

You will perhaps recall that moving passage in Jules Romain's greatest work where the writer, musing on the horror before Verdun, tries to discover why the French held out, and why the fortress was not taken; in his mind, he moves among the men in their ruined trenches and records their thoughts and feelings; finally he notes "the man . . . who says: 'All that matters to me in this world is the language of France, the cathedrals of our French countryside, the quays of the Seine, landscapes that can be found nowhere else in the world, a way of life that is unique. If all that is to be taken away, life has no longer any point. . . .'" "Picture to yourself" he writes, "trench after trench filled with men thinking such thoughts, and you will find the answer to your question. . . . That is why Verdun still stands."

It seems to me, gentlemen, that here we may discover what you and I have in mind in our reflections together; I hope you may agree with me that the invisible elements of our national life can inspire a like attitude, so that when a similar question is asked here, the answer will be forthcoming in terms no less moving, and as true.

Twenty-three hundred years ago in Athens, a Greek historian pondered the same question. He too concluded that men will give everything they possess for their land and what they cherish if without these life would not be worth living. In the great speech in which his thoughts are recorded he said to his fellow citizens: "You must yourselves realize the power of Athens and feed your eyes upon her from day to day till love of her fills your hearts and until all her greatness shall break upon you". We would no doubt express ourselves differently and with greater reserve; but with nothing less than this should we be content: that a man may think about this country with like emotion and that what we are defending may be as clear to us as it was to the citizens of that little state so many centuries ago.

S/A