



Biography: 'Three Score Years and Ten' (Annotated)

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"Three Score Years and Ten."

CHAPTER I.

One evening long ago, when this wonderful century, now in a vigorous old age, had just passed its nineteenth birthday, in a bright, cheerful sitting-room in the good old city of Hartford, Conn., sat a fair young matron beside a cradle in which lay sleeping a beautiful boy a year and a half old. The gentle motion of her little slipped foot on the rocker, keeping time with the soft humming of a cradle hymn; the work-basket near by; and the dainty needle work in her hand; the table tastefully spread for two, and the clear wood fire in the old-fashioned fireplace, formed as restful a picture of domestic peace and content as one could wish to see.

But the expectant look in the bright blue eyes, uplifted at each sound, clearly indicated that some one was coming who should round out this little circle and make it complete.

And now the familiar footstep draws near and the husband and father enters; she rises joyfully to meet him, but seeing in his face a look of grief or pain, exclaims, "What is it, dear husband?" He holds her very close, but cannot find words to tell her that which will cross all their cherished plans of a year's quiet resting in her native city; and handing her an official document, with its ominous red seal newly broken, he watches her anxiously as she reads:

Lieutenant Nathan Clark, U. S. Fifth Infantry: You are hereby appointed Assistant Commissary of

Subsistence, and will forthwith join your regiment at Detroit, which is under orders to move to the Mississippi river and establish a military post at the mouth of the St. Peters river.

With respect and esteem,

GEORGE GIBSON, Com. Gen. of Subsistence.

Twice she reads this order, and then, looking up with a smile, says, with a slight tremor in her voice: "Is this all, beloved? Why should it so distress you? You surely do not flinch from duty?" With a perceptible start at such a suggestion, the gallant young soldier replies: "No, no, my precious wife; but this means separation from you and our boy, for you cannot venture on so long and perilous a journey as that, and our separation is not for days and months, it may be for years; how can I endure it? And we were so happy here in our snug little cottage--you in the midst of early friends and beloved relatives, your childhood companions and associations all about you; and I with my duties as recruiting officer. We had reason to hope and expect at least a year longer of this life, and this sudden blasting of our hopes seems cruel. Oh, Charlotte! how can you bear the thought?" As he thus poured out his heart, her eyes regarded him with wonder, and when he ceased she drew him to his favorite chair, and, seating herself on a low stool beside him, took his hand in hers, and, looking up at him through her tears, said with ineffable tenderness: "My own dear husband; how cou

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