

John Burnet of Barns

"First shall the heavens want starry light,
The seas be robbèd of their waves ;
The day want sun, the sun want bright,
The night want shade, and dead men graves ;
The April, flowers and leaf and tree,
Before I false my faith to thee."

And I kissed her and bade farewell, with the echo still ringing in my ears, "to thee, to thee."

I rode through the great shadows of the wood, scarce needing to pick my path in a place my horse knew so well, for once again I was on Maisie. The stillness clung to me like a garment, and out of it, from high up on the hillside, came a bird's note, clear, tremulous, like a bell. Then the trees ceased, and I was out on the shorn, green banks, 'neath which the river gleamed and rustled. Then, all of a sudden, I had rounded the turn of the hill, and there, before me in the dimness, stood the old grey tower, which was mine and had been my fathers' since first man tilled a field in the dale. I crossed the little bridge with a throbbing heart, and lo! there was the smell of lilac and gean-tree blossom as of old coming in great gusts from the lawn. Then all was confusion and much hurrying about and a thousand kindly greetings. But in especial I remember Tam Todd, the placid, the imperturbable, who clung to my hand, and sobbed like the veriest child, "Oh, Laird, ye've been lang o' comin'."