

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.”

(From Christina Rossetti. *Goblin Market and Other Poems*.
London: Macmillan, 1862)