# COURMAYEUR 1948

## By NIEL HANSON

We took four hours to reach the Gamba hut from Courmayeur, following in the steps of other mountaineering pilgrims past Notre Dame de Berrier, through Val Veni, along the foot of the Peuterey ridge, and up the boulder-strewn slopes of the Aiguille du Châtelet.

I had therefore time to think again of the chance that had brought me there, and the delightful walk that we had had on the yesterday from la Fouly over the Col du Petit Ferret and along an oven-hot Val Ferret below the Grandes Jorasses to Entrèves. I had been at the Alpine Club training meet in the Bernese Oberland for the past two weeks, and had then been invited by Graham Brown and Peter Lloyd to join them for a week above Courmayeur. In the Oberland I began to learn about the Alps, for it was my first visit. During the epilogue to that meet on which I was now embarking, I came, perhaps, to understand just a little about them. Thus although it would be out of place to intrude my personal appreciation on this occasion, I must nevertheless record the debt I owe these two experienced mountaineers for taking me with them, and for the pleasures I shared in their company.

Moving slowly in the August afternoon along Val Veni, I recalled our journey from the Oberland to Orsières, and the crossing into Italy. My companions presented such a contrast as they walked, stripped to the waist, along the hot valley to Entrèves : Graham Brown small and immensely enthusiastic, exhibiting all the while his endless and purposeful tenacity, knowing the countryside well and revelling in his rediscovery of it ; Peter Lloyd broad and well-built, immensely powerful, and with his slow smile, reticent as always in his first discovery of this most delightful of climbing worlds ; and I long-legged and thin, a graduate of British mountains, among which I have climbed since I was six, now visiting the Alps for the first time in my twenty-fifth year—a novice in snow and ice, on the glaciers and among the crevasses.

We had begun the expedition by sleeping the previous night under a tree above Entrèves, in shelter from a thunderstorm, because we could not find a bed in the village, and by the time a food supply for several days had been bought, it had seemed too late to walk to Courmayeur down the valley. During the morning we had learned that here as everywhere else the weather had been bad, and the idea of going up to the Brenva face of Mont Blanc had regretfully to be abandoned. Thus we were now making our way to the Gamba hut, up and on to the rock-strewn green grass on the shoulder of the Aiguille du Châtelet. We arrived late in the day to share the hut with a few Italian climbers. When it was realised that our doubtful French concealed not Germans but Englishmen, our advent was made doubly welcome. When,

further, names were exchanged, I was left in no doubt about the company I kept.

It was decided during the evening, over an excellent and, alas, expensive meal prepared for us by the guardian's wife, to cross the Fresnay glacier the next day and ascend to the fixed bivouac on the Brèche Nord des Dames Anglaises, from which we should climb, perhaps, one of the Dames Anglaises. After a night at the bivouac, we hoped to reach the summit of the Aiguille Blanche de Peuterey before returning to the Gamba hut on the following day. Two of the Italians had reached the other side of the glacier a few days earlier, and had recrossed immediately. They told us that, though complicated, a way could be found, and that a return crossing at a higher level, to the Col de l'Innominata, was more difficult. We inspected the weather before going to bed. There was a light covering of cloud, with stars peeping through, and it was perhaps, a little warm. But the prospects seemed fair.

The night was still mild when I awoke expectantly at a quarter to two. Wedged between Peter Lloyd and an Italian, I stirred only hesitantly. But the thought that we might not be able to start troubled me, and I wanted to know whether I could sleep on with my conscience at rest. I slipped quietly off the long bunk and hopped unsteadily across the floor to the window, still wrapped in the sleeping bag that I always carry. Outside, there was mist on the lower ridges, but the zenith was clear, and only a few wisps of high cloud remained. There could be no excuse to stay in bed, but it would be fifteen minutes yet before the guardian came through to wake us, and so I crept back to the bunk and lay quietly to conceal my eagerness, until I could hear him moving. We had breakfast in the kitchen, yawning over the lighted candles. Then, pulling on our boots, we began to make ready. Collecting together finally the food, the ropes, the glacier lantern, and ourselves, we moved out into the dark morning.

The lights still blazed in Val Veni 4000 ft. below us, as we gazed at the Peuterey ridge, which rose from behind the Fresnay glacier as a vast wall of inky blackness without relief. Above the ridge shone bright stars, and a warm, too warm, wind was blowing gently. We set off across the intervening scree towards the glacier.

We moved close together and slowly. No light returned from the uneven ground, and it was difficult to keep one's feet among the broken rocks. Apart from a few coughs and grunts we kept the silence, comfortably occupied with our own personal discomforts. We traversed scree for over half an hour, and the ground then became more broken, the rocks larger. The lantern was held for each of us as each small problem had to be overcome. In the light of day one could have run. Here haste would not only be impossible but sacrilegious. The vast black walls of the amphitheatre into which we were moving, the silence and the flickering torchlight emphasised the almost religious nature of the procession, the novitiate and his priests moving solemnly to an initiation. Perhaps this more than anything else was my first impression of Alpine climbing. After the first effort of rising and starting,

the relaxation found in silent steady movement, the personal privacy of one's endeavour in the darkness, and the solemnity that invests the task as seen before daylight, are enough to tell even the most rational of his emotional reserves, even the materialist of the limits of his materialism.

As we crossed the foot of the Aiguille Joseph Croux the scree steepened, and rocky outcrops called for several pauses and détours. The glacier lantern cast a feeble light on each particular problem. When we had been going for about an hour, and were weaving slowly through the outcrops of rock, a footing was suddenly missed, and the lantern fell away over the edge of a projecting rock into the void. It bounced and clattered on the scree, and we strained our ears to pin-point it. It bounced for what felt like a full minute, but was no doubt less than a fifth of that time, and it seemed to describe a slow arc away to the left. We stood for a few moments mutually apologising, cursing silently at nothing, for there was nothing to curse. 'We shall need that lantern to-morrow morning.' So the descent began in the dark. Apprehensively we crossed the scree downwards and to the left, describing a wide arc, thinking the adventure ended before it had begun. As we peered and strained impotently, the minutes passed. There was nothing to be seen. At what we thought to be the greatest distance it could have fallen, we moved once more away to the left and upwards. Black shadows and rocks in the scree caught out attention only to mock us a moment later. We paused to think again. Could it have fallen further? Summoning up the traces in our minds of the sounds of its falling, we marked a small area about 80 ft. below the point from which the lantern had dropped. This lay in the middle of a wide expanse of scree. We searched over this, and in two minutes the lantern had been found. Our senses had of necessity acquired an unwonted acuteness. We climbed slowly upwards and resumed the traverse. The lantern, once found, though bent, could have been used. But now as we moved on towards the glacier, the thin scattered clouds were reflecting the early light of dawn, and we needed no further light.

Standing on the edge of the glacier, we roped up. Although we searched for the tracks of the Italians, they were not to be seen. So, after two false starts, we moved out slowly into the centre of the glacier. As we wound back and forwards in the maze of crevasses and séracs, we watched the rising sun touch the S.E. face of Mont Blanc de Courmayeur with its seeming-pink rays, which advanced slowly down over the rocks and hanging glaciers high above the north end of the Fresnay glacier. The air on the glacier was still very cold, and progress was slow. We were still advancing slowly up the centre of the glacier, cutting up several steep ice walls, when the sun reached us. An hour or two later a party from the Gamba hut reached the Col de l'Innominata on our left, and began to climb the Aiguille Joseph Croux. They had nearly reached the summit when a light mist hid them. During the morning light clouds gathered around the summits, but the sunshine continued. Leading on through the maze, Peter Lloyd was now

patiently cutting up séracs, spattering us with showers of ice. On the surface of the glacier it was warm, but between the ice walls the air was still cold and raw. We at last reached the foot of the W. wall of the Peuterey ridge after 1 o'clock, and by then the pangs of a 10-hour hunger had almost abated. We ate rolls, sardines, and chocolate, perched on a rock near the side of the glacier, in full sunshine.

Because the sun was warm, it was an effort to begin the climb to the fixed bivouac at the foot of the Dames Anglaises. We began the ascent on the rocks to the left of the main couloir or gully, following a shallow groove up the face. The sun still shone, and we mounted one or two steeper and slightly over-hanging pitches with muscles tensed. The problems were for the moment familiar to me, the novice, and I climbed with physical pleasure and without reflection. About 100 m. up we took to a steep snow couloir, kicking up quickly. We could not see the bed of the main gully, and as the day drew on, and we seemed to come no nearer to the col at the top of the gully, the problem of finding a way to the refuge, which we believed to be on the col, became pressing. Away to the right there rose from the whole length of the gully a very steep 150 m. wall. We were too far over to the left, and needed to make a way over on the right somewhere near the top of this wall, thus to avoid the steep rock faces of the ridge of the Aiguille Blanche that lay ahead of us. There seemed, however, no way round to the right. The approach to the refuge is not easy to find, and Graham Brown had last been near this place over 15 years ago, before the fixed bivouac had been built. After a number of abortive reconnaissances over difficult rock to see whether a fault in the wall of the gully could be found, we gathered again with the gully away to the right of the small ridge we were on, and the couloir up which we had come down below us to our left. From this vantage point on a little ridge, the col at the foot of the Dame Anglaises, about 300 to 400 ft. away, was still invisible, obscured by a steep and overhanging rock wall that rose a little higher up the ridge. It was now 6 o'clock, and there were less than 3 hours of daylight left. Was the refuge in fact on that col, and if so, could we find a way to it ? It seemed most sensible to believe that it was there, and to try to work towards it. But a lingering doubt always remained. From a little higher up the ridge there appeared to be a narrow fault or broken ledge running horizontally across the steep wall of the gully at about the level of the col. It disappeared behind the projecting rocks of the ridge of the Aiguille Blanche about 100 yards along. Should we try to force a way along this fault, when we should not get back that day ? The decision had to be made.

We moved slowly and singly out along the broken ledge. It seemed as though it might have been traversed before, but there was no evidence for its former use. The traverse was of moderate difficulty, and the rock was very brittle. Showers of stones from our feet fell away into the gully below as we moved across and round the projecting rocks. In an hour we had lost sight of the ridge, but the col was still invisible. The col gradually appeared in the next hour, coming inch by inch into

the line of vision. First, the far side appeared, then the little snow shoulder in the centre, and then the rocks on the N. side. At a quarter to eight we could see almost the whole col, but there was no refuge to be seen. We scrambled across the last stretch of crumbling ground towards the snow shoulder. The minutes stretched out endlessly as we waited for each other to move. There was now only one part of the col that could not be seen. Sheltered below the vertical wall on the N. side of the col, and hidden from view until the last moment by an outcrop of rock in the foreground, was a small platform. As I moved ahead over the last few feet, I watched anxiously as the platform came into view. Nothing appeared until I could almost see over the other side of the col on to the Glacier de la Brenva. Suddenly the weariness from the long hours and the uncertainty disappeared. There was the refuge, perched precariously on a little platform almost vertically above the Glacier de la Brenva, and there was still half an hour before darkness.

Two rolls of bread, a sardine, cheese and some hot lemon cooked on Peter Lloyd's meta stove finished the day. It was not too far to the summit of the Aiguille Blanche, and we had no need to start too early on the morrow. The refuge sheltered its first inhabitants for three seasons.

There were 4 in. of new snow at 6 o'clock next morning, and it was still snowing lightly. We had only enough food for another 24 hrs., and only enough meta for one more hot drink. There could be no doubt that we should not get higher to-day ; nor could we afford to wait a day. Although it was snowing lightly still, the only decision possible was to go back, and go back quickly. If the snow ceased, we might get back down the Fresnay glacier, although our tracks, so hardly won through that maze of crevasses, must now be covered. Graham Brown thought we might cross the glacier higher up, returning to the Gamba hut over the Col de l'Innominata and down the Glacier du Châtelet. This was discussed desultorily over breakfast of the eternal roll, sardine and cheese, accompanied by a hot drink which used up the last of the meta. The inevitability of the decision to retreat had overcome my disappointment. We must go. Now the only question lay in the route to be taken.

Owing to the new snow on the rocks over which we had come up, we decided to descend by the main couloir. It was narrow, about 5 m. across at the head, and descended very steeply and almost directly about 1200 ft. to the glacier bed. It widened to about 10 m. across lower down, and was bounded on either side by steep, sometimes overhanging, walls. It was below the rock wall that we had traversed the previous evening.

We set out about 8.30. The sun shone for half an hour or so, and the snow had stopped. Steps could be kicked, if one faced the snow, for the first 10 m. The going seemed fairly good. We should be down soon.

Within the first hour, however, the outlook had changed radically.

The wind became colder, the sun was shrouded, it began to snow again. Fitful at first, the fall became gradually heavier. The softer snow in the gully began to peter out, and each step now had to be cut in hard frozen snow, or carefully moulded from veins of solid ice. Progress became very slow, and it was bitterly cold. The new snow, having settled on the steep slopes above the walls of the gully, was blown periodically into the gully by the rising wind. As the snow became heavier, the danger from these light avalanches increased. We could see where, about 400 ft. down the main gully, another gully joined it from our left. When we could reach the junction, we should for the moment be sheltered from any potential snow-chutes. But as the snow continued and the wind rose, progress became slower still, and the bed of the gully itself became a snow-chute for light powder snow. A continuous stream, fed from the gully and the walls above, ran down the centre of the gully, obliterating often the steps as they were made. The line of steps had to weave from side to side of the gully across this ever-growing stream. I was in the centre for most of this descent, and had not the stimulus of cutting steps to keep me warm. Blown by a bitterly cold wind, bombarded by clouds of wind-driven snow from the gully wall, I gazed down at the bed of the glacier as it appeared occasionally out of the mist. Hour after hour we moved down, painful step by painful step, feet and fingers chilled. There are still times when I am too young to be patient, and need a conscious restraint to preserve the meticulous care required for such irksome and time-consuming tasks. This above all seems to me to be the difference between British and Alpine climbing. Although we may spend a 16-hour day among British hills, many of those hours may be carefree and easygoing, in which it is a delight to use the full power and skill of the body in rapid movement, and tension is often relieved. These hours of Alpine climbing showed me that the endurance here is not only physical. The mental discipline required for the constant meticulous attention to every step is needed throughout the longest of days, as a perpetual guard against the risks attendant on the slightest lapse of attention. This is doubtless a commonplace with those who know the Alps, and will without doubt also become a commonplace for me. But wherever and whenever I am reminded again of this principle, I shall remember the 8 hours we took to descend 1000 ft. of this gully to the Fresnay glacier.

It was still snowing when we reached the foot of the gully. The stream of powder snow running down the centre of the gully and carving out a deep bed for itself, had become a spate. We had had to cross the stream again several times lower down, but here the snow stream was so swift that the foot could not be held in a foothold against it. Chilled and cheerless, we at last crossed the bergschrund and stood for a few moments on the glacier munching chocolate.

At 5 o'clock we began to cross the glacier again. Time was short, and food was short ; it was snowing still, and the visibility was lessening. Shortly after we had started to cross the glacier, the rocks of the

Innominata ridge bounding the glacier on the far side became invisible. Several times we thought we had reached the other side, only to be turned back at the last few yards by deep crevasses. Once we found ourselves in the same place where we had been half an hour before. It was impossible to plan a route through the maze of crevasses with visibility less than 20 m. We had to go on trying and hope that the next start was right. It was 7 o'clock before we reached the other side. We looked anxiously for the route up to the col, but the thick mist and driving snow obscured vision. I had not thought before that we should not get over, but that was now obvious. Daylight was rapidly fading, but as a gesture to each other we continued to peer upwards, trying to identify the route. Cold and soaked to the skin, we ploughed through half a metre of new snow until a break in the rock wall appeared. At one point the rock about 100 ft. above us appeared to overhang a small cave. Peter Lloyd suggested that there might be a break at the side of the overhang. But I believe it was the overhanging cliff that he was thinking about. As I kicked up the snow to below the overhang, and into a little stone platform under the overhang and behind a mound of snow, there was but one thought in our minds. 'This will do,' I said. No answer was needed, and none came.

As we crowded together behind the snow mound, we surveyed our bivouac. Above us for 30 or 45 ft. rose the overhang, sheltering an uneven stone platform. There was a shelf about 4 ft. wide between the back wall of rock and the snow mound. Out over the glacier the Peuterey ridge, now and again appearing through the cloud and snow, faced us. Deep below the platform was the bed of the glacier. It was now dusk. We unroped, moved a few rocks, and then sat down. Peter Lloyd lit a candle and placed it in a hollow scooped out in the snow mound. Occasionally an eddy of snow covered us, and the candle crackled. We ate half our remaining provisions—a roll, a sardine, some cheese and a lemon each. Then we sat down in the gathering darkness to watch the night out.

It was cramped and uncomfortable. If one stretched one's legs they rested on the snow, and one's feet rapidly lost all sensation. The wall at the back overhung and pressed one forward. It was still snowing hard; and though we were partly in shelter from the snowfall, our clothes were soaking and were becoming stiff where they were not warmed by the body. I began to shiver, at first involuntarily, and later voluntarily at intervals to summon the already diminished latent reserves of warmth. I moved my numbed toes around my boots, and stared out across the glacier. The light of the candle, comforting reminder of a distant world, reflected off the snow for an hour and then went out. We sat crouched together, each in his own silent world, and waited.

The long hours of such a night leave much behind with us, yet little that we remember in detail. Physical discomforts, the ever-growing coldness of one's wet body, and fits of shivering that jerk us back to the moment, are interspersed with calculations for the morrow, and more

THE DAMES ANGLAISES FROM A POINT ON THE S.E. ARÊTE OF PUNTA INNOMINATA, JULY 18, 1932.

[*To face p.* 32.

calm and detached moments of reflection. ' It is a short climb to the col, and a short way down. We should be back at the hut by midday to a hot drink. I could do with something to eat, but the warmth of a drink is more important. If we start by seven, we should reach the col by nine, and then two hours down——. It will be warm in the hut, and then I can sleep.' These thoughts, in endless variation, went round and round my brain. It is so easy to laugh at these moments, saying ' And you get pleasure from that ? ' But one does, even at the time and in the worst discomfort, except when you think how long it might go on —Sitting on the balcony watching the world to which one now scarcely belongs, only to be wrenched from detachment by the chill creeping in on all sides. Peter Lloyd stirs slightly, and I move my leg under his for warmth, and am twisted in a spasm of cramp and have to take it away again. Graham Brown hunched in the corner, grunts, and returns to himself. I move my toes around inside my boots, shiver and shift slightly. Five minutes later I begin the same routine again.

Hour by hour the night passed. I knew, as so many others have also known, the hope and confidence of the early hours of night, the ebb of the spirit at 2 and 3 in the morning, and the foreknowledge of dawn almost before the light has changed. Even now, perhaps, my next generation was using these silent hours to steal into the world. The sheltering mountaineer, staring unseeing over the snow-mound into the night, became for some moments his other self, lived a few moments in his normal world, and was brought back again to a bivouac on the Innominata ridge by another attack of shivering.

In the second half of the night the sky cleared and the temperature fell. The sun was now, as of old, something to pray for. The Aiguille Noire, rising almost vertically from the glacier, moved across two bright stars, and when they reappeared to the south the sky was lighter. Infinitely slowly the light was returning. Grey flecks of cloud high above the Dames Anglaises hung suspended until they were tinged with pink, and then they dissolved. We sat silent and expectant, remarking in the cold early light the long dry icicles new-formed on the overhang behind, the glistening frost on the wall at our backs, and more than 3 ft. of fresh powder snow on the mound in front of us. My leather gloves, left on the head of my ice-axe, were solid with frost, impossible to wear until they had later been warmed over the candle-end.

We ate the last of the food at 7 o'clock. The sky was clear, the sun was on the summits, but not yet on us. Having knotted the stiff rope with stiffer fingers, we moved awkwardly and steeply down through the new layer of powder snow towards the glacier. The sun caught us an hour later and brought life back again. We looked for the route over the col. Movement on the glacier would be very slow, difficult and dangerous, and it seemed that it would be easier to get on to the rocks above and try to force a way up. The snow lay thick on the rocks, and though, unhindered, the climbing would have been easy, every inch of the route, already sparse of handholds, had to be swept of the snow in the search for them. But we persevered to make a route up. As

the sun came higher, the loose snow and icicles on the rocks above melted and crashed down on and over us. Thick blankets of snow, as if cleared by some giant with a spade, crashed down over us and on to the rocks around. We crouched to the rocks in the bright sunlight, clinging to uncertain holds as the small avalanches thudded down. The falls were not dangerous, but they were disconcerting. After working as rapidly as possible out of the direct line of falling snow, we tried to force another route up the cliff. None of the routes would go, however, and after several abortive attempts to lead a way up, with one slip fortunately retrieved by Peter Lloyd before I had fallen more than 15 ft., we had to rope off the cliff on to the snowslope below us. It was now 12 o'clock.

We therefore worked slowly back up the top of the snow slope along the foot of the cliff, ploughing through the loose snow. At about 2 o'clock we found the correct route. Landmarks were difficult to identify because of the snowfall, and it had already begun to snow again. Peter Lloyd led off up the gully and rocks. The snow came faster and it was bitterly cold on the hands. Towards the top, at about 3 o'clock, the climbing became difficult, and the last rise to the col was over a slight overhang and on rotten rock deeply covered in snow. Peter Lloyd looked at it and came down. I went up and looked at it, holding myself against the rotten rock with insecure handholds. It needed only one strong pull over the overhang, but the holds were uncertain, my fingers numbed. Arms and legs began to tremble, and I moved quickly down again, swearing at the steep and rotten rock in nervousness. 'Perhaps we could go round that side.' But it was not very promising. 'You'll have to do it,' Peter Lloyd said, 'it's the only way up.' He came up with me and belayed close to the overhang. I stood on the highest point below the overhang, holding myself in with one hand, and cleared more and more of the thickly lying snow with long sweeps of the arm. Removing my gloves for the crucial move, I gradually prized myself over the overhang, muscles in arms and legs tensed and shaking. The handholds held, strength had returned to the fingers. Peter Lloyd came up as if he was climbing a garden wall, bringing Graham Brown after him. We stood together on the summit of the col, biting hastily at our remaining chocolate.

It was after 4 o'clock, and still snowing, when we started down the gully to the Glacier du Châtelet, and we had eaten only one fragment of chocolate since our almost non-existent breakfast. The descent of the gully repeated the experience of the previous day, though the difficulties were less. But the snow was thicker, and was in places waist high. Graham Brown ploughed a furrow down through this, peering through the mist and snow for the glacier bed.

We moved along the near side of the upper snowslope when we reached it. It was now a blizzard, and at each step into the unresisting new snow small cascades were dislodged and ran down the steep slopes. It proved impossible to descend to the lower slopes of the glacier on this side, and thus very weary, and at about 6 o'clock, we had to retrace

our steps once again up the slope for about 600 ft. to where we had reached it, and then we tried to force a way down on the other side. During the traverse round the steep head of the glacier the surface snow was running down over the whole slope, filling the tracks almost immediately they were made, and burying the rope as soon as it touched the surface. At one moment a large part of the surface snow above Graham Brown and Peter Lloyd began to move, and the powdery advancing edge flowed over them. Only the surface movement continued, however, and the uneasy moment, in retrospect perhaps the worst we had, was past almost before it had begun. The snowing continued unabated, dark snow clouds swirling along the glacier and up over its enclosing walls. When we found a fault in the wall separating the upper snowslopes from the lower reaches of the glacier, the snow was so thick, and time so short, that climbing down was out of the question, and we roped down in haste. Then we set off down the middle of the smooth and uncrevassed glacier, trudging painfully through the new snow. We were now all very tired, and anxious to reach the hut. It was 7 o'clock, and only an hour of daylight remained. Graham Brown, who was leading, veered away to the right near the lower end of the glacier. Peter Lloyd and I thought the hut was to the left, and anxiously sought assurance for his decision. Our anxiety for the approaching night was beginning to show, and the visibility was less than 80 ft. Graham Brown fortunately continued away to the right for several hundred yards, and we reached the right hand edge of the glacier. A few minutes later I thought I saw the hut in the mist, and moved quickly towards it. Just as I found that it was only a large boulder I turned away a little, and in a slight clearing in the darkening mist saw the snow-covered hut below us. I turned and pointed, and we unroped and moved independently towards it.

We were met by anxious and attentive Italian climbers, who had believed us lost in the blizzard, and as we sat peeling off our soaking clothes we were brought some of the guardian's special grog, and sat drinking this and drying out as the light finally ebbed.

Only as I sat with hot food and tea before me did I realise that I was almost too tired to eat. The relaxation from anxiety, the warmth, the grog, dispelled activity and attention wandered. The anxious attentions of the Italians and the guardian's wife held off sleep for a while. The great *orage* had finished the season and the whole hut, and its guardians, decided to leave for the valley to-morrow. But the thoughts and needs of the external world were now receding. We climbed on to the bunk and lay down.

I do not make notes of my climbing expeditions, nor record a daily log of their trials, tribulations and triumphs. So that, when I live over again a climbing experience as I have done here, during the long winters that separate one from another, the details have often become blurred, and the emphasis may have shifted. But the resulting memory is a record of what the experience has left with me.

What I have written is, however, only a part of that record. The

mountaineer may faithfully record his knowledge of mountains with which he has made friends, though that is not all his experience. But a mountaineering journal is a record of the moods of mountains and how they have affected men. I shall therefore be content to let my record be that, and shall keep the other and more personal parts of the memory for my own possession.

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# TRAVELS IN JAPANESE-OCCUPIED MALAYA[1]

By F. SPENCER CHAPMAN

*Being the substance of a lecture delivered before the Alpine Club, December* 8, 1947.

In August 1941 I found myself posted to Singapore as second in command, and later in command, of a small school of guerilla warfare. After specialising in the fieldcraft and equipment side of commando work, I reached Malaya after a year in Australia, where I had been sent with Mike Calvert—later one of Wingate's column commanders—to start commandos in that country and in New Zealand.

One of the primary objects of the military department to which I was attached was to organise left-behind parties (I prefer the name stay-behind parties : it sounds less abandoned) of Europeans and Asiatics in various parts of the Far East which we thought might be overrun by the Japanese. Unfortunately this belief did not seem to be shared by those in command and, as far as Malaya was concerned, we were not allowed to make preparations of any sort until December 8, on which night, it will be remembered, Singapore was bombed by the Japanese. Only then were we allowed to carry on with the plan which had been put up to Malayan Command some months previously ; and we were allowed to start training the young Chinese Communists at Singapore. Having handed over the school to another, I went up to the advance headquarters of the 3rd Indian Corps at Kuala Lumpur primarily to organise raiding parties behind the Japanese lines which were by then—December 20—already a third of the way down Perak.

The first thing to be done was to have a look at the enemy—for already rumour had it that the Jap was something phenomenal as a jungle fighter. Accordingly with two companions I crossed the Perak river at Parit and spent four days behind the lines watching the Jap cycle-troops and staff cars pouring along the roads towards the river. This reconnaissance more than ever convinced me of the vulnerability of the advancing Japanese forces to guerilla attacks, and I put up a last-minute plan for a few small British stay-behind parties to enter the

[1] The text of this article has already been published in the *Geographical Journal*, with whose courteous permission it is here reproduced.