

No eyry could he see, though he strained his eyes to their utmost; raising them, he gazed upon the dimly-lighted sea, and was not long in detecting a black speck in the distance.

The speck, becoming momentarily larger, proved to be the eagle returning home. As it neared the rocks, it seemed to be sailing straight towards him. Its outstretched wings scarcely moved, yet it seemed coming towards him with great velocity. A piece of silver glimmered amongst its talons, which piece of silver had a very short time since been swimming, all unconscious of its fate, in the briny sea. The erne seemed almost upon him, when its mighty pinions began to flap, and the bird was about to alight on a shelving piece of rock forty feet or so beneath him. Suddenly dropping its prey, with a loud scream it darted upwards, high up above him.

The eagle's quick, piercing eyes had perceived that its eyry was watched. The mother-bird, too, alarmed at the sudden disappearance of her mate, instantly left her bed to join him.

Descending into unpleasantly close proximity to Tom, they hovered over him, uttering meanwhile low threatening cries. Judging that discretion is the better part of valour, Tom worked his body backwards several feet from the edge of the precipice; then rising, he retired to a safer distance.

But as the birds still menaced him with beak and talon, he took to his legs and beat an ignominious retreat. Turning round, and finding that he was not followed, he flung out the presumptuous challenge—

"I'll be even with you yet!"

He came home with a warm glow on his cheeks, and with a sparkle in his eyes that suggested some mischief brewing. He did not conceal from his mother and sister what he had been doing, but said nothing of a scheme he had in his head; however, his mother divined the meaning of that excited twinkle in his eyes, and took the opportunity to speak to him seriously about birds and nests. So pitifully did she plead for them that Tom went to bed that night with wonderfully good intentions.

But, alas! what a slight thing will upset a good resolution. On Monday morning he was on his way to school, when a well-known sound arrested him. A sharp ringing, half-laughing cry, not very high above him attracted his attention. Raising his eyes, he beheld a kestrel pursuing its steady, stately flight; suddenly pausing, its wings moving rapidly, it hovered for a moment or two, and then dropped to the ground more swiftly than a shaft from a well-strung bow.

Now it was not many weeks since he had found the somewhat clumsily constructed nest of this dainty-looking hawk. It had been no easy work getting to the ledge of rock on which lay the kestrel's nest, and his schoolfellows had been loud in their praises of his agility and pluck. He by no means disliked being thought daring, and the sight of the beautiful bird recalled to his memory the pleasurable excitement he had experienced in scaling a certain scarp of rocks.

"Hulloa, Tom!" exclaimed a voice behind him. "Did you see the kestrel dive just now?"

"Yes," said Tom. "What did she carry off?"

"A mouse, I think. Come, old fellow, won't you sell me the kestrel's egg?"

"No; get one yourself for nothing," returned Tom, contemptuously. "For my part," he added, "I mean flying at higher game."

"You won't beat that kestrel's nest in a hurry, so you needn't brag!" retorted Will.

"Won't I just? What would you say to an eagle's nest?"

"Have you found one, then?"

"Yes."

"But the eggs will all be hatched."

"Oh, I dare say! Still I mean to have a peep at the nest."

"Where is it?"

"High up in the rocks, on the other side of those shooting out towards the sea."

"But can you get at it?"

"There's the rub!" said Tom, dubiously, rushing up the school steps, and leaving his friend to construe his words as he pleased.

After school, four of Tom's special friends went down on the beach to see, from a distance, the eyry.

"Can't be done," they at once decided.

"It can," said Tom.

"Rocks too perpendicular," said his friends.

"We must get at it from the top," explained Tom, coolly. "We shall have to get a good strong rope, and loop it round one of us under the arms; the other fellows must hang on to the rope like anything, and quietly let the chap who is tied down to the nest. Now, then, which of you will go down?"

No one volunteered.

"Pooh! You are none of you worth a snap! I will do it if you'll all come and help with the rope."

"Who will get the rope?"

"Will Graham's father is a rope-maker; he can get one easily enough from his father's yard."

Lizzie had told her brother an American story of a man who had reached an eagle's nest in the manner Tom had described, little thinking, poor child, what dangerous notions she was thereby putting into his head. Only there was this wide difference between the American hero and Tom Lee: the hero of Lizzie's tale was one in the true sense of the word, for he had rescued a babe from an untimely death; whereas Tom's fancied heroism would be nothing but a vain-glorious feat of empty daring.

Will Graham promised to provide the rope.

(To be continued.)

MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

A doctor and a clergyman were exercising their hunters one morning in the country lanes, when an argument arose between them as to which of the animals possessed the sweetest disposition. "I'll wager that if their respective tempers could be tried," said the doctor, "mine would be far and away the best." "That's all nonsense," retorted the clergyman. "My mare has a mealy nose, and that, in horseflesh, is a sure sign of good temper." "Well, here's a stiff hedge, let us try their leaping capabilities," suggested the doctor. "Right you are," agreed his friend. The doctor's hunter quietly refused the jump, although put at it again and again. The clergyman's little mare also refused, but at the same time threw back her ears and exhibited considerable ill-temper. When repeatedly urged to jump she finally displayed a clever back-jumping feat, which threw her master straight over the hedge. Strange to relate, the reverend gentleman was quite unhurt, and, scrambling to his feet, commenced to scrape the mud from his broadcloth, whilst the doctor laughingly remarked—"Perhaps you are convinced now that my hunter has a better disposition than yours?" "Not at all," replied the clergyman. "My mare is such an unselfish little brute that, although unable to take the fence herself, she had no desire to keep me from going over. In fact, she facilitated the mode of my transit, whilst your horse displayed a dog-in-the-manger temperament, by not going himself, and not allowing you to go either."