

## CHAPTER IX

### THE END OF ALL THINGS

I AM writing the last words of this tale in my house of Barns after many years have come and gone since the things I wrote of. I am now no more young, and my wife is no more a slim maid, but a comely woman. The years have been years of peace and some measure of prosperity. Here in Tweeddale life runs easily and calm. Our little country matters are all the care we know, and from the greater world beyond there comes only chance rumours of change and vexation. Yet the time has not been idle, for I have busied myself much with study and the care of the land. Many have sought to draw me out to politics and statecraft, but I have ever resisted them, for after all what are these things of such importance that for them a man should barter his leisure and piece of mind? So I have even stayed fast in this pleasant dale, and let the bustle and clamour go on without my aid.

It is true that more than once I have made journeys even across the water, and many times to London, on matters of private concern. It was during one of these visits to Flanders that I first learned the importance of planting wood on land, and resolved to