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**THE JOURNAL.**

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**AN OLD BACHELOR'S STORY.**

BY ALFRED ROCHEFORT.

I was an only child, and so, from my earliest recollection, I grew to look on my little playmates—the neighbors' children—as if they were my kin.

The Coltons and Kyles were of the same old Scotch-Irish strain and the clanship of race was strong with them.

Frank Colton's brothers and sisters, being well grown up, were not so companionable to him as myself.

Under the rigid and—as I then thought—severe training of Mr. Creighton, who was a most scholarly, conscientious man, I was made ready for college, and here came my first separation from Frank Colton.

During the four years I was at the university I wrote to Frank as regularly as I did to my parents, and that was at least once a week.

When I came home for the holidays Frank would come as far as Cincinnati—fifty miles down the river—to meet me, and until the vacation was over we were never apart.

"George, our fathers have quarreled and do not speak." "Quarreled?" I exclaimed.

"Opposite sides!" I repeated. "They are utterly opposed about the war," he said, with a sigh.

neighborhood; and in many cases brothers shook hands and parted—never to meet again—but to fall in the ranks of opposing armies.

"I am going, George," he said in a voice husky with tears. "And I came to say good-bye."

"And come what may, George, we shall still be friends?" "Until death!" I replied.

How rapidly youths develop into men in the fierce furnace of war and the mighty strain of march and midnight watch.

Two years had passed. From prisoners, I learned that Frank Colton was a captain of cavalry—my own rank in the same arm of service; and I prayed that our regiments might never be brought face to face.

"I was in command of my regiment, near Jonesboro, where a heavy battle was being fought, when an aide galloped up, and, saluting me, said:

"The general orders that you charge the enemy in your front, and drive them out of the woods. Smith's battery will cover you."

"As I was about to order the 'advance,' a soldier passed with a prisoner. "Whose troops are in the woods?" I asked.

"Colonel Colton's," growled the prisoner. "On many a bloody field I had shown that I was not deficient in courage; but now I did fear. My sword trembled in my grasp, and the words stuck in my throat as I turned to the young bugler, riding just behind me, and ordered him to sound the 'charge.'"

A thrilling cheer burst from six hundred throats. With expanding nostrils and explosive breathings, the horses answered the spur. Smith's battery opened, with thundering crash and shrieking shell, on the right. And from the woods the leaden sirocco of death beat into our faces.

"Surrender!" I drew my pistol, and was about to fire, when the tall man cried: "George! George!"

I cannot recall the few words that I uttered. I know I did not thank him, nor was I surprised at his conduct. We shook hands, and each went to his friends in the camp of the other's foe.

When again we met it was on the banks of the Ohio, and beside the burned ruin of my father's house. My father had been killed defending his home, and his grave was so close to the blackened chimney of the old homestead that it looked like a grim monument above his resting-place.

Poor Frank! he had fared as badly. He, with his empty left sleeve, was the sole survivor of five brothers. His father and mother had aged very much, and were living in an out-building that had once been occupied by their servants.

Frank's parents greeted me with all the old kindness, and the day after my arrival being Sunday, we went to hear Dominie Creighton preach.

Ah me! The church was not nearly so full as in the olden time, but the ground about it was covered with the silent tents of the dead. I had never thought our good old teacher an eloquent man, but this day the tears were in his voice and in the eyes of that stricken, lumbled congregation.

This love was a very sacred thing to me, and I kept it to myself. Had I told Frank, perhaps my future would have been different.

"I can tell you all now, for you have placed it in my power to marry." "To marry, Frank?" I turned and looked at him with a heavy feeling in my heart, but he did not seem to see me, for his eyes were fixed on the fire.

"Yes," he said. "It all happened since you left; and I wanted to write to you about it, but it was uncertain until the night before I came to join you. Then, after much waiting, Annie gave me her answer—"

"Annie Creighton?" I was amazed at the calmness with which I asked the question. "Yes, George. But you look sick. What is wrong?" he asked, jumping up in alarm, for my face showed my anguish, despite my will.

"An old heart trouble. I shall soon be over it. I will lie down," I said, tottering to the bunk in which I slept.

I did not sleep that night. My heart was in revolt, and into it came a fierce heat for the man I had so loved through all my life, so clung to in the bitter years of conflict.

could not form the question that rose from my guilty heart to my blanched lips. As we stood there I heard a cry coming up from the wild flood, and looking over the roaring waters I saw white-faced Frank Colton clinging with his one arm to the rans of the cabin.

The falls were a mile below, and the bravest drew back powerless to aid. In that moment I felt that the wild flood was sweeping my rival from my path. But the horrid thought passed away, and as I saw his face again I remembered only the past.

"It is death to go in!" shouted the men. I heard, but did not heed them. I scarcely know how I reached his side. I do know that I felt at the time the strength of a thousand giants in my arms.

That flood washed all the hate from my heart. Three months after that I stood up at the altar, Frank Colton's "best man," and I signed my name to the certificate which showed that Annie Creighton was his wife.

Frank and I have been partners for years, and the world has gone well with us. He has a son that bears my name, and he and Annie often ask me why I do not marry. I laugh and turn away, and say: "I am too old to think of it now."—N. Y. Ledger.

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