

The Templar Legacy

Peter Tallon

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In Peter Tallon's riveting historical adventure *The Templar Legacy*, two Englishmen accompany the last remaining members of the Order of the Temple to the Holy Land in 1424. Their goal is to help secure an infamous treasure in hopes of financing their country's long, ongoing war with France.

Captain Richard Calveley has been fighting and living in France for eight years when the English prince asks him to travel to Pilgrim's Castle and retrieve its hidden treasure. A parallel story line focuses on Calveley's friend Father Hugh, the steward of Calveley's family land in England, who has succumbed to worldly vices to the detriment of his work. The story oscillates between the two, with more emphasis given to Calveley's arduous undertaking.

The writing is intelligent. Characters are described in physical and psychological detail, as with a knight who can see out of only one brown eye, or a villainous henchman who is described as hairy and troll-like. History is approached with a similar attention to detail, down to capturing weapons, clothing, customs, and religions. Definitions of less-familiar words are subtly woven into the text.

Battles between the French and English are both interesting and educational, showing how soldiers—who fought for little or no pay—usually took their reward in plunder and ransom. Real-life characters and events are explained in an informative but never overly solicitous manner. Two maps are helpfully included to illuminate Calveley's journey.

The long, drawn-out process by which a leading Templar and Calveley cajole, scheme, and bribe their way across the Mediterranean Sea is gripping. Interesting characters are introduced along the way, including Chaim ben Issachar and his eighteen-year-old daughter, Ruth, and the dauntless Captain Dandolo.

Dandolo's Italian dialect is memorable, and dialogue generally feels contextualized and authentic. The plot remains suspenseful throughout the nonstop travails of Calveley, the knights, and other members of their group, and includes gripping scenes such as when they are besieged by Turks on land and pirates at sea.

Adventures and villainy continue to the end as Calveley returns to France, setting characters up for the next book in the series. Some information from the first book is recounted here to fill in pertinent background, but it is not necessary to have read the first volume in order to enjoy and understand this one.

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ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (February 16, 2018)

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