

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-94)

4 *Maude Clare*

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, 5  
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; 10  
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 15  
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. 20

“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 25  
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: 30  
“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 35  
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.” 40

“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, 45  
More wise, and much more fair;  
I'll love him till he loves me best,  
Me best of all, Maude Clare.”

1858

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