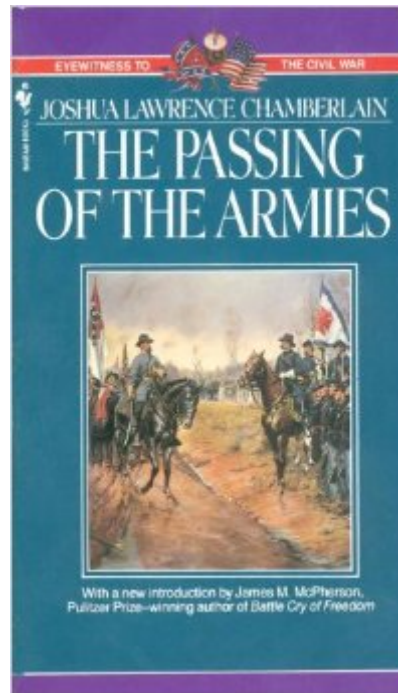


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The Passing Of Armies: An Account Of The Final Campaign Of The Army Of The Potomac



Synopsis

A member of the Fifth Corps recounts the dramatic final acts of the Civil War, describing Sheridan's rise, Warren's fall, and the slow, inexorable stalking of Lee's forces across the battle-scarred countryside.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It was after being shown the film "Gettysburg" in August 1997 I first heard of Joshua Lawrence Chamnberlain and the 20 Maine. I found the film very moving, and the serious, very human and very sensitive character of Chamberlain (played by Jeff Daniels) a very appealing figure - a true leader, a man who could inspire the best from others, a man of courage and integrity. I wanted to find out more, to discover the real Joshua Chamberlain. To my delight, I found he had written a personal account of his life with the Army of the Potomac. Unbelievably - "The Passing of the Armies" was now available in the UK. I was overwhelmed by this book, a poem in prose, a beautiful command of language and emotion, sensitive and deeply felt. It helped me understand a little of what the American Civil War did mean and how men could endure such agony and danger. The book is an incredibly personal account of the last days before Appomattox, followed by a almost mystical account of the last review of the battered but triumphant Army of the Potomac. The language is very romantic, very foreign to twentieth century ears, but Joshua Chamberlain was there, he risked everything, valued people, he saw the deaths and felt the loss. Wounded six times, he was once given up for dead after being shot through both hips by a musket ball while leading a charge at Petersburg in 1864. He was a good man, an inspiring man, with a wonderful self-deprecating

humour, as shown when he describes falling in a muddy river along with his horse.

Joshua Chamberlain is probably the most famous 'minor figure' of the American Civil War. While history has remembered an amazing number of Civil War generals (quick, name three generals from America's Revolutionary War), Chamberlain never rose to a position high enough to be generally considered important. Except, that is, for his amazing work on July 2, 1863, when his regiment, the 20th Maine, held the left flank of the Union army against repeated Confederate attacks, culminating with a bayonet charge when the regiment ran out of ammunition. For his actions on that day, Chamberlain received the Medal of Honor. But while Chamberlain's heroism at Gettysburg was amazing and vitally important to the survival of the United States of America, they were hardly the only important actions Chamberlain took during the war. Chamberlain would go on after Gettysburg to be wounded six times, twice declared dead in The New York Times, and rise to the rank of Brevet Major General and division commander. During his time with the Army of the Potomac, Chamberlain had a front row view of the battles that ended the American Civil War, and he was on the field at Appomattox when Robert E. Lee finally accepted the inevitable and asked Grant for terms of surrender. Chamberlain was then selected to accept the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. Given those exploits, Chamberlain had quite a bit to report on, and in The Passing of the Armies he offers his views on the final campaign of the war and the disbanding of the Army of the Potomac. Chamberlain's writing is fascinating, although the style is appropriate to the 19th century and can appear a bit cumbersome to the modern reader.

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