

## STORY.

Few readers of the public journals will fail to remember, that after the battle of Gettysburg, a dead soldier was found on the field clasping in his hand a ferrotype of his three little children. No other incident of the war is known to have so touched the heart of the nation. For months after the battle, the soldier's name and the home of his family was a mystery. The ferrotype found within his clasped hand was obtained by J. Francis Bourne, M. D., of Philadelphia, who had it photographed, in the hope that the picture's circulation might lead to the discovery of the family, and the soldier's own recognition; and at the same time, that the sales of the copies might result in a fund for the support and education of the little ones thus left fatherless. Publicity was also given to the incident in many newspapers throughout the country. From many quarters letters were soon received of affecting inquiry; some written by soldiers' wives who had no tidings from their husbands since the great battle; others, by soldiers who survived the conflict, but could not learn the fate of comrades. Still the mystery of this soldier was unsolved. At length, four months after the battle, a letter arrived with the intelligence that a soldier's wife, at a little town in Western New York, had seen the account of the soldier and his picture. She had sent to her husband such a ferrotype on the eve of the battle and had since heard nothing from him. With trembling anxiety she awaited the reply from Doctor Bourne. It came, enclosing a copy of her souvenir to her husband—the identical likeness of her children—and told the painful story that she was a widow, and her three little ones were orphans.

The unknown soldier was thus ascertained to be Amos Humiston, late of Portville, Cattaraugus County, New York, orderly sergeant in the 15th N. Y. volunteers.

Rev. Isaac G. Ogden, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Portville, wrote respecting the fallen soldier, that "he was a man of noble impulses, a quiet citizen, a kind neighbor, and devotedly attached to his family. When the rebellion first took the form of open war upon the country, he was anxious to enlist, but his duty to his family seemed then to be paramount to his duty to his country. But after the disastrous Peninsula Campaign, when there was a call for three hundred thousand more volunteers, and when he received assurance from responsible citizens that his family should be cared for during his absence; then, without the prospect of large bounty, he enlisted as a private in the 15th N. Y. State Volunteers. He was with his regiment in the battle of Chancellorsville, and was promoted to the office of orderly sergeant. At Gettysburg he fought with great gallantry, and on its bloody field laid down his life for his country."

The discoverer of the soldier's family made them an early visit and returned to them the ferrotype stained with their father's blood. They were very needy, living a mile from the village in a most dreary spot and in the humble dwelling their father had begun to build had been given in vain to finish before he enlisted. Their wants were now well supplied, and a comfortable home in the village was purchased for them; their new-found friends being able thus to aid them from the mentioned sales of the photographic copies of the little ones, supplemented by the profits arising from a piece of music—*The Children of the Battlefield*—composed on the touching incident, and given to Doctor Bourne in furtherance of his benevolent work.

Through the kind agency of many good people in leading localities over the country, these sales were continued, and their results formed the nucleus of the fund that originated, in 1863, the NATIONAL HOMESTEAD AT GETTYSBURG—a home and school for the orphans of soldiers of the United States, at which dependent orphans have already gathered from thirteen States of the Union.

The sequel of this story has touching interest in the fact that the stricken family of Sergeant Humiston—both widowed mother and three little ones—were the first inmates of this institution, the foundation of which was laid by the soldier's hand as he grasped in death the picture of his children. The institution stands in sight both of the spot where he fell and that where he now lies buried. The day following the arrival of the family at Gettysburg, flowers were found strewn by little hands on the Sergeant's honored grave.

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