

to give the attempt much chance of success. But, when one was on the spot, one felt that a man might perhaps more readily learn the meaning and significance of this spirit, there in the field ambulance (providing that he approached the task with all proper humility), than he could in any other way acquire the same knowledge, outside the trenches, or, rather, the shell-holes of the actual Verdun front line itself.

Short of absolute disintegration, of annihilation, German mechanism had spent its worst terrors on these men; and the spirit of them remained as pure and bright a flame as I have ever seen. Truly, these shattered heroes epitomised in their own broken persons the deathless spirit of resistance which has proved Verdun a gate of France that not all the might and all the mechanism of the German Empire could break through. Even when too weak to turn his head upon the pillow, not one of those brave fellows lacked the invincible strength of spirit to move his lips in a smile as one drew near, and to draw one's gaze, with a flicker of his own tired eyes, in the direction of the Croix de Guerre or other medal at his bed's head, which he had won in this his latest sacrifice for France. Gladness, pride, confident assurance of ultimate victory, and cheerful readiness to endure while life should