Clarion Review

Historical

Asim: Servent of Two Masters
D.W. Smith
Xlibris
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Four Stars (out of Five)

"He deserves a battle so glorious it will please Allah," says the villain in crafting the manner in which he will take down the Ottoman warrior Asim, the hero of D.W. Smith's thoroughly engrossing novel of assassins and intrigues in mid-fifteenth century Europe.

The themes and plots of *Asim: Servant of Two Masters* resonate well in modern times because the same issues continue to feed the ongoing struggles between the worlds of Islam and the West. Few in the cast of characters are who they appear to be, and Smith is very clever in how he portrays his colorful gallery of rogues, while managing to keep them quite real and believable.

Asim: Servant of Two Masters reads like a detective novel or murder mystery, enough so that fans of either genre will not be disappointed. With one notable exception, it is also a solid work of historical fiction. Set just after the fall of Constantinople in 1454, the novel draws from both sides of this great dividing mark in world history. There are both medieval and Renaissance themes, settings, ideas, and artifacts, along with timeless issues of greed, power, lust, ambition, prejudice, and honor.

There is action aplenty in the novel, with skirmishes and sword fights, chases and duels, battles and brawls, explosions and fires, and even a few gruesome surgeries. Such adventurous and graphic scenes are integral to this deep and intriguing plot, with its many players waging war against each other on so many levels—religious, political, and personal.

Smith's style is clear, crisp, and mostly clean. Unfortunately, the book contains about a dozen typos mostly in the last quarter of the book and one glaring and repeated factual error regarding the Knights Templars. The Templars were forcibly disbanded in 1312—140 years prior to the year in which this book is set. The kings of Portugal, one of whom is a key character in the novel, later created a similar order but it was known as the Knights of Christ, not the

Templars.

Tightly written at just over 250 pages, the memorable, action-packed *Asim: Servant of Two Masters* is easily digested in a few sittings.

Mark G. McLaughlin