Less attractive aspects of Morris's plot to twentieth-century readers include its tendency to identify female autonomy with sexual hostility, and its gratuitous Victorian assumption that marriage is a universal end to which all aspirations flow. When Atalanta's initial independence melts into acquiescent "fear of success," and she and her attendants celebrate the loss of her "maiden zone, her arrows, and her bow," the tale's 'happy' closure obliquely recalls Tennyson's celebration of the collapse of Ida's hopes for a woman's college in The Princess.

The tale also expresses other, more enduring values, however—values that recur in Morris's poetic work: his deep love of pastoral settings, his sense of life's beauty, and his open respect for "the worship of Venus." In the interconnective passage, Morris's more-than-Victorian faith in the centrality of erotic love finally shades into agape, and the narrative's recurrent sense of the brevity and contingency of all satisfactions reappears, as the frame-tale's elderly narrators recall other voices and other rooms:

... the end of life so nigh,
The aim so little, and the joy so vain....

See Bellas, 46-54; Boos, 69-72; Calhoun, 129-33; Kirchhoff (1990), 158-59; Oberg, 62-64.

Manuscripts:

No early drafts of "Atalanta's Race" are extant, though the title was listed among the tales "in preparation" at the end of The Life and Death of Jason. The fair copy for the printer is in Huntington Library MS 4618.

"Atalanta" is absent from May Morris's list of the quarto manuscript drafts Morris prepared sometime between the summer of 1867 and the appearance of the first volume of The Earthly Paradise in April, 1868.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

The Argument.

ATALANTA, DAUGHTER OF KING SCHOENEUS, NOT WILLING TO LOSE HER VIRGIN'S ESTATE, MADE IT A LAW TO ALL SUITORS THAT THEY SHOULD RUN A RACE WITH HER IN THE PUBLIC PLACE, AND IF THEY FAILED TO OVERCOME HER SHOULD DIE UNREVENGEED; AND THUS MANY BRAVE MEN PERISHED. AT LAST CAME MILANION, THE SON OF AMPHIDAMAS, WHO OUTRUNNING HER WITH THE HELP OF VENUS, GAINED THE VIRGIN AND WEDDED HER.

HROUGH thick Arcadian woods
a hunter went,
Following the beasts up, on a fresh spring day;
But since his horn-tipped bow1 but seldom bent,
Now at the noontide nought had happed to slay,
Within a vale he called his hounds2 away,

Hearkening the echoes of his lone voice cling
About the cliffs and through the beech-trees ring.

But when they ended, still awhile he stood,
And but the sweet familiar thrush3 could hear,

1horn-tipped bow: a bow made of curved antelope-horns and joined in the middle by an arc of metal, known throughout the ancient world as "the Greek bow" (P. Hueffer, The Life of the Greeks and Romans 247).
2hounds: Xenophon (Scripta Minor, trans. Merchant, 1968, 377-87), describes three breeds of hunting dogs: the terrier-like Vulpine; the Castorian, a tracker similar to the foxhound; and large Indian deer- and boarhounds.
3thrush: the song-thrush or kichle, often mentioned in Greek writings, including Aristotle's. It was prized more often for its edibility than its song. (N. Douglas, Birds and Beasts of the Greek Anthology, 1928, 76).
And all the day-long noises of the wood,  
And o'er the dry leaves of the vanished year  
His hounds' feet pattering as they drew anear,  
And heavy breathing from their heads low hung,  
To see the mighty cornel bow unstrung.

Then smiling did he turn to leave the place,  
But with his first step some new fleeting thought  
A shadow cast across his sun-burnt face;  
I think the golden net that April brought  
From some warm world his wavering soul had caught;  
For, sunk in vague sweet longing, did he go  
Betwixt the trees with doubtful steps and slow.  

Yet howsoever slow he went, at last  
The trees grew sparser, and the wood was done;  
Whereon one farewell backward look he cast,  
Then, turning round to see what place was won,  
With shaded eyes looked underneath the sun,  
And o'er green meads and new-turned furrows brown  
Beheld the gleaming of King Schoeneus' town.

So thitherward he turned, and on each side  
The folk were busy on the teeming land,  
And man and maid from the brown furrows cried,  
Or midst the newly-blossomed vines did stand,  
And as the rustic weapon pressed the hand  
Thought of the nodding of the well-filled ear,  
Or how the knife the heavy bunch should shear.

Merry it was: about him sang the birds,  
The spring flowers bloomed along the firm dry road,  
The sleek-skinned mothers of the sharp-horned herds

4doubtful steps and slow: compare Paradise Lost X, 648-49: "They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow/ Through Eden took their solitary way." Milamion is leaving the earthly paradise of his forest for a less pristine world of hierarchy and injustice, but also potential love.

5sharp-horned herds: The Greeks actually consumed relatively little milk or butter, and raised cattle mainly as draft animals. (W. Huiitland, Agricola, 1921, 16).

6death-bearing arrows: Apollo's anger could bring plagues, as in Book I of the Iliad, and otherwise-inexplicable deaths were sometimes attributed to his arrows.

7Fleet-foot One: probably Diana, to whom Ovid gives the epithet "swift." As the moon-goddess, she is often portrayed in images of silver (Acts 21:24 speaks of "a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of
A brazen altar stood beneath their feet
Whereon a thin flame flickered in the wind,
Nigh this a herald clad in raiment meet
Made ready even now his horn to wind,
By whom a huge man held a sword,\(^8\) entwined
With yellow flowers; these stood a little space
From off the altar, nigh the starting-place.

And there two runners\(^9\) did the sign abide,
Foot set to foot: a young man slim and fair,
Crisp-haired, well knit, with firm limbs often tried
In places where no man his strength may spare;
Dainty his thin coat was, and on his hair
A golden circlet of renown he wore,
And in his hand an olive garland bore.

But on this day with whom shall he contend?
A maid stood by him like Diana clad
When in the woods she lists her bow to bend,
Too fair for one to look on and be glad,
Who scarcely yet has thirty summers had,
If he must still behold her from afar;
Too fair to let the world live free from war.\(^10\)

She seemed all earthly matters to forget;
Of all tormenting lines her face was clear,
Her wide grey eyes\(^{11}\) upon the goal were set

Artemis\(^{11}\)).

\(^8\) a huge man held a sword: In Apollodorus and Lemprière, Atalanta ran armed, gave the suitors a head start, and immediately killed all she overtook. Morris makes Atalanta less martial, and transfers responsibility for her murders to the public execution.

\(^9\) two runners: Ovid's Atalanta ran against many suitors at once. Morris mitigates the resulting carnage, and heightens the personal and romantic qualities of Milanion's quest.

\(^10\) free from war: This is an allusion to Helen's supposed role in the Trojan War, which Morris also treated in his unpublished early fragment "Scenes from the Fall of Troy," and in "The Death of Paris," the Earthly Paradise classical

Atalanta's Race

Calm and unmoved as though no soul were near;
But her foe trembled as a man in fear,
Nor from her loveliness one moment turned
His anxious face with fierce desire that burned.

Now through the hush there broke the trumpet's clang
Just as the setting sun made eventide.
Then from light feet a spurt of dust there sprang,
And swiftly were they running side by side;
But silent did the thronging folk abide
Until the turning-post was reached at last,
And round about it still abreast they passed.

But when the people saw how close they ran,
When half-way to the starting-point they were,
A cry of joy broke forth, whereat the man
Headed the white-foot runner, and drew near
Unto the very end of all his fear;
And scarce his straining feet the ground could feel,
And bliss unhoped for o'er his heart 'gan steal.

But midst the loud victorious shouts he heard
Her footsteps drawing nearer, and the sound
Of fluttering raiment, and thereat afeard
His flushed and eager face he turned around,
And even then he felt her past him bound
Fleet as the wind, but scarcely saw her there
Till on the goal she laid her fingers fair.

There stood she breathing like a little child
Amid some warlike clamour laid asleep,
For no victorious joy her red lips smiled,
Her cheek its wonted freshness did but keep;
No glance lit up her clear grey eyes and deep,
Though some divine thought softened all her face,
As once more rang the trumpet through the place.

But her late foe stopped short amidst his course,
One moment gazed upon her piteously,
Then with a groan his lingering feet did force
To leave the spot whence her eyes could see;
And, changed like one who knows his time must be
But short and bitter, without any word
He knelt before the bearer of the sword;

Then high rose up the gleaming deadly blade,
Bared of its flowers, and through the crowded place
Was silence now, and midst of it the maid
Went by the poor wretch at a gentle pace,
And he to hers upturned his sad white face;
Nor did his eyes behold another sight
Ere on his soul there fell eternal night.

O was the pageant ended, and all folk
Talking of this and that familiar thing
In little groups from that sad concourse broke,
For now the shrill bats were upon the wing,
And soon dark night would slay the evening,
And in dark gardens sang the nightingale
Her little-heeded, oft-repeated tale.

the Greek word for "grey" implied keenness and shining clarity.
12softened all her face: Morris's Atalanta, like the classical gods, is heedless because she lacks human emotions. In Ovid, by contrast, Atalanta's behavior is partly excused by an oracle warning that she will "lose herself" in marriage, and when the newly-married Atalanta and Milanius later engage in sexual intercourse in Cybele's temple, the goddess turns them into lions.
13shrill bats: The bat, nycteris, was well-known in ancient Greek literature.
14soft-repeated tale: According to Hyginus's Fables and Roman mythological handbooks, the nightingale, Philomela, was a transformed princess, whose brother-in-law Tereus had raped and imprisoned her and cut out her tongue to avert denunciation to his wife, Philomela's sister Procne. Procne nevertheless discovered the crime, and in concert with Philomela murdered Tereus's son Itys, and served the corpse to him at a banquet. When Tereus in turn learned what he had eaten, he tried to kill the sisters, whereupon the gods intervened and transformed them all into birds. What is to be "heeded" in the nightingale's song in Morris's text is probably a warning against tyranny and slaughter of the innocent.
15in the wood: Exposure (abandonment) of infants—mostly girls—was accepted practice in classical Greece, and recommended in a passage of Plato's Republic. According to a 3 B.C. fragment of Posidippus, "Sons are always brought up somehow, even in the poorest family; girls are always exposed, even by the well-to-do."
16root-grubbing bear: Morris found this rationale for Atalanta's inhumanity in Apollodorus.
17shapeless cubs: The belief was recorded in the middle ages that bear cubs are born as boneless lumps, and given animal form by their mother's tongue. (T. H.
In course of time the woodfolk slew her nurse,  
And to their rude abode the youngling brought,  
And reared her up to be a kingdom's curse,  
Who grown a woman, of no kingdom thought,  
But armed and swift, 'mid beasts destruction wrought,  
Nor spared two shaggy centaur kings* to slay  
To whom her body seemed an easy prey.

So to this city, led by fate, she came,  
Whom known by signs,19 whereof I cannot tell,  
King Schoeneus for his child at last did claim,  
Nor otherwhere since that day doth she dwell  
Sending too many a noble soul to hell:  
What! thine eyes glisten! what then, thinkest thou  
Her shining head unto the yoke to bow?

Listen, my son, and love some other maid,  
For she the saffron20 gown will never wear,  
And on no flower-strewed couch shall she be laid,  
Nor shall her voice make glad a lover's ear:  
Yet if of Death thou hast not any fear,  
Yea, rather, if thou lov'st him utterly,  
Thou still may'st woo her ere thou com'st to die,

Like him that on this day thou sawest lie dead;  
For, fearing as I deem the sea-born one,21  
The maid has vowed e'en such a man to wed  
As in the course her swift feet can outrun,  
But whoseo fails herein, his days are done:  
He came the nightest that was slain to-day,  
Although with him I deem she did but play.

18centaur kings: "Rhoeus" and "Hyleus" in Apollodorus (II, 190). Ovid mentioned a different version, in which Milanian rescues Atalanta from Hyleus.
19know by signs: the "signs" themselves are unknown, but recognition of long-lost family members was a popular theme in classical mythology.
But none of all these things, or life, seemed good
Unto his heart, where still unsatisfied
A ravenous longing warred with fear and pride.

Therefore it happed when but a month had gone
Since he had left King Schoeneus' city old,
In hunting-gear again, again alone
The forest-bordered meads did he behold,
Where still mid thoughts of August's quivering gold
Folk hoed the wheat, and clipped the vine in trust
Of faint October's purple-foaming must.\(^{25}\)

And once again he passed the peaceful gate,
While to his beating heart his lips did lie,
That owning not victorious love and fate,
Said, half aloud: And here too must I try,
To win of alien men the mastery,
And gather for my head fresh meed of fame
And cast new glory on my father's name.

In spite of that, how beat his heart, when first
Folk said to him: And art thou come to see
That which still makes our city's name accurst
Among all mothers for its cruelty?
Then know indeed that fate is good to thee
Because to-morrow a new luckless one
Against the whitefoot maid is pledged to run.

So on the morrow with no curious eyes
As once he did, that piteous sight he saw,
Nor did that wonder in his heart arise
As toward the goal the conquering maid 'gan draw,
Nor did he gaze upon her eyes with awe,
Too full the pain of longing filled his heart
For fear or wonder there to have a part.

But O, how long the night was ere it went!
How long it was before the dawn begun
Showed to the wakening birds the sun's intent
That not in darkness should the world be done!
And then, and then, how long before the sun
Bade silently the toilers of the earth
Get forth to fruitless cares or empty mirth!

And long it seemed that in the market-place
He stood and saw the chattering folk go by,
Ere from the ivory throne King Schoeneus' face
Looked down upon the murmur royally,
But then came trembling that the time was nigh
When he midst pitying looks his love must claim,
And jeering voices must salute his name.

But as the thronch he pierced to gain the throne,
His alien face distraught and anxious told
What hopeless errand he was bound upon,
And, each to each, folk whispered to behold
His godlike limbs; nay, and one woman old\(^{26}\)
As he went by must pluck him by the sleeve
And pray him yet that wretched love to leave.

For sidling up she said: Canst thou live twice,
Fair son? canst thou have joyful youth again,
That thus thou goest to the sacrifice
Thyself the victim? nay then, all in vain
Thy mother bore her longing and her pain,
And one more maiden on the earth must dwell
Hopeless of joy, nor fearing death and hell.

O, fool, thou knowest not the compact then
That with the threeformed goddess\(^{27}\) she has made

25 purple-foaming must: must is incompletely fermented wine.
26and one woman old: perhaps Diana in disguise, serving as Atalanta's tutelary spirit. This old woman does not appear in any of the sources, and in Ovid's text,
To keep her from the loving lips of men,
And in no saffron gown to be arrayed,
And therewithal with glory to be paid,
And love of her the moonlit river sees
White 'gainst the shadow of the formless trees.

Come back, and I myself will pray for thee
Unto the sea-born framer of delights,
To give thee her who on the earth may be
The fairest stirrer up to death and fights,
To quench with hopeful days and joyous nights
The flame that doth thy youthful heart consume:
Come back, nor give thy beauty to the tomb.

How should he listen to her earnest speech?
Words, such as he not once or twice had said
Unto himself, whose meaning scarce could reach
The firm abode of that sad hardihead.
He turned about, and through the marketstreet
Swiftly he passed, until before the throne
In the cleared space he stood at last alone.

Then said the King: Stranger, what dost thou here?
Have any of my folk done ill to thee?
Or art thou of the forest men in fear?
Or art thou of the sad fraternity
Who still will strive my daughter's mates to be,
Staking their lives to win to earthly bliss
The lonely maid, the friend of Artemis?

Atalanta herself advises Milanion to court someone else.
27threeformed goddess: In classical mythology, Diana is a composite
"threeformed goddess": Selene, queen of the moon; Artemis, the maiden
huntress; and Hecate, artificer and goddess of death.
28her the moonlit river seen: Diana as moon-goddess.
29sad hardihead: grim determination.
30marketstead: marketplace.
31earthly bliss: Atalanta does not share the suitors' view of marriage as an
"earthly paradise."

O King, he said, thou sayest the word indeed;
Nor will I quit the strife till I have won
My sweet delight, or death to end my need.
And know that I am called Milanion,
Of King Amphidamas the well-loved son:
So fear not that to thy old name, O King,
Much loss or shame my victory will bring.

Nay, Prince, said Schoeneus, welcome to this land
Thou wert indeed, if thou wert here to try
Thy strength 'gainst some one mighty of his hand;
Nor would we grudge thee well-won mastery.
But now, why wilt thou come to me to die,
And at my door lay down thy luckless head,
Swelling the band of the unhappy dead,

Whose curses even now my heart doth fear?
Lo, I am old, and know what life can be,
And what a bitter thing is death anear,
O Soul! be wise, and hearken unto me,
And if no other can be dear to thee,
At least as now, yet is the world full wide,
And bliss in seeming hopeless hearts may hide:

But if thou losest life, then all is lost.
Nay, King, Milanion said, thy words are vain.
Doubt not that I have counted well the cost.
But say, on what day wilt thou that I gain
Fulfilled delight, or death to end my pain?
Right glad were I if it could be to-day,
And all my doubts at rest for ever lay.

Nay, said King Schoeneus, thus it shall not be,
But rather shalt thou let a month go by,
And weary with thy prayers for victory
What god thou know'st the kindest and most nigh.
So doing, still perchance thou shalt not die:
And with my goodwill wouldst thou have the maid,
For of the equal gods I grow afraid. 33

And until then, O Prince, be thou my guest,
And all these troublous things awhile forget.
Nay, said he, couldst thou give my soul good rest,
And on mine head a sleepy garland set;
Then had I scaped the meshes of the net,
Nor shouldst thou hear from me another word;
But now, make sharp thy fearful heading-sword. 34

Yet will I do what son of man may do,
And promise all the gods may most desire,
That to myself I may at least be true;
And on that day my heart and limbs so tire,
With utmost strain and measureless desire,
That, at the worst, I may but fall asleep
When in the sunlight round that sword shall sweep.

He went therewith, nor anywhere would bide,
But unto Argos restlessly did wend;
And there, as one who lays all hope aside,
Because the leech has said his life must end,
Silent farewell he bade to foe and friend,
And took his way unto the restless sea,
For there he deemed his rest and help might be.

...
And bowls inscribed with sayings of the wise
Above the deeds of foolish living things;
And mirrors fit to be the gifts of kings.

And now before the Sea-born One he stands,
By the sweet veiling smoke made dim and soft,
And while the incense trickles from his hands,
And while the odorous smoke-wreaths hang aloft,
Thus doth he pray to her: O Thou, who oft
Hast holpen man and maid in their distress,
Despise me not for this my wretchedness!

O goddess, among us who dwell below,
Kings and great men, great for a little while,
Have pity on the lowly heads that bow,
Nor hate the hearts that love them without guile;
Wilt thou be worse than these, and is thy smile
A vain device of him who set thee here,
An empty dream of some artificer?

O great one, some men love, and are ashamed;
Some men are weary of the bonds of love;
Yea, and by some men lightly art thou blamed,
That from thy toils their lives they cannot move,
And 'mid the ranks of men their manhood prove.
Alas! O goddess, if thou slayest me
What new immortal can I serve but thee?

Think then, will it bring honour to thy head
If folk say: Everything aside he cast
And to all fame and honour was he dead,
And to his one hope now is dead at last,
Since all unholpen he is gone and past:
Ah, the gods love not man, for certainly,
He to his helper did not cease to cry.

Nay, but thou wilt help; they who died before
Not single-hearted as I deem came here,
Therefore unthanked they laid their gifts before
Thy stainless feet, still shivering with their fear,
Lest in their eyes their true thought might appear,
Who sought to be the lords of that fair town,
Dreaded of men and women of renown.

O Queen, thou knowest I pray not for this:
O set us down together in some place
Where not a voice can break our heaven of bliss,
Where nought but rocks and I can see her face,
Softening beneath the marvel of thy grace,
Where not a foot our vanished steps can track:
The golden age, the golden age come back!

O fairest, hear me now who do thy will,
Plead for thy rebel that she be not slain,
But live and love and be thy servant still;
Ah, give her joy and take away my pain,
And thus two long-enduring servants gain.
An easy thing this is to do for me,
What need of my vain words to weary thee!

But none the less, this place will I not leave
Until I needs must go my death to meet,
Or at thy hands some happy sign receive
That in great joy we twain may one day greet
Thy presence here and kiss thy silver feet,
Such as we deem thee, fair beyond all words,
Victorious o'er our servants and our lords. 43

Then from the altar back a space he drew,
But from the Queen turned not his face away,

Eve of St. Agnes*).

43our lorde Morris adds the night watch in the temple, an analogue of the church vigils of young men about to be knighted.
But from a pillar leaned, until the blue
That arched the sky, at ending of the day,
Was turned to ruddy gold and changing grey,
And clear, but low, the nigh-ebbed windless sea
In the still evening murmured ceaselessly.

And there he stood when all the sun was down,
Nor had he moved, when the dim golden light,
Like the far lustre of a godlike town,
Had left the world to seeming hopeless night,
Nor would he move the more when wan moonlight
Streamed through the pillars for a little while,
And lighted up the white Queen's changeless smile.

Nought noted he the shallow-flowing sea
As step by step it set the wrack a-swim;
The yellow torchlight nothing noted he
Wherein with fluttering gown and half-bared limb
The temple damsels sung their midnight hymn;
And nought the doubled stillness of the fane
When they were gone and all was hushed again.

But when the waves had touched the marble base,
And steps the fish swim over twice a-day,
The dawn beheld him sunken in his place
Upon the floor; and sleeping there he lay,
Not heeding aught the little jets of spray
The roughened sea brought nigh, across him cast,
For as one dead all thought from him had passed.

Yet long before the sun had showed his head,
Long ere the varied hangings on the wall
Had gained once more their blue and green and red,
He rose as one some well-known sign doth call
When war upon the city's gates doth fall,
And scarce like one fresh risen out of sleep,
He 'gan again his broken watch to keep.

Then he turned round; not for the sea-gull's cry
That wheeled above the temple in his flight,
Not for the fresh south wind that lovingly
Breathed on the new-born day and dying night,
But some strange hope 'twixt fear and great delight
Drew round his face, now flushed, now pale and wan,
And still constrained his eyes the sea to scan.

Now a faint light lit up the southern sky,
Not sun or moon, for all the world was grey,
But this a bright cloud seemed, that drew anigh,
Lighting the dull waves that beneath it lay
As toward the temple still it took its way,
And still grew greater, till Milanion
Saw nought for dazzling light that round him shone.

But as he staggered with his arms outspread,
Delicious unnamed odours breathed around;
For languid happiness he bowed his head,
And with wet eyes sank down upon the ground,
Nor wished for aught, nor any dream he found
To give him reason for that happiness,
Or make him ask more knowledge of his bliss.

At last his eyes were cleared, and he could see
Through happy tears the goddess face to face
With that faint image of Divinity,
Whose well-wrought smile and dainty changeless grace
Until that morn so gladdened all the place;
Then he, unwriting, cried aloud her name
And covered up his eyes for fear and shame.

But through the stillness her voice could hear
Piercing his heart with joy scarce bearable,
That said: Milanion, wherefore dost thou fear?
I am not hard to those who love me well;
List to what I a second time will tell,
And thou mayest hear perchance, and live to save
The cruel maiden from a loveless grave.

See, by my feet three golden apples lie;
Such fruit among the heavy roses falls,
Such fruit my watchful damsels carefully
Store up within the best loved of my walls,
Ancient Damascus, where the lover calls
Above my unseen head, and faint and light
The rose-leaves flutter round me in the night.

And note, that these are not alone most fair
With heavenly gold, but longing strange they bring
Unto the hearts of men, who will not care,
Beholding these, for any once-loved thing
Till round the shining sides their fingers cling.
And thou shalt see thy well-girt swiftfoot maid
By sight of these amidst her glory stayed.

For bearing these within a scrip 45 with thee,
When first she heads thee from the starting-place
Cast down the first one for her eyes to see,
And when she turns aside make on space,
And if again she heads thee in the race
Spare not the other two to cast aside
If she not long enough behind will bide.

Farewell, and when has come the happy time
That she Diana's raiment must unbind
And all the world seems blessed with Saturn's clime 46
And thou with eager arms about her twined

Beholdest first her grey eyes growing kind,
Surely, O trembler, thou shalt scarcely then
Forget the Helper of unhappy men.

Milanion raised his head at this last word,
For now so soft and kind she seemed to be
No longer of her Godhead was he feared;
Too late he looked; for nothing could he see
But the white image glimmering doubtfully
In the departing twilight cold and grey,
And those three apples on the steps that lay.

These then he caught up quivering with delight,
Yet fearful lest it all might be a dream;
And though aweary with the watchful night,
And sleepless nights of longing, still did deem
He could not sleep, but yet the first sunbeam
That smote the fane across the heaving deep
Shone on him laid in calm untroubled sleep.

But little ere the noontide did he rise,
And why he felt so happy scarce could tell
Until the gleaming apples met his eyes.
Then leaving the fair place where this befell
Oft he looked back as one who loved it well,
Then homeward to the haunts of men 'gan wend
To bring all things unto a happy end.

OW has the lingering month at last gone by,
Again are all folk round the running-place,
Nor other seems the dismal pageantry
Than heretofore, but that another face
Looks o'er the smooth course ready for the race;
For now, beheld of all, Milanion
Stands on the spot he twice has looked upon.

(according to Hesiod and other sources) by Saturn.

44Ancient Damascus: Damascus was known in the ancient world for its fruit and flowers, and there is some evidence that Venus/Aphrodite may have been imported from Cypriot or Syrian sources into the Greek pantheon.
45scrip: here, a small bag or wallet carried by travelers.
46Saturn's clime: the element weather of the world's first, "golden" age, ruled
But yet... what change is this that holds the maid? Does she indeed see in his glittering eye More than disdain of the sharp shearing blade, Some happy hope of help and victory? The others seemed to say: We come to die, Look down upon us for a little while, That dead, we may bethink of us thy smile.

But he... What look of mastery was this He cast on her? why were his lips so red? Why was his face so flushed with happiness? So looks not one who deems himself but dead, E'en if to death he bows a willing head; So rather looks a god well pleased to find Some earthly damsel fashioned to his mind.

Why must she drop her lids before his gaze, And even as she casts adown her eyes Redden to note his eager glance of praise, And wish that she were clad in other guise? Why must the memory to her heart arise Of things unnotic'd when they first were heard, Some lover's song, some answering maiden's word?

What makes these longings, vague, without a name, And this vain pity never felt before, This sudden languor, this contempt of fame, This tender sorrow for the time past o'er, These doubts that grow each minute more and more? Why does she tremble as the time grows near, And weak defeat and woeful victory fear?

Now while she seemed to hear her beating heart,

47 look of mastery: Atalanta's downcast eyes, trembling, and blushing are conventional Victorian concomitants of feminine "love," in which public victory, honor, and achievement are "woeful" to her.

Above their heads the trumpet blast rang out And forth they sprang; and she must play her part. Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt, Though slackening once, she turned her head about, But then she cried aloud and faster fled Than e'er before, and all men deemed him dead.

But with no sound he raised aloft his hand, And thence what seemed a ray of light there flew And past the maid rolled on along the sand; Then trembling she her feet together drew And in her heart a strong desire there grew To have the toy; a some god she thought had given That gift to her, to make of earth a heaven.

Then from the course with eager steps she ran, And in her odorous bosom laid the gold. But when she turned again, the great- limbed man Now well ahead she failed not to behold, And mindful of her glory waxing cold, Sprang up and followed him in hot pursuit, Though with one hand she touched the golden fruit.

Note too, the bow that she was wont to bear She laid aside to grasp the glittering prize, And o'er her shoulder from the quiver fair Three arrows fell a and lay before her eyes Unnoticed, as amidst the people's cries She sprang to head the strong Milanion, Who now the turning-post had well-nigh won.

But as he set his mighty hand on it White fingers underneath his own were laid, And white limbs from his dazzled eyes did flit,

48 toy: a wry allusion, perhaps, to the apple's role in the 'fall' of Eve.
49 Three arrows fell: a mark of the abandonment of her relationship with Diana, goddess of hunting and chastity.
Then he the second fruit cast by the maid:
She ran awhile, and then as one afraid
Wavered and stopped, and turned and made no stay,
Until the globe with its bright fellow lay.

Then, as a troubled glance she cast around
Now far ahead the Argive could she see,
And in her garment's hem one hand she wound
To keep the double prize, and strenuously
Sped o'er the course, and little doubt had she.
To win the day, though now but scanty space
Was left betwixt him and the winning place.

Short was the way unto such winged feet,
Quickly she gained upon him till at last
He turned about her eager eyes to meet
And from his hand the third fair apple cast.
She wavered not, but turned and ran so fast
After the prize that should her bliss fulfil,
That in her hand it lay ere it was still.

Nor did she rest, but turned about to win
Once more, an unblest woeful victory:
And yet; and yet; why does her breath begin
To fail her, and her feet drag heavily?
Why fails she now to see if far or nigh
The goal is; why do her grey eyes grow dim?
Why do these temors run through every limb?

She spreads her arms abroad some stay to find
Else must she fall, indeed, and findeth this,
A strong man's arms about her body twined.
Nor may she shudder now to feel his kiss,
So wrapped she is in new unbroken bliss:
Made happy that the foe the prize hath won,

She weeps glad tears for all her glory done.

HATTER the trumpet, hew
adown the posts!
Upon the brazen altar break the sword,
And scatter incense to appease the ghosts
Of those who died here by their own award.
Bring forth the image of the mighty Lord,51
And her who unseen o'er the runners hung,52
And did a deed for ever to be sung.

Here are the gathered folk; make no delay.
Open King Schoeneus' well-filled treasury,
Bring out the gifts long hid from light of day,
The golden bowls o'erwrought with imagery,
Gold chains, and unguents brought from over sea,
The saffron gown the old Phoenician53 brought,
Within the temple of the Goddess wrought.

O ye, O damsels, who shall never see
Her, that love's servant bringeth now to you,
Returning from another victory,54
In some cool bower do all that now is due!
Since she in token of her service new
Shall give to Venus offerings rich and new,
Her maiden zone,55 her arrows, and her bow.

desire"; Venus also makes them preternaturally heavy.
51mighty Lord: either Cupid, god of Love, or Zeus, king of the gods.
52runners hung: In Ovid, Venus hovers invisibly over the race, as a force of
nature that can (sometimes) reconcile differences and end violent cycles of
revenge.
53Phoenician: Renowned seafarers and traders of the ancient world, the
Phoenicians were well-known for the manufacture and sale of fine cloth and
dyes.
54victory: note this inversion of the normal associations of "victory."
55zone: wash, belt, or girdle, a symbol of virginity.
O when his last word's echo died away, March
The growing wind at end of that wild day
Alone they heard, for silence bound
them all;
Yea, on their hearts a weight had seemed to fall,
As unto the scarce-hoped felicity
The tale grew round; the end of life so nigh,
The aim so little, and the joy so vain;
For as a child's unmeasured joy brings pain
Unto a grown man holding grief at bay,
So the old fervent story of that day
Brought pain half-sweet, to these: till now the fire
Upon the hearth sent up a flickering spire
Of ruddy flame, as fell the burned-through logs,
And, waked by sudden silence, grey old dogs,
The friends of this or that man, rose and fawned
On hands they knew; withal once more there dawned
The light of common day on those old hearts,
And all were ready now to play their parts,
And take what feebler joy might yet remain
In place of all they once had hoped to gain.

OW on the second day that these did meet
March was a-dying through soft days
and sweet,
Too hopeful for the wild days yet to be;
But in the hall that ancient company,
Not lacking younger folk that day at least,
Softened by spring were gathered at the feast,
And as the time drew on, throughout the hall
A horn was sounded, giving note to all
That they at last the looked-for tale should hear.

THEN spake a Wanderer: O kind hosts and dear,
Hearken a little unto such a tale
As folk with us will tell in every vale
About the yule-tide fire, whenas the snow
Deep in the passes, leteth men to go
From place to place: now there few great folk be,
Although we upland men have memory
Of ills kings did us; yet as now indeed
Few have much wealth, few are in utter need.
Like the wise ants a kingless, happy folk
We long have been, not galled by any yoke,
But the white leaguer of the winter tide
Whereby all men at home are bound to ride.
Alas, my folly! how I talk of it,
As though from this place where to-day we sit
The way thereto were short. Ah, would to God
Upon the snow-freed herbage now I trod!
But pardon, sirs; the time goes swiftly by,
Hearken a tale of conquering destiny.

1 upland men: Morris's Norwegian mariners tend to like tales in which tyrants are chastened or rebuked.
3 winter tide: the "leaguer" or "siege" of heavy snows, the only restraint imposed on these kingless northmen.