British officers. The British fooled themselves into thinking that the Sepoys

were loyal to their white officers and the queen, when in fact both Hindu and Muslim soldiers hated the foreign intruders and their attempts to Christianize them. Prime Minister Palmerston had an inkling that things were not going well in India, believing that the Russians were stirring up "the natives" in order to have them topple the British hegemony on the sub-continent. During the course of the book, Flashman assumes various disguises and experiences at least a half-dozen near-death incidents. Unlike his portrayal in other books in the Flashman series, in this book he displays sensitivity to the horrors of war. He falls in love with the beautiful Rani, Lakshmibai, who is the Maharani of Jhansi and who becomes a leader of the forces trying to expel the British. In the book, he treats the excesses of Indian rebels and the British army with balance. Both behave disgustingly. While he has his share of sexual conquests, he admits to true love for Lakshmibai, as well as his wife, Elspeth. The Flashman pictured here is an older (about 36 years old), more mellow scoundrel than the insensitive lout portrayed in the first book in the series.

As with all the Flashman books, the historical details are fantastic and true. Reading these books is a great way to get up to speed on 19th century events that are otherwise presented in a dry, dull fashion.

Jane Jago says

Flashy just gets worse. Or better. Depending on your point of view.

Okay it's about as far from PC as you can get. And if that is going to bother you give the Flashman oeuvre a miss. But you will be missing a real laugh out loud treat.

Humour underpinned with scholarship. It's a mixture I find irresistible.

Love says

The fifth Flashman book is billed as being about the Great Game and it starts out that way with Flashman being sent as a political officer (pretty much a spy) to the Indian state of Jhansi, to manipulate its beautiful queen and keep the Russians out. But the book is really about the Indian Mutiny, which breaks out during Flashman's stay in India. Due to him being hunted by thuggee assassins, Flashman is hiding out under cover as an Indian soldier as the mutiny breaks out. So he experiences the run-up to the mutiny from a native perspective. He then sheds his cover in time to experience some of the worst massacres perpetrated by the Indians against their former masters.

This might be my favorite Flashman story so far, I like the setting and while being an adventure novel it also offers a good analysis of the origins of the Indian Mutiny.

Matthew says

I think this Flashman book almost replaced Flashman at the Charge as my favorite Flashman book for surprising reasons. I think that Flashman at the Charge was definately funnier. Flashman in the Great Game is peppered with the usual hilarity, however the tone of the novel is much more sentimental and reverent towards the historical experience. The Sepoy Mutiny was horrid and awful atrocities were committed on both sides. Flashman spends most of the novel disguised as a "native *badmash* of unsavoury appearance" and

sees the fighting from two perspectives. He shows some uncharacteristic sympathy to the plight of the colonized that peeps out through his usual blithe disdain for the subjugated peoples of the 19th century. The novel has many more touching moments and scenes that evoke deep anger than the other Flashman books I have read so far. It awakened a powerful curiosity in me to learn more about British India (I recommend the movie *Kim* to anyone who is interested in *The Great Game*). The writing was superb as usual, Fraser is one author I can always count on when I need to blow through an entertaining read and learn something without thinking about it.

Rick Brindle says

Another excellent Flashman installment. This time, Flashy has been sent to investigate mysterious goings on back in India. Of course, he tries to get out of it, but if he did that, there wouldn't be a story. Cue the arrival of Count Ignatieff and lots of danger that only Flashy can get himself into, along with various beautiful women who he shouldn't really end up in bed with, but of course does. As the Indian Mutiny heats up, Flash gets into all sorts of scrapes, and as usual GMF's historical knowledge is boundless. Like all his previous novels, you are entertained with a hero who I'm liking more with each novel, you also get to learn a good history lesson, and his descriptions take you right there, right then.

As I've mentioned in previous reviews, Flashman isn't the coward he's supposed to be. Sure he's scared when he's in danger, he tries to keep his head down, and he runs away when he can, but who wouldn't? He also gets stuck in when he (absolutely) has to, and he's honest enough to accept that if he can jump from one lover's bed to another, so can women, which probably makes him the only Victorian character, real or imagined, that has ever done that. And if he really was that much of a cad, he wouldn't have acted with such magnanimity in the final action scene at the end. So there, as Flashy himself would say.

Mark says

The *Great Game* usually refers to jockeying between the Russians and the British for control of Afghanistan and other parts of Central Asia. While that's a factor in Fraser's fifth outing with Flashman, the action and historical detail of the book center more around the Sepoy Rebellion, in which terrible atrocities were committed by both the Indians and the British colonialists.

Flashman describes them all. As usual, footnotes provide entertaining and illuminating commentary on the historical accuracy of his descriptions. The plot here is faster moving, packed with more history and less silly than some of the other books in the Flashman series. For example, Flashman isn't successful with *every* woman he sees and attempts to seduce. As usual, there's not a lot for the defenders of political correctness to like.

Most of the reviewers on this site, me included, observe that the entire Flashman series is politically incorrect under current standards for these things. Of course we do this to distance ourselves from Flashman's behavior and attitudes. But political correctness is akin to the Efficient Markets Hypothesis. The more everyone else zigs, the more you should zag. Parallel to the Efficient Markets Paradox, we introduce the Political Correctness Paradox: politically correct speech and actions in the extreme malign the groups they attempt to protect. The only antidote is unsparing accuracy and transparency, and Flashman offers those in spades, at least to us, his readers. To his contemporaries, he's a complete toady and bully, which is the entire fun. The contrast sheds a lot of light on the institutionalized hypocrisy of Flashman's times, and by extension, ours.

If you're curious about George Macdonald Fraser's own point of view, here's an article he published just before he died in 2008.

David says

G. M. Fraser's *Flashman in the Great Game* is probably, to date, the best in the series.

Here *Flashman* has been caught up in the 1857 Indian Mutiny, as it is popularly referred as.

There are moments of *Flashman*'s loathsome, but endearing, humor, for the most part, however, the brutality of the Mutiny, on both sides, is front and center. Many will cringe at the barbarity but Mr. Fraser has attempted to stay as honest and insightful as is humanly possible when dealing with such a contentious topic.

In an age of post post-colonialism it is difficult to look back on the British Empire, or the American for the matter, without a reflexive cringe, but at the same time it is a fascinating period. The first global economy emerged during the the period of British Imperialism and the values, for the most part, that would become a central feature of our own nascent global civilization were given voice by the Imperial Age.

These sentiments have been hotly debated and they will continue to be. Europeans, and those of European descent, will argue for the civilizing influence of the Empire while those of non-European descent, especially those whose ancestors were subjected to its 'tender' mercies, will argue for its barbarities -- which are on full display in the *Flashman* books...though Fraser attempts to be balanced in his reading of this part of British history.

This dialectic will not see its conclusion any time soon. The origins of this, obviously enough, are to be found in history and, perhaps, resentment at the European success stories, and those of many of its former colonies.

Nonetheless, *Flashman in the Great Game* is a rousing good story that has been well handled by the author and may encourage an interesting debate about the Indian Mutiny and what place in world history it is to occupy.

Recommended for readers of historical fiction, adventure/action aficionados, and enthusiasts of the comic novel. Social justice warriors looking for something else to rail about on Twitter might enjoy *Flashman in the Great Game* for the cathartic, auto-erotic rage it will inspire.

Rating: 5 out of 5 stars

Raegan Butcher says

Another ripping adventure yarn featuring Harry Flashman, this time on hand to experience the worst of the Sepoy Rebellion in India.
