Thousand: If you have stood in the sleet. If you have stood in the wind. If you have put your hand to the ground and felt the cold burning up from stone or walked the quarter-mile grade dug out of earth, shovel by shovel. If you have seen bridges hammered into sides of granite or stood at Dove Cut to find every foot there planed, tamped, packed. Every iron bit hammered into place, every mountain groined by blasts of nitroglycerin. To know that eyes were lost here, as well as hands and limbs and skin and face. Then you come close to something like awe. The evidence moves you to pity, to dread, almost to mirth. A human task done for the inhuman. And if you have looked, you cannot help but feel it all press up and through you, this work designed to destroy the body, destroy the mind, to make you senseless as whatever piece of steel you grip in your hand. A crush of time. The whole earth bisected by it. And you, free over it all, never free from it all, walk the line.

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