

when Tom, in a loud whisper, bade his friends extend themselves on the ground; for one of the eagles had just left its nest, and was flying seaward for its morning meal and to cater for its young. It was quickly followed by its mate.

They remained motionless for a few minutes, and as they watched the birds become smaller and smaller the sun slowly raised himself above a bank of clouds that hung drowsily over the sea horizon, and casting his slanting yellow gleams upon the long line that marked the edge of the precipice from the sea, brought at the same time the old beacon, lying in front of them, more distinctly before their eyes. It suggested a new idea to Tom.

"Graham," he said, turning his head, "we must make use of yonder old stump."

"I see," returned the rope-maker's son, "we'll give the rope a twist round it, which will make our hold more secure."

"You've hit it! Let's get to our work."

And rising, the boys walked on to the beacon, the eagles being now out of sight.

Tom soon got himself into the loop they made at one end of the rope; then, stepping slowly towards the edge of the rocks, he laid himself down full length on his chest, and worked his body, as he had done once before, in zigzag fashion to the brink.

Giving one quick glance down at the eyry, and another out to sea, he bade his accomplices "hold on tight" to the other end of the rope, "for I am going to crawl back to you," he said.

Upon which there was some merriment at Tom's expense.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked, when he had jerked himself to within safe standing distance.

"At you, of course!"

"You think I'm afraid," he said, examining the edge and point of a carving-knife with which he had provided himself in case he was attacked by the eagles, "but that's just where you are wrong. I'll go down, only we must shift our position a little. I was not quite above the nest."

However, by changing their ground the benefit derivable from the old beacon would be lost; and it was now seen that without some resistance to the strain on the rope, such as the beacon afforded, there might be a disaster.

"Better give it up," suggested Graham. And the other boys readily chimed in, for they began to see that it was not only Tom who would be exposed to danger.

But Tom was still smarting under the recent laughter, and was determined to make the descent, happen what might.

"No," said he: "it's too late to give it up now. We must do it *without* shifting our ground, that's all."

And in less than two minutes he was again calling upon them to "hang on tight," as, twisting himself round, he flung his legs over the precipice, and then, more cautiously, the rest of his body.

Instantly the rope tightened, and the ancient beacon gave a slight vibration, the boys, hanging on though they were with all their might, being jerked forward nearer the stump than was pleasant.

"Be careful!" sang out Tom, angrily, as with one hand he kept himself from scraping against the perpendicular wall, and with the other flourished the carving-knife. Doubtless he felt very heroic at that moment, dangling there in mid-air, with the sea-waves far down below him; still it was in a voice savouring considerably of fear that he cried out

"Let me down more gently, can't you?"

He would fain have kept his eyes fixed above him, for it made him dizzy to look down; but he had no alternative, it being necessary that he should spring forward to the ledge of rocks before coming quite level with the eyry.

"Hold hard!" he cried, at length, and swinging himself three or four feet out of the perpendicular, he gained a footing on the rock platform.

In a moment he was kneeling by the great pile of sticks



that formed the eyry, a pair of young eaglets, who had crawled to the farthest extremity of the pile, receiving his intrusion on their nursery with the most violent hissing. Jumping in amongst the roughly-arranged sticks, some of them of no mean size or length, he seized one of the birds by the neck, shouting out at the same time a loud, triumphant "Pull up!"

Instantly he felt a tug