



Flashman: A Novel

By George MacDonald Fraser

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"If ever there was a time when I felt that 'watcher-of-the-skies-when-a-new-planet' stuff, it was when I read the first *Flashman*."—P.G. Wodehouse

The first novel in the Flashman series

Fraser revives Flashman, a caddish bully from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes, and relates Flashman's adventures after he is expelled in drunken disgrace from Rugby school in the late 1830s. Flashy enlists in the Eleventh Light Dragoons and is promptly sent to India and Afghanistan, where despite his consistently cowardly behavior he always manages to come out on top. Flashman is an incorrigible anti-hero for the ages. This humorous adventure book will appeal to fans of historical fiction, military fiction, and British history as well as to fans of Clive Cussler, James Bond, and The Three Musketeers.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for the Flashman series

“Hilariously funny.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

“Great dirty fun!”—*Grand Rapids Press*

“The most entertaining anti-hero in a long time... Moves from one ribald and deliciously corrupt episode to the next... Wonderful and scandalous.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“Raises dastardliness to the level of an art... One of the most amusing and sardonic novels I have ever read!”—*Omaha World*

“As irreverent and picaresque as *Tom Jones* and always more dramatic... Flashman is a one-man demolition squad!”—*Chicago Today*

“Marvelously entertaining... A delight!”—*Providence Journal*

About the Author

George MacDonald Fraser was a bestselling historical novelist, journalist and screenwriter. He is perhaps most famous for his series of Flashman novels, featuring his antihero Harry Flashman. In addition to his novels, he wrote numerous screenplays, most notably *The Three Musketeers* and the James Bond film *Octopussy*. George MacDonald Fraser died in 2008 at the age of 82.

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‘*Don’t wait to die on the field of honour. Heroes draw no higher wages than the others.*’ – soldier of fortune Paolo di Avitabile in *Flashman*

Just before World War I, Mark Franklin, the hero of George MacDonald Fraser’s *Mr American*, travels to London, where he spends a bibulous evening with an elderly military man by the name of Sir Harry Paget Flashman. ‘He had looked Sir Harry up in Who’s Who and read incredulously through the succinct list of campaigns and decorations – that gnarled old man sleeping there had seen Custer ride into the broken bluffs above the Little Big Horn, and fought hand to hand with Afghan tribesmen more than seventy years ago; he had ridden into the guns at Balaclava and seen the ranks form for Pickett’s charge at Gettysburg; he had known Wellington and Lincoln . . .’

Who wouldn’t be incredulous? Sir Harry’s numerous honors include not only England’s Victoria Cross, but also the French Legion of Honour and the American Congressional Medal of Honor. His Who’s Who entry – should you ever happen upon it – requires four inches of small type just to list some of his nearly unbelievable exploits. During the course of a long life, Sir Harry Paget Flashman (1822–1915) served as a political adviser to Chancellor Bismarck on the Schleswig-Holstein question, briefly functioned as chief of staff to the Rajah of Sarawak, rode with both John Brown and Jeb Stuart, and even assisted the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico as an aide-de-camp. Over the years this far-ranging traveler also spent some time as a buffalo hunter, western scout, Australian prospector, ‘reluctant deputy marshal to J. B. Hickok, Esq.,’ and native interpreter – Sir Harry spoke nine languages fluently and could ‘rub along’ in another dozen or so.

Naturally, Who's Who – with British discretion – barely hints that Harry Flashman frequently spied for Her Majesty's government and that he was mixed up in both the African slave trade and the Underground Railroad. Moreover, through a run of astonishing bad luck, the man seems to have landed smack in the middle of virtually every major battle or civil insurrection of the nineteenth century – the Siege of Gandamack in Afghanistan, the Zulu attack at Rorke's Drift, the rising of the Mahdi at Khartoum, the Charge of the Light Brigade, the Battle of Chancellorsville, the Peking Rebellion of 1900. During the American Civil War he even inexplicably managed to serve as a major in the Union forces and a colonel in the army of the Confederacy.

As it happens, when Mr Franklin met Sir Harry the then 92- year-old general had recently completed his personal memoirs, memoirs so disturbing that after his death they were quickly sealed and, it would appear, instantly forgotten. Indeed, the memory of Sir Harry himself gradually faded away, so that otherwise reliable histories of the Victorian era failed to assign him even a footnote. But, then, in 1965 during a sale of household furniture at Ashby in Leicestershire, the manuscript miraculously resurfaced. Ably edited by George MacDonald Fraser, the so-called Flashman Papers were eventually published in twelve volumes, each 'packet' focusing on one or more episodes from their author's martial career. They begin with the teenaged Flashman's expulsion from Rugby School for drunkenness – an incident mentioned in Thomas Hughes's almost libelous Tom Brown's School Days – and follow him up to the unpleasantness, very late in his life, with Colonel Sebastian 'Tiger Jack' Moran. That last name may be familiar, as Moran was once described by the consulting detective Sherlock Holmes as 'the second most dangerous man in London' and 'the best heavy-game shot that our Eastern Empire has ever produced'.

But, really, what impropriety in these reminiscences could have offended the sensibilities of the Flashman family? The author was the most upright of eminent Victorians, the recipient of the San Serafino Order of Purity and Truth, the honorary president of the Mission for the Reclamation of Reduced Females, and the former governor of his alma mater, that bastion of muscular Christianity, Rugby School. Perhaps Sir Harry's family, in particular his clerical son, the Reverend

Bishop Harry Albert Victor Flashman, simply felt it wiser for posterity to honor a public career already well documented in *Dawns and Departures of a Soldier's Life* and 'Twixt Cossack and Cannon. Yet time has not been kind to these stiffly official memoirs. They are as forgotten now as if they had never existed, while great scholars and common readers alike return regularly to the Flashman Papers for instruction and delight. And, it goes without saying, for the irresistible brazen effrontery of the man himself. For in these memoirs, Sir Harry Flashman, the supposed Victorian equivalent of a 'parfit gentil knyght,' reveals himself to be – in his own words – 'a scoundrel, a liar, a cheat, a thief, a coward – and, oh yes, a toady.'

In fact, Flashman is one of the world's most entertaining and beguiling rogues. He pursues life's pleasures with Casanovaian gusto, regularly employs the colorful language of the barracks, and knows that 'there isn't any folly a man won't contemplate if there's money or a woman at stake.' With his gallant sidewhiskers, bold dark eyes with hooded lids, and strong, aquiline nose, this charming dastard – fourteen stone of sheer manliness – regularly seduces schoolgirls and queens, hides or runs away when fights break out, and manages, through deception and utter poltroonery, to survive when better men die. As he says (in *Royal Flash*): 'The ideal time to be a hero is when the battle is over and the other fellows are dead, God rest 'em, and you take the credit.'

The three startling, even shocking adventures reprinted in this Everyman omnibus provide the ideal introduction to Sir Harry's rumbustious life. In Flashman the youthful anti-hero spends his last day at Rugby, enlists in the army, captures the heart (and body) of the fair-haired Elspeth, and reluctantly embarks on a mission to mountainous, war-torn Afghanistan. In *Flash for Freedom!* the luckless Flashy joins the crew of an African slave ship, unwillingly assists the Underground Railroad, and fortuitously meets a rising young

American politician named Abraham Lincoln. (In later years, Lincoln was known to say: 'When all other trusts fail, turn to Flashman.' I believe that the word 'all' should be emphasized.) Finally, Flashman in the Great Game takes our man into the world of Kim, as he spies for the British, dallies with a luscious maharani, and desperately struggles to survive the blood-baths of the Sepoy Mutiny.

That he does so will hardly come as a surprise, nor that he emerges from his Indian nightmare not only alive but also elevated to a knighthood. Nevertheless, a few crudely unimaginative critics have suggested that nobody could actually have escaped from so many deadly ambushes and battles. Two or three have even gone so far as to speculate that George Mac-Donald Fraser is the author, not the editor, of the Flashman Papers, with the deeply cynical implication that Flashman himself is merely a character in a series of clever novels. Sigh. What can you expect these days from cloistered academics, none of whom is even half as alive as Flashman? Flashy may not be as admirable as, say, Don Quixote, Lord Greystoke or Sherlock Holmes, but he's certainly just as real.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Genoveva Johnson:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or read a book allowed Flashman: A Novel? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You understand beside you can spend your time using your favorite's book, you can smarter than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have different opinion?

Adriana Cornell:

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People live in this new moment of lifestyle always attempt to and must have the free time or they will get great deal of stress from both lifestyle and work. So, when we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we consult again, what kind of activity are there when the spare time coming to anyone of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading guides. It can be your alternative inside spending your spare time, the actual book you have read is Flashman: A Novel.

Marjorie Calhoun:

Reading can be called mind hangout, why? Because if you are reading a book specifically book entitled Flashman: A Novel your head will drift away through every dimension, wandering in every single aspect that maybe not known for but surely will become your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a e-book then become one web form conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get previous to. The Flashman: A Novel giving you one more experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful info for your better life in this particular era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will probably be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning a sport. Do you want to try this extraordinary wasting spare time activity?

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