

## Climbing a Mountain

have ever climbed a mountain, you know how exciting it is to realize you are about to get on top of one of the world's roofs—especially for the first time when you do not yet know what to expect or how it is going to be like.

I can remember my first ascension to a mountain top well. It happened about three years ago, when it was autumn, and the weather in the mountains was gloomy. My friends offered me to travel to the western Carpathian Mountains, and after a short period of hesitation, I accepted their invitation. There was nothing much to do for me at the time, so I thought a change of surrounding would only be of use to me.

The Carpathian Mountains are not too high. If you compare them to, say, the Caucasian Mountains, the Carpathians look more like hills—although on average, they are about 4500 feet high. Anyways, this is more than enough for a novice, and I am glad my experience of climbing mountains started there.

The hillside we started our ascension from was rather sloping, in the beginning. This side of the mountain was covered with a pine forest. The trees were incredibly high and thick; their knotted large roots cut the ground here and there, forming natural footsteps, making walking the terrain a little bit easier. The air was fresh and clean; after about 30 minutes of climbing, we heard the sound of a stream and rushed to it for a drink. I think it was the tastiest water in my life: it smelled of moss and soil, was subtly sweet, and was so cold and clear—dipping our stained hands in it seemed almost a crime.

After about an hour of walking, we left the forest, and walked along the slope, overgrown with shrubs. The ground beneath our feet changed its color, but we did not pay attention to it, until it started to rain slightly; after it became slippery, and one of our friends fell because of this, we realized we were walking on clay. Fortunately, there was a plateau a bit higher, and somehow, we managed to reach it; still, our clothes were covered with clay. Further, the slope gradually became steeper, so instead of walking, we had to climb. Instead of clay, there were mostly stones and branches, and we could grab the shrubs nearby to help ourselves climb. There was another small plateau on our way to the top; on this plateau, we found many wild blueberries and strawberries, which were delicious.

When we ultimately got to the top, we did not realize it at first because of the cloudy and foggy weather. The rain stopped, but we could still barely see our surroundings, so we felt disappointed but nevertheless happy because of making it to the top. We had a teapot and a touristic primer with us, so we made some hot tea, and drank it, discussing where else we would go next time. And suddenly, when we were ready to leave, the sun somehow broke through the clouds, and cast the fog away. We were awed to see the incredible scenery below: green misty valleys, shady mountains around, and a shining serpent of a distant river. Amazed, we stood there for about five minutes, before the sun hid behind the clouds again. But these

five minutes made us feel much happier than if we saw all the scenery while climbing the mountain.

In the following years, I climbed several more mountains. Though rarely something extreme happened, I still feel happy and proud for discovering more mountains firsthand. But I guess I never again had the same feeling as at that very moment when the clouds vanished and revealed the whole world below the first mountain I climbed.