

**AMAT: A NOVEL; IN
THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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Amat: a novel; in three volumes. Vol. II by Anonymous

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VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

“An easy task it is to win our own.”—*King Richard II.*

“THE regiment will parade at six A.M. to-morrow; coffee will be issued to the men before falling in. Those who are on the sick list, or foot-sore, will be left under command of Lieutenant A. Douglas, who will take charge of the tents and baggage until the return of the regiment,” reads Charlie Grant from the order-book.

“That sounds like business,” says Ronald, looking over his shoulder; “I wonder if they’ll stand?”

“Who knows? They seem confident enough, from the way they have been sending their round shot over here since we came. As a rule they

don't, I believe, but after Wyndham's affair they may like to try; I hope they will."

Next morning, while they are waiting for orders, Sir Colin dashes up suddenly, and, in a few fervent words, greets his old comrades as is his wont.

"Highlanders, I'm devilish glad to see you; wish you had been here sooner. There they are," pointing in the direction of the enemy's lines, where they could be seen in very fair formation. "I'm much mistaken if you don't have more marching than fighting to-day; but if they do wait for you I think they won't like your cold steel or hot blood," he says, with grim humour.

As he rides away, the men, standing at ease, criticise him with the loving freedom of old campaigners who have followed him to victory.

"'Dced, Donal, but he's no different; he was aye best pleased when there was a chaunce o' burnin' powther."

"Ye may weel say that, Angus; thae cheils wud need a lang spune to sup wi ower deil whan it's i' the lift."

“Fat for no?” says an Aberdonian, whose proverbial pawkiness belies the steady valour he has proved too often to be questioned. “Tat’s pread an’ mate to him; an’ tat’s fat has made him fat he is. For ta likes o’ me,” he adds, with unconscious pathos, “it’s cauld lead, and tat’s no het parritch.”

“Diaoul!” mutters a fiery Cameron on his left; “is tat no guid enough for a Gordon?”

But a small proportion of the men have not been in the Crimea, so the prospect of a fight is no new thing to them; and, as they cast loose some cartridges, and put them in their sporrans to be handy for quick firing at close quarters, there runs a gleam of suppressed fire in their eyes which tells the few outsiders who are watching that the Wyndham *fasco* of a few days back will not go unavenged if they get the chance.

At last comes the welcome order to advance. Moving quickly, as the Highlanders do when once under way, the enemy apparently are for a moment taken by surprise; but presently, as if awakening from their stupor, they open fire.

At first the range is indifferent, but they have been too well taught to continue many such mistakes, and soon a round shot hits the mark with that dull sound which tells its tale to the initiated. Another and another come with like effect, and then the batteries open fully ; but the Highlanders only close their ranks, and press on without a touch of trigger.

“ This is getting hot, Grant,” says the Major on the left ; “ look out, by Jove, or it’ll have you ! ” he exclaims the instant after, as a round shot, ricochetting in front, comes straight at Charlie ; but, ere he moves, his devoted clansman does, and springing forward, Duncan Grant saves his foster-brother’s life at the expense of his own.

For an instant only may Charlie halt and clasp him in his arms, as he satisfies himself that he is indeed beyond all hope.

“ God help poor Hamish ! ” is all he can say, as he reverently lays down all that is left of the old man’s faithful son, and looks at the remaining brother, who, with the stoicism and fidelity