three days with next to nothing to eat, and he found himself saying aloud: “Now I know what a piece of bacon feels like when it is suddenly picked out of the pan on a fork and put back on the shelf!”

“No you don’t!” he heard Dori answering, “because the bacon knows that it will get back in the pan sooner or later; and it is to be hoped we shan’t. Also eagles aren’t forks!”

“Oh no! Not a bit like storks—forks, I mean,” said Bilbo sitting up and looking anxiously at the eagle who was perched close by. He wondered what other nonsense he had been saying, and if the eagle would think it rude. You ought not to be rude to an eagle, when you are only the size of a hobbit, and are up in his eyrie at night!

The eagle only sharpened his beak on a stone and trimmed his feathers and took no notice.

Soon another eagle flew up. “The Lord of the Eagles bids you to bring your prisoners to the Great Shelf,” he cried and was off again. The other seized Dori in his claws and flew away with him into the night leaving Bilbo all alone. He had just strength to wonder what the messenger had meant by ‘prisoners,’ and to begin to think of being torn up for supper like a rabbit, when his own turn came.

The eagle came back, seized him in his talons by the back of his coat, and swooped off. This time he flew only a short way. Very soon Bilbo was laid down, trembling with fear, on a wide shelf of rock on the moun-
tain-side. There was no path down on to it save by flying; and no path down off it except by jumping over a precipice. There he found all the others sitting with their backs to the mountain wall. The Lord of the Eagles also was there and was speaking to Gandalf.

It seemed that Bilbo was not going to be eaten after all. The wizard and the eagle-lord appeared to know one another slightly, and even to be on friendly terms. As a matter of fact Gandalf, who had often been in the mountains, had once rendered a service to the eagles and healed their lord from an arrow-wound. So you see ‘prisoners’ had meant ‘prisoners rescued from the goblins’ only, and not captives of the eagles. As Bilbo listened to the talk of Gandalf he realized that at last they were going to escape really and truly from the dreadful mountains. He was discussing plans with the Great Eagle for carrying the dwarves and himself and Bilbo far away and setting them down well on their journey across the plains below.
The Misty Mountains looking West from the Eyrie towards Goblin Gate

The Lord of the Eagles would not take them anywhere near where men lived. “They would shoot at us with their great bows of yew,” he said, “for they would think we were after their sheep. And at other times they would be right. No! we are glad to cheat the goblins of their sport, and glad to repay our thanks to you, but we will not risk ourselves for dwarves in the southward plains.”
“Very well,” said Gandalf. “Take us where and as far as you will! We are already deeply obliged to you. But in the meantime we are famished with hunger.”

“I am nearly dead of it,” said Bilbo in a weak little voice that nobody heard.

“That can perhaps be mended,” said the Lord of the Eagles.

Later on you might have seen a bright fire on the shelf of rock and the figures of the dwarves round it cooking and making a fine roasting smell. The eagles had brought up dry boughs for fuel, and they had brought rabbits, hares, and a small sheep. The dwarves managed all the preparations. Bilbo was too weak to help, and anyway he was not much good at skinning rabbits or cutting up meat, being used to having it delivered by the butcher all ready to cook. Gandalf, too, was lying down after doing his part in setting the fire going, since Oin and Gloin had lost their tinder-boxes. (Dwarves have never taken to matches even yet.)

So ended the adventures of the Misty Mountains. Soon Bilbo’s stomach was feeling full and comfortable again, and he felt he could sleep contentedly, though really he would have liked a loaf and butter better than bits of meat toasted on sticks. He slept curled up on the hard rock more soundly than ever he had done on his feather-bed in his own little hole at home. But all night he dreamed of his own house and wandered in his sleep into all his different rooms looking
for something that he could not find nor re-
member what it looked like.