

As I changed from a nouveau into an Orienne and finally became an institution in the section, and sure of myself, I found that in the run of work, I usually drew the front cars; that I was trusted and depended upon by the Chief—who was one man in ten thousand—(Perry, with whom Case and I spent permission in Paris). I changed from being a silent observer of the work and leaned my weight and influence with force, to develop certain traditions in the section.

I strove to eliminate the discussion of the occasional danger; the hardness of the job, the heroic in it, and mostly, the hypocritical attitude towards ourselves as friends and saviours of France. Most of the men were of the same opinion as myself, that it was sufficient to do the job well and have as good a time as possible. I can remember that I always appreciated the agreement of Don. I began to feel that he was the sort of man, intellectually honest, clean-cut and fine, whose friendship was worth sharing, but at this time I did not know that he was a fifty storey affair with innumerable sub-basements, and that his foundations were built on rock. I had felt the last, perhaps, because it was that, that attracted me to him probably.

Piecing together the stray bits of chance that have marked my growing knowledge of him, December 31st stands out clearly. It was a dark disagreeable night, and an incipient attack broke out at 6 o'clock. By 6.45, five cars were up, with Don second on call. Perry had left to see what was doing, and had left me in charge. I posted an additional list, got lanterns and saw that all the cars were ready to leave. The next call came at 7.30 for one car, and the man who should have gone made me infuriated—I had little use for him in any case—by his not being ready, and then half-an-hour after he should have left, running back to his room to light a "briquette"—(a cigarette light).

Don was back in his room, writing some letters and knowing that he was dependable—feeling that he could carry on under any circumstances—I went into his room, and explained the situation to him and asked him to go up. He had left the cantonment, and was on his way in ten minutes. Personally, I had no particular love for the job on my hands, because it meant sitting tight until every car in the place had left. After that I could go.

After wandering aimlessly from room to room, I advised everybody to get to bed and get as much sleep as they could, and then went into Don's room, where there was paper and pen and ink, to wait the gong of the telephone bell, and to write to you. You may remember the letter.

In the middle of it another car went out and one came in for supplies. It was the end of 1916—my year and I. As I sat and listened or wrote a few lines of the letter, trying to see how I had particularly justified my existence in 1916, and coming to the conclusion that, in the main, it did not amount to much, my wandering gaze caught and was held by some of the correspondence Don had been answering.

It was a single paragraph in a letter, and before I realized it, really without any consciousness of what I was doing, I read it,