

Appomattox (Classic Reprint)

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain



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Station, on the South Side Railroad, nearly abreast of the head of Lee sretreating column, while Meade was with his two corps close upon Lee srear at New Store, ten miles north of us, across the A ppomattox. At noon of this day General Ord, of the A i Tny of the James, joined us with two divisions of the Twenty-fourth Corps under General Gibbon, and Bimey sdivision of the Twenty-fifth Corps, colored troops; Ord, by virtue of seniority, becoming commanding officer of the whole. He was a stranger to us all, but his simple and cordial manner towards Sheridan and Griffin, and even to us subordinates, made him welcome. We pushed on, the cavalry ahead. The Fifth Corps had a very hard march that day, made more so in the afternoon and night by the lumbering obstructions of the rear of Ords tired column, by courtesy given the road before us, the incessant check fretting our men almost to mutiny. We had been rushed all day to keep up with the cavalry, but this constant checking was worse. We did not know that Grant had sent orders for the Fifth Corps to march all night without halting; but it was not necessary for us to know it. After twenty-nine miles of this kind of marching, at the blackest hour of night, human nature called a halt. Dropping by the roadside, right and left, wet or dry, down went the men as in a swoon. Officers slid out of saddle, loosened the girth, slipped an arm through a loop of bridle-rein, and sunk to sleep. Horses stood with drooping heads just above their masters faces. All dreaming, one knows not what, of past or coming, possible or fated. Scarcely is the first broken dream begun when a cavalry man comes splashing down the road, and vigorously dismounts, pulling from his jacket front a crumpled note. The sentinel standing watch by his commander, worn in body but alert in every sense, touches your shoulder.

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