Out of the church she followed them
   With a lofty step and mien:
His bride was like a village maid,
   Maude Clare was like a queen.

“Son Thomas,” his lady mother said,
  With smiles, almost with tears:
“May Nell and you but live as true
   As we have done for years;

“Your father thirty years ago
   Had just your tale to tell:
But he was not so pale as you,
   Nor I so pale as Nell.”

My lord was pale with inward strife,
   And Nell was pale with pride;
My lord gazed long on pale Maude Clare
   Or ever he kissed the bride.

“Lo, I have brought my gift, my lord,
   Have brought my gift,” she said:
“To bless the hearth, to bless the board,
   To bless the marriage-bed.

“Here’s my half of the golden chain
   You wore about your neck,
That day we waded ankle-deep
   For lilies in the beck:

“Here’s my half of the faded leaves
   We plucked from budding bough,
With feet amongst the lily leaves, —
   The lilies are budding now.”
He strove to match her scorn with scorn,  
He faltered in his place:  
“Lady,” he said, — “Maude Clare,” he said, —  
“Maude Clare:” — and hid his face.

She turn’d to Nell: “My Lady Nell,  
I have a gift for you:  
Though, were it fruit, the bloom were gone  
Or, were it flowers, the dew.

“Take my share of a fickle heart,  
Mine of a paltry love:  
Take it or leave it as you will,  
I wash my hands thereof.”

“And what you leave,” said Nell, “I’ll take,  
And what you spurn, I’ll wear:  
For he’s my lord for better and worse,  
And him I love, Maude Clare.

“Yea, though you’re taller by the head,  
More wise, and much more fair;  
I’ll love him till he loves me best,  
Me best of all, Maude Clare.”

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