

Bertha and Sir John of Jerusalem

water-side, since Matthew the Hermit had but now come over the bridge and was inquiring for him, and so ran off again; and Jock, going out, found no Matthew Hermit by the water-side, nor Margaret herself, but Bertha of Clotheram standing alone; and Bertha said that Margaret had gone into the house to give a message that she had forgotten to her husband Richard.

And thinking she would soon return and explain these two different tales, they stood there for a while without speaking further, awkward both of them, and looking away to the other side of the river. In the end it was the man who spoke first.

"A glad day and a glad moment this, Mistress."

"Ay, to see thy boyhood's friends again, Richard and Edmund."

"And more than these."

"Yes, Sir Christopher, and your other friends."

Disconcerted by this wilful avoidance of his meaning, he tried a different approach.

"I was true to my promise to right your wrong so far as I might."

"My wrong?"

"The wrong I did you at Hood. At Rome we were high in favour, and some of those best learned in Canon law gave me counsel whether our marriage might be set aside."

"Ay, and they said?"

"It was agreed by all that it was no marriage,