

1939 partly to enjoy again the view of the Verte. As I mentioned before, my first ascent was snatched from bad weather and conducted throughout at a brisk trot, so that we were back in the hut, after a latish start, well before midday. We saw a great storm over Mont Blanc from the summit during the five minutes we spent there. We were soaked on the descent from the hut and reached Paris before the rain stopped. In 1939 we had a day of splendid weather. We came from the Trient hut this time, crossing the upper basin of the Trient Glacier to the Col du Tour in bright moonlight. The moon left us under the Aiguille Forbes and we waited twenty minutes for the light before tackling the big dome that gives access to the east ridge of the Char-donnet. The dawn came while we were cutting steps up the hard ice of the dome. When shall we see an Alpine dawn again? In July, 1939, the question already forced itself on the mind. We lingered long on the summit, watching the avalanches pour down the Verte, and drinking our fill of mountain beauty. I have never enjoyed a summit more, perhaps from the consciousness that it might be a long time before the next.

That night the rhythm of the Paris train reminded me of a song I heard for the first time at San Pellegrino in the Dolomites more than twenty years ago. In the tiny inn there we were kept awake half the night by a gathering of the neighbourhood—a gathering enlivened by a fiddler who played, with infinite repetition, a single tune. It was a good tune, and even iteration and the desire for sleep could not wholly stale its charm. The singing was melodious, if a little ragged, and after many repetitions I could, I thought, make out some of the words. They were simple, haunting, and evocative words, about youth and the springtime of beauty, and the tune was undoubtedly a good tune; in fact, as subsequently appeared, it was one of the Devil's best. But in 1923 one didn't know that a very minor consequence of 'Giovinezza' would be to keep us all away from the Alps for five years or more.

WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG

By R. L. G. IRVING

TO fill these wartime numbers of the ALPINE JOURNAL the Editor has sometimes to fall back upon the memories of those who have reached, if not passed what Sir Claud Schuster has called 'the middle age of a mountaineer.' Our star performers, whose achievements rank at least as 'various expeditions,' are busy with weapons more deadly than the now stumpy ice-axe or even the hammer and piton. We older fellows can only stand and wait, sometimes hearing, never seeing them preparing the advance above. And while we wait, we are grateful if the JOURNAL gives us a chance to renew the vision of youth.

The danger of wartime journals, a danger the following pages will make abundantly clear, is that they may so stimulate the memories of an old stager that he may revert to the childish habit of inviting all and sundry to inspect and admire some simple treasure he has dug up. It has now happened to me. To go back at once to quite unsophisticated days we can have no better starting point than the platform at Martigny. It was there that we got our first view up the great wide valley towards the Bietschhorn and the peaks above Bérisal. After five years of exile I should love to hear, if only on a gramophone record, the curious metallic clang that heralds the departure of a Jura-Simplon train. A puff of the hot, sullen, dust-laden air that increased our regrets for the cool airs above would be acceptable ; anything, in fact, that might let us believe we were at one of the gateways of home.

Forty years on in our excursion into the past, a party of three climbed down from a stuffy train that had stopped at every station since leaving Visp. One of them, alas, had to climb into it again when the gong went, a small person with black curly hair, bright eyes and a peeling face. He was returning to England, but he was carrying back a good deal that would endure far longer than the evidence on his fiery complexion showing where and how he had acquired it. He himself was killed in Palestine in 1917, but I know some of it has been handed on to his son.

The two who waved their goodbyes were going up into the mountains again. A descent to low levels, to crowds and trains and luggage worries, is almost worth making deliberately for the exquisite pleasure of another return to the pastures and the snows. I was one of the two, the other was George Mallory, then just eighteen, a slim, long-legged boy, with another year at Winchester. He had just done the examination for Woolwich, in those days a pretty stiff test. I cannot say whether the prospect of going to the Alps and the discussion of plans had interfered with his final preparation ; his failure by a narrow margin to pass in has never troubled my conscience. Mr. A. C. Benson, who had recently become Master of Magdalene, was ready to encourage some Wykehamists to go there and Mallory was offered an exhibition on the history he promised to read, since it could not be on any that he had previously read.

The Mallory of eighteen was an altogether simpler personality than the Mallory described by Cambridge admirers and by those who only knew him later. He was essentially young in mind ; the mists of metaphysics in which he loved to wander as a man were some way above him when he first went to the Alps. I agree that the features and the shape of the face might have served as a model for a Botticelli madonna. A traverse of Monte Rosa had temporarily spoiled a complexion whose delicacy and smoothness disguised the virility of its owner. Not for several years would a weekly shave be for him more than a formality.

After a night at the small Hôtel du Grand St. Bernard near the station we drove at something less than four miles an hour up the white dusty

Orsières road, to where the path turned off for Champex. As George wrote in a record of our doings : ' The signs of a loathsome civilisation rapidly springing up were observed with regret.' But we loved Champex. How was it possible not to do so when we looked at the snows of the Combin, the first successful ascent of our tour, beyond the calm foreground of the lake ? And it was not till the next year that I noticed the smells. So many Swiss mountain resorts seem to go through the successive stages of building and smells before they pass to improved sanitation, eau courante, tout confort moderne, and the old prix modérés vanish from the bill if not from the prospectus.

After a nice, lazy morning on or by the lake and a luxurious lunch, we set off on a zigzag approach to Mont Blanc. Our objectives were the Cabane d'Orny, the Col du Tour or Col du Chardonnet, Chamonix, the Col du Géant, Courmayeur, the Dôme hut, Mont Blanc, Chamonix. It was hot and sultry as we climbed up above Champex, the sort of afternoon where none but the very young would leave a well trodden path. But we were in that category and we had no map, Champex not having yet reached the well stocked bazaar stage of development. Where the path began a great détour to the right, we saw traces of what might be a short cut ; moreover it led through masses of ripe bilberries. They quickly lost attraction. In George's words, ' Our short cut led us up detestable slopes of bilberries and small pines until we reached a col which, it was hoped, would lead easily to the cabane : we were soon undeceived and found it necessary to descend about 1,000 feet, where a path was struck which led upwards again and over the arête at about the same height as the previous col. The rest of the way was quite clear and we reached the Cabane d'Orny at about 6 P.M., only two meals having been consumed en route. A most recherché and yet substantial supper was eaten, quite worthy of the foresight of a profound epicure.' A very young, not a Young, record.

At 3 A.M. we woke to the various noises accompanying a thunderstorm. At 4 we got up and breakfasted on bread and milk ; and ever since that morning I have considered this as an excellent meal to carry one through several hours of continuous climbing in the Alps. All the surrounding ridges were shrouded in clouds, but as the storm furies had calmed down, we set off up the Orny Glacier. We were walking together on the gently sloping bare ice when a flash of lightning came, apparently between us, accompanied without interval by a deafening sharp bang. A downpour followed, which quickly gave us the cold bath we had omitted at the cabane. This changed to sleet and snow as we began to cross the broad, flat snowfield at the head of the glacier. Under the cloud, to our right, we could just see the edge where the fall of the Trient Glacier began. In all other directions the snowfield faded into the mist. Partial clearances gave us now and then glimpses of steep slopes and portions of a bergschrund above the flat expanse of snow, but we could only guess at the position of the Col du Tour. I made what I hoped might be a successful shot at it, and went up the steep slope on a long rope till I reached the ridge and

could look over. Not an alluring prospect ; a steep descent in mist on to a completely unknown, invisible glacier !

There was no doubt about my full personal responsibility for the safety of the party, and I was not prepared to take the obvious risks. From our present position retreat was easy. I came down and we began to retrace our steps across the snowfield. There was still an alternative way we could take, which would get us to Chamonix that evening ; to descend the Trient Glacier and cross the Col de Balme.

The mist was now all round us, but we had seen where the wide opening of the Trient Glacier lay. A compass consultation was held. We satisfied ourselves as to which end of the needle pointed north and turned left at right angles to our track leading back to the cabane. A gradual descent for twenty minutes brought us below the clouds and to the brink of the Trient icefall. Its appearance at once shattered our hopes of an easy walk over it to Trient. It was a dreadful turmoil of séracs and crevasses with pinnacles of ice that might crash down any minute.

Rocks always attract the young and those above the right bank were the obvious ones on which to look for a way down. To reach them at a favourable point we had to cross some ice over which we saw one or two small showers of stones race down. Fortunately, it was not steep enough to make steps necessary and we hurried across to a point a considerable distance above the rapidly descending glacier. Conditions were unpleasant for any sort of rock climbing ; when it was not sleet that came down it was hail, our hands and feet were exceedingly wet and cold. At first we got along without much difficulty ; then smooth slabs stopped us. There was only one way to get nearer the glacier, to traverse back under the ice we had crossed a few minutes earlier. Just about the middle of the traverse we spied a huge rock coming at us out of the clouds with giant bounds. George found good cover close at hand, I only had it for head and shoulders. The rest of me felt horribly vulnerable as the monster and his followers passed beside or over us. From first to last the cannonade may have lasted half a minute—thirty very long seconds ; the enemy scored only some near misses. It is well that the missiles used by the mountain's artillery do not explode on contact with snow or ice, so that on a slope like that we were crossing a miss is as good as a mile.

When it was over, the amount of débris on the glacier below was impressive. The remainder of the traverse was uneventful. Presently, after a short further descent we were able to resume progress in the desired direction downwards, more or less parallel to the glacier about thirty feet above it. This involved another passage under the ice slope we had such good reason to distrust. Either the enemy was napping or he had nothing ready to fire, for nothing of any sort came down. I think this was the only danger spot, but our difficulties were by no means over. The smooth wet rocks became so bad that I had to come up after a futile attempt to get down. A *deus ex machina* was at hand to solve the difficulty. Some old snow that had hidden from the sun

under a great rock provided it. It displayed a hole which flagrantly invited inspection. Having been lowered through it by George, I found foothold underneath, and a rather exciting traverse brought us to the glacier below the worst of the icefall.

It was now past midday and even bread and milk at breakfast leaves a certain emptiness after nearly eight hours. We sat down in sopping clothes on wet stones and ate wet bread and jam, and other wetnesses. Keeping to the right we were making good progress down the glacier when we were struck by the folly of going down to three thousand feet below the Col de Balme only to climb up to it again. Not only was the side of the triangle going to the Col de Balme shorter than the two that passed through the village of Trient to get there : it was also, at least as the crow would fly, approximately horizontal. Time did not come into such an obvious affair.

First the glacier had to be crossed to the left bank. It was not far, but it took us a good two hours, the rain having made the ice so smooth and slippery that steps were needed on the most innocent-looking slopes. By the time the steep rocks and grass on the far side were reached we were ready for another halt and further sustenance. The crossing of a stream, which probably had no existence in fine weather, caused some trouble. George showed me what a daring and wonderfully successful stream-crosser he was to be, while I was content to know I could not be wetter. Beyond it we were rewarded by a minute track which got better and better as we traversed round the steep hillside towards the Col de Balme ; the rain stopped as we arrived there, twelve hours after leaving the Cabane d'Orny. We found in the small hotel a charming hostess who made perfect omelettes, and when Mont Blanc appeared in bright sunlight above a mass of quiescent clouds, the world was entirely good.

Having sampled the pleasant garden and sumptuous cuisine of the Hôtel Couttet two years before, I took George there, and we enjoyed both to the full till next afternoon. We then charged our rucksacks and ourselves with some of the choicest products of the Pâtisserie des Alpes and started for Montenvers.

The hottest part of the day was over, the crowds had come down and there was no train then to deprive us of the walk up through the woods. We decided not to hurry to be in time for dinner, and we did well. As we came to where the woods end near Montenvers the view of the Dru burst unexpectedly on us between the last trees, with the last glow from the western sky full on it ; and as we moved on, the moon glided into view from behind the jagged crest of the Charmoz. In the right circumstances the evening pageant of the Alps can stir us however many times we may have seen it ; the impression it makes on us when we are young and unsophisticated, especially when it comes upon us suddenly, may last all our lives.

We had a perfect day for our crossing of the Col du Géant, the finest of all the great Alpine passes. We also had tracks through the

séracs, two glorious hours at midday on the col and an easy descent of two hours to the Hôtel du Mont Blanc in Courmayeur.

It would have needed a more confirmed optimist than myself to draw encouragement from the weather signs next morning. More than threats are needed, however, to keep the very young in the valley after a fairly easy day. So we set out for the Dôme hut. We both agreed that a few pounds less in the rucksack means more enjoyment in the walk; in consequence we took too little bread and put off collecting wood till too late to collect more than a few sticks near the Lac de Combal. The Italian Miage Glacier under gathering clouds is as savage a spot as any in the Alps. The broad straight waste of stone-covered ice is shut in by the precipices and steep icefalls of Mont Blanc on one side and of the Trélatête on the other, and on either side there is plenty that is threatening, even under a clear sky. The Cabane du Dôme, we knew, was on the buttress that separates the Dôme Glacier from the further end of the Miage Glacier. A small track started up from an obvious place in a bay of the latter, a short distance beyond the end of the buttress. There was only one occupant of the cabane, a porter who had brought up provisions and a great load of wood with which to welcome the arrival of a party who were intending to cross Mont Blanc by the route from the Col du Géant via Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit. He was not at all friendly till we had offered him a considerable fraction of our small stock of cash for a share in the wood and the supply of water he had collected. The distance of the water supply and the hopeless inadequacy of the sticks of wood we carried gave him a good market.

Five rugs among three people is one short of comfort when a hut is cold, and one and a half is the maximum two very young amateurs can expect when the third is a porter in possession. In the morning snow lay thick on everything and it was still snowing. A few black rocks with thick white cushions on them were dimly visible through the window. Our provisions being totally inadequate to withstand any siege, we decided to return to Courmayeur. A steep slope that had been very hard snow coming up was covered with new powder snow nearly knee deep. I forget what I said when George suggested a glissade. Lower down we had rain for snow all the way to Courmayeur. When we got there, we had to go to bed while our clothes were dried and in bed we enjoyed both tea and dinner.

In the morning our clothes were dry in places, so we spent the day looking for some corner out of doors that was not swept by the cold sleet-laden wind, which appeared to come from every quarter. An error of ten francs in the addition, luckily not discovered at the time, and rigid economy in the collecting of provisions enabled us to pay the bill. None suffer so much from underprovisioning as the very young, so I propose to go into our deficiencies in this matter in some detail as a warning. It was the quantity, not the quality of our supplies that was wrong. We took with us nearly a pound of Marie biscuits, a small glass of butter, a small pot of bovril, a small tin of potted meat, a few

packets of desiccated soup and twelve petits pains : very much on the small side, as you see.

Our starting at all caused some amusement at the hotel. The weather was still cloudy, wet and cold, though the direction of the wind was better. Near the Lac de Combal we met the porter on his way down from the hut. He was altogether friendly now, and most grateful for the careful tracks we had made coming down the steep slope below the hut. He said he had left a lot of his wood behind, and adjured us to be careful.

On reaching the Miage Glacier we ate four of our petits pains and half our potted meat and went on our way unsatisfied. Very soon the new snow began ; it was not deep enough to be really heavy till we came to ascend the buttress on which the cabane stands. We entered it still fairly fresh, but soon realised it was a very much colder place than on our first visit. The snow had found its way through the interstices between the boards and round the double windows and there was a lot of ice on the floor. We swept most of the snow out and supped on four more of our petits pains and half the remaining potted meat. That left four petits pains, biscuits, a mouthful of potted meat, some honey and bovril for the next day, if we ate nothing for the next ten hours. Five rugs for two instead of for three just enabled us to keep warm enough to get some sleep. Getting up at 3 A.M. was cold work. We were ravenous, but the look of the weather enjoined the strictest economy of our resources. Two of the last four petits pains were eaten with honey. Our hopes were not high when we sallied out into the gloom and cold at 4 A.M. Far above, a violent wind was raging on the Bosses ridge, the air was full of small dry flakes of snow. Instead of a small track in the rocks down to the glacier we found a steep though short slope of deep new snow. When we reached the glacier it was still not light enough to see any distance. George held my rope while I attempted to scale a 10-ft. overhang of ice which appeared to bar access to easier walking beyond. The take-off was an insecure snow bridge unsuitable to combined tactics. Fuller daylight revealed an easy alternative passage, not far off. The Dôme Glacier is steep in places and the methods we had to adopt for making any progress often resembled swimming rather than walking. We had risen little more than a thousand feet in three hours when the weather decided for us that we had gone far enough. A blizzard rushed down on us, obliterating in a few moments all signs of the huge tracks we had so laboriously made ; the folly of going on was unmistakable. The clouds were thin and broken at our level, so we could see our way back to the cabane and only the ploughing of new tracks delayed us. We re-entered it at 9 A.M.

Semi-starvation faced us. A thorough search of every corner and shelf discovered new supplies—some pieces of grey hard bread, and a still older, dusty object which George diagnosed as cheese and which he undertook to toast into a savoury condition. A half-full tin of some red paste looked too dangerous to use. Thanks to this windfall

we brewed what circumstances made into a delicious broth, to whose softening influence the stoniest of the bread succumbed.

Meanwhile the wind howled round the cabane, and even inside it we could see the air was full of snow dust ; any ice on the floor more than a foot from the stove remained unmelted. Forgetting that anything could be really hot in such an atmosphere, we hung one or two stockings over the smoke pipe of the stove to dry. We were surprised when two halves of one of them fell on the floor. By putting our heads as well as bodies in the five rugs we remained unfrozen and the hours passed. At 4 P.M. we rose and ate all we dared, soup, the rest of the old bread and the block, which toasting made definitely recognisable as cheese. Till early morning the storm went on and we thought sadly of the only way of getting to Chamonix next day, over the Col du Miage.

We got up at 6 A.M. to see the sky clear, and the clouds that were driving along the Bosses ridge were almost certainly snow blowing away. With the last of the porter's wood we made a hot drink and ate our last two petits pains and honey. We were off by 6.30 and on coming to the glacier were pleasantly surprised to find that the deep tracks that had been so quickly covered as we descended in the storm had mysteriously been uncovered. In an hour we had risen almost to our highest point of the day before. Presently we turned up the west branch of the Dôme Glacier. It was a beautiful sight under its new snow and a cloudless sky, and its ascent was nowhere difficult. We made our first halt at the foot of the short ice slope at its head which leads up to the ridge connecting the Aiguilles Grises with the Bionnassay-Dôme ridge. Sundry nibblings had reduced our supply of biscuits. What was left with the last of the honey only made us long for more.

Twenty minutes of step-cutting took us on to the ridge, and as our heads rose above it we saw the slender, heavily corniced ridge of the lovely Aiguille de Bionnassay quite near in front of us. The wind had swept the snow off the steep but fairly broad ridge which we followed to its junction with the Bionnassay-Dôme ridge. I found my crampons gave grand holding, and George, who had only bootnails to rely on, managed so well that very little step-cutting was needed and we went up fast till we reached the flank of the Dôme du Goûter. Here the wind caught us badly for the first time in the day. In a few moments we seemed to have nothing on ; George thought his legs would freeze. We sheltered for a bit under the wall of a crevasse, till the icy blast seemed less violent, then hurried on to the Vallot hut, reaching it soon after midday. As we entered it, we saw a party of six coming down from the First Bosse. When they joined us, we learned that two of them had been imprisoned in the observatory on the summit for four days. More provident than we had been, they had plenty to eat ; they must have had a bad time, for they were devoutly thankful to the two guides and two friends who had come up to help them down. They said the wind on the Bosses was terrible. What we did not realise at the time was that, in the English papers, George's people had been

reading of 'Two climbers imprisoned on Mont Blanc; Feared Tragedy.' As George had informed them of our intention to cross the mountain when we were at Chamonix, all sorts of unpleasant possibilities were suggested to them.

Not long ago some very adverse comments of mine on this old Vallot hut were published in the JOURNAL. On this occasion it did, at least, give us shelter from the wind and a chance of waiting till its worst fury was past. We employed the time boiling up some bovril in our aluminium flask. The first time the cork blew out and the precious contents went to thicken the ice upon the floor. We were more careful with a second attempt and improved its filling qualities by adding fragments of bread discarded by previous well provisioned parties. We set out on the final fifteen hundred feet of the ascent comparatively warm and refreshed.

The First Bosse on a calm August day, when one party after another climbs or is dragged up it, may be a place altogether without attraction for the up to date climber. I have been particularly fortunate in my memories of it. Two years before this occasion it had been the biggest thrill of my first ascent when I was the only man on the mountain after waiting three days at the Tête Rousse for storms to cease. Subsequently I climbed it with my wife to be, many years later with a son, and twice I have come down it as the sun was setting and our party was the only one left high up. It was thrilling enough now as George and I struggled up with the wind blowing snow dust and bits of ice against our faces. Once we were over the exposed crest we came into heavenly warmth and peace on the southern side of the ridge as we approached the Second Bosse. Perhaps the wind abated deliberately as a fast bowler bowls slow to a very young batsman. But for a short blizzard on the short rise of the Tournette it was surprisingly merciful to us along the rest of the ridge, and we reached the highest point of the Calotte in an hour and a quarter from the Vallot hut. We were grateful that the observatory did not occupy quite the highest point and found welcome shelter under its south wall.

For some reason I have retained no vivid impression of this particular summit view from a single one of ten ascents, though I have plenty of memorable views before arrival. Partly, it may be, because Leslie Stephen and others had told me so fully and so eloquently what I should see; mostly, I think, because it was entirely satisfying to the senses just to be there.

Hoping to find tracks down the Mur de la Côte, we hurried past the Rochers Rouges and hit off the top of the Mur without loss of time. The Col du Géant party expected at the Cabane du Dôme had evidently not been there, for not a sign of any tracks was to be seen. For nearly an hour I cut steps down the bare ice in a wind which showed us with relentless persistence why there was no snow on it. As I got near the welcoming snow where the slope eased off I stopped cutting steps, relying on my crampons and the absence of real danger. Poor George must have been numb from reduced activity. A scrape and rattle of

an axe on ice behind me announced the beginning of a rapid descent as he reached the stepless ice. He slithered past with good acceleration towards the snow. I stopped him on it, but the jerk brought me down past him to more level ground. We picked ourselves up and congratulated ourselves on having unintentionally shortened our exposure to the wind by several minutes. Turning left we found an easy way past a great ice cliff to the edge of the Grand Plateau.

It was 4 P.M., the place and temperature ideal for a halt and some more bovril. It gave us the fillip needed to plough through the knee deep snow across the end of the plateau to the far side where we joined the tracks of the party of six coming from the Vallot hut. Plunging and glissading we hurried down to the Petit Plateau, then past the Grands Mulets, on the balcony of which we saw parties that had just arrived or had been waiting for the wind to drop. It was no good stopping there, its high prices were notorious and our pockets were as empty as our stomachs. At Pierre Pointue we came to spring water. With some remnants of grenadine and some of the cognac I carried for the emergency which had not arisen, it was nectar. Some kind spirit directed us to the right path through the woods below, so that we entered Couttet's before 9 P.M. I cannot remember what we ate : it is just as well. I am pretty sure we celebrated with champagne.

There was no Sunday boat from Havre, which gave George one more day. We looked at Loppé's pictures and at the windows of all the photographic shops, and we watched through Couttet's telescope the Col du Géant party at last achieving its ascent, profiting not a little by the steps we had cut upon the Mur de la Côte. Next day we drove up to Argentière and I accompanied George as far as the Col de Balme. The hostess was as charming, the omelettes as good as the week before, and Mont Blanc was changed for George from a glorious stranger to an intimate friend. He went on to Martigny, I went back to Chamonix to begin a low level route just below the snow line across the head of the Italian valleys to Saas. It took several days. They were days filled with beauty, and except for being almost benighted descending to Les Mottets from the Col d'Enclave, for a little excitement finding a way up Corno Bianco and for losing my way on the Turlo, they were delightfully uneventful.

First impressions of mountains often decide the place they hold in a man's life. In David Pye's biography of Mallory I read : 'He was fortunate in going to Winchester and in being taken by Mr. Irving to the Alps, but one can scarcely doubt that the development in him of the mountaineer would have been in any case only a matter of time.' It is not for me to criticise the first part of this assertion ; as to the second part, I wonder. I should like to think that great capacity to climb mountains and to understand their significance inevitably finds its opportunity for development ; we shall all welcome any future improvement in our educational system which will ensure it.

The 'arboreal' instinct shown frequently in childhood, combined in Mallory's case with a complete absence of fear in places whose perils

were terribly obvious to mother or grandmother, is not enough. His brother Trafford went to climb in Wales with him, and his career in the R.F.C. and R.A.F. is evidence of at least as great a fondness for hazardous situations, but his fame has been won in the air, not on mountains. As far as I know there was in George Mallory's case no inherited love of mountains; the Malvern Hills were the nearest approach to them he had known, he had read none of the few books of mountain adventure he might have read at Winchester; not till he knew he was going to the Alps in a few days did he take the opportunity of using the small hand and foot holds which the centuries fashion in mediaeval buildings. Harry Gibson, the third member of our party who had to leave us at Martigny and missed Mont Blanc, had read some Alpine books; he had been taken to Switzerland and had walked up the Cima di Jazzi. He was the obvious boy to ask to join me in the Alps. He and George Mallory were both good gymnasts and this had thrown them much together; that is how George came to be with us.

At the moment when his abundant energies and supple frame, with its fine but not overdeveloped muscles, were approaching their full powers, when his latent capacities for appreciation and understanding were ready to respond to the right stimulus, it happened that mountains came into his life, to be accepted as a means to its fulfilment. We have his own authority for the belief that it was the traverse of Mont Blanc recorded above which, more than any single expedition, made that acceptance final and complete. The majesty of this greatest of all Alpine peaks, the ascent persisted in and accomplished despite delays from storms, combined to offer an ideal to an unsophisticated mind ready to regard life as a struggle to win through to knowledge of the truth. It was an ideal he himself attempted to put into words in a description of another ascent of Mont Blanc¹, written when serving in the war of 1914-18.

His development on the purely intellectual side in his last year at Winchester and at Cambridge was similar to that of many boys who leave the hard kerbed road of mathematics or classical scholarship for the softer, more speculative paths of history. But on Mont Blanc he found something which he carried with him up to the end on Mount Everest, a sense that grew clearer year by year of the direction which the body and the mind must follow.

¹ *A.J.* 32. 148 sqq.