

Reflections:

BEFORE AND AFTER

GENERAL
JOSHUA LAWRENCE CHAMBERLAIN

CIVIL WAR | U.S. ARMY

The letter below was written by Chamberlain on his return to Petersburg, Virginia, seventeen years after being wounded there.

LETTER TO HIS SISTER,
JANUARY 29, 1882



Last Friday I visited the battlefield of Petersburg and spent 4 hours trying to identify the spot where I fell on the 18th of June 1864, leading a charge upon the Rebel works.

Standing and musing there remembering how I thought of mother amidst the horrible carnage, I looked down and saw a bullet, and while stooping to pick it up, another and another...

You cannot imagine, I believe, what thoughts came over me as I thought of all those who stood there on that day—and what it was all for, and what would come of it...

Such thoughts never would end, had one time to ponder & it is well perhaps that the common cares & inexorable duties of life call us away from too long thoughts.

Photo credit: "General Joshua L. Chamberlain, circa 1865," Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Civil War Photographs, LC-DIG-cwpbh-03163

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