The next morning Bilbo woke up with the early sun in his eyes. He jumped up to look at the time and to go and put his kettle on—and found he was not home at all. So he sat down and wished in vain for a wash and a brush. He did not get either, nor tea nor toast nor bacon for his breakfast, only cold mutton and rabbit. And after that he had to get ready for a fresh start.

This time he was allowed to climb on to an eagle’s back and cling between his wings. The air rushed over him and he shut his eyes. The dwarves were crying farewells and promising to repay the Lord of the Eagles if ever they could, as off rose fifteen great birds from the mountain’s side. The sun was still close to the eastern edge of things. The morning was cool, and mists were in the valleys and hollows and twined here and there about the peaks and pinnacles of the hills. Bilbo opened an eye to peep and saw that
the birds were already high up and the world was far away, and the mountains were falling back behind them into the distance. He shut his eyes again and held on tighter.

“Don’t pinch!” said his eagle. “You need not be frightened like a rabbit, even if you look rather like one. It is a fair morning with little wind. What is finer than flying?”

Bilbo would have liked to say: “A warm bath and late breakfast on the lawn afterwards;” but he thought it better to say nothing at all, and to let go his clutch just a tiny bit.

After a good while the eagles must have seen the point they were making for, even from their great height, for they began to go down circling round in great spirals. They did this for a long while, and at last the hobbit opened his eyes again. The earth was much nearer, and below them were trees that looked like oaks and elms, and wide grass lands, and a river running through it all. But cropping out of the ground, right in the path of the stream which looped itself about it, was a great rock, almost a hill of stone, like a last outpost of the distant mountains, or a huge piece cast miles into the plain by some giant among giants.

Quickly now to the top of this rock the eagles swooped one by one and set down their passengers.

“Farewell!” they cried, “wherever you fare, till your eyries receive you at the journey’s end!” That is the polite thing to say among eagles.
“May the wind under your wings bear you where the sun sails and the moon walks,” answered Gandalf, who knew the correct reply.

And so they parted. And though the Lord of the Eagles became in after days the King of All Birds and wore a golden crown, and his fifteen chieftains golden collars (made of the gold that the dwarves gave them), Bilbo never saw them again—except high and far off in the battle of Five Armies. But as that comes in at the end of this tale we will say no more about it just now.

There was a flat space on the top of the hill of stone and a well worn path with many steps leading down it to the river, across which a ford of huge flat stones led to the grass-land beyond the stream. There was a little cave (a wholesome one with a pebbly floor) at the foot of the steps and near the end of the stony ford. Here the party gathered and discussed what was to be done.

“I always meant to see you all safe (if possible) over the mountains,” said the wizard, “and now by good management and good luck I have done it. Indeed we are now a good deal further east than I ever meant to come with you, for after all this is not my adventure. I may look in on it again before it is all over, but in the meanwhile I have some other pressing business to attend to.”

The dwarves groaned and looked most distressed, and Bilbo wept. They had begun to think Gandalf was going to come all the way and would always be there to help them
out of difficulties. “I am not going to disappear this very instant,” said he. “I can give you a day or two more. Probably I can help you out of your present plight, and I need a little help myself. We have no food, and no baggage, and no ponies to ride; and you don’t know where you are. Now I can tell you that. You are still some miles north of the path which we should have been following, if we had not left the mountain pass in a hurry. Very few people live in these parts, unless they have come here since I was last down this way, which is some years ago. But there is somebody that I know of, who lives not far away. That Somebody made the steps on the great rock—the Carrock I believe he calls it. He does not come here often, certainly not in the daytime, and it is no good waiting for him. In fact it would be very dangerous. We must go and find him; and if all goes well at our meeting, I think I shall be off and wish you like the eagles ‘farewell wherever you fare!’”

They begged him not to leave them. They offered him dragon-gold and silver and jewels, but he would not change his mind. “We shall see, we shall see!” he said, “and I think I have earned already some of your dragon-gold—when you have got it.”

After that they stopped pleading. Then they took off their clothes and bathed in the river, which was shallow and clear and stony at the ford. When they had dried in the sun, which
was now strong and warm, they were refreshed, if still sore and a little hungry. Soon they crossed the ford (carrying the hobbit), and then began to march through the long green grass and down the lines of the wide-armed oaks and the tall elms.

“And why is it called the Carrock?” asked Bilbo as he went along at the wizard’s side.

“He called it the Carrock, because carrock is his word for it. He calls things like that carrocks, and this one is the Carrock because it is the only one near his home and he knows it well.”

“Who calls it? Who knows it?”

“The Somebody I spoke of—a very great person. You must all be very polite when I introduce you. I shall introduce you slowly, two by two, I think; and you must be careful not to annoy him, or heaven knows what will happen. He can be appalling when he is angry, though he is kind enough if humoured. Still I warn you he gets angry easily.”

The dwarves all gathered round when they heard the wizard talking like this to Bilbo. “Is that the person you are taking us to now?” they asked. “Couldn’t you find someone more easy-tempered? Hadn’t you better explain it all a bit clearer?”—and so on.

“Yes it certainly is! No I could not! And I was explaining very carefully,” answered the wizard crossly. “If you must know more, his name is Beorn. He is very strong, and he is a skin-changer.”