Alcestis is initially another of Morris's gentle suffering heroines, and a certain sadness and bitterness linger in the 'womanly' self-effacement of her sacrifice and the tale's suggestion that moral and physical victories may be mutually exclusive. She does act, however, and her ambivalence and sorrow express a realism and amour propre usually absent from Morris's more saintlike women lovers.

The frame-tales' auditors, at any rate, are deeply moved. Admetus may have 'overcome' death within the tale, but Alcestis's courage gains a deeper immortality in its retelling. Such retellings have for a moment the power to mitigate the twin miseries of separation and death:

Scarce their own lives seemed to touch them more
Than that dead Queen's beside Boebeis' shore.

See Bellas, 97-110; Boos, 90-94; Calhoun, 161-68; Kirchhoff (1990), 165-66; Oberg, 47, 55; Silver, 69, 72.

Manuscripts:

No early drafts remain, and "The Love of Alcestis" is not included in May Morris's list of early drafts. Huntington Library MS 6418 contains the fair copy for the printer.

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THE LOVE OF ALCESTIS.

The Argument.

ADMETUS, KING OF PHERAE, IN THESSALY, RECEIVED UNWITTINGLY APOLLO AS HIS SERVANT, BY THE HELP OF WHOM HE WON TO WIFE ALCESTIS, DAUGHTER OF PELIAS. AFTERWARDS TOO, AS IN OTHER THINGS, SO PRINCIPALLY IN THIS, APOLLO GAVE HIM HELP, THAT WHEN HE CAME TO DIE, HE OBTAINED OF THE FATES FOR HIM, THAT IF ANOTHER WOULD DIE WILLINGLY IN HIS STEAD, THEN HE SHOULD LIVE STILL; AND WHEN TO EVERY ONE ELSE THIS SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE, ALCESTIS GAVE HER LIFE FOR HER HUSBAND'S.

DIST SUNNY grass-clad meads that
slop adown
To lake Boebeis' stands an ancient town
Where dwelt of old a lord of Thessaly,
The son of Pheres and fair Clymene,
Who had to name Admetus: long ago
The dwellers by the lake have ceased to know
His name, because the world grows old; but then
He was accounted great among great men;
Young, strong, and godlike, lacking nought at all
Of gifts that unto royal men might fall
In those old simple days, before men went
To gather unseen harm and discontent,
Along with all the alien merchandise

1 Boebeis: a lake near Mount Ossa in Thessaly, a region of northeastern Greece. The unnamed town is Pherae.
2 He was accounted great among great men: Unlike earlier authors, Morris makes Admetus a relatively worthy king, and suggests that his happiness and prosperity are merited. Euripides, by contrast, calls him "spoiled."

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[Note: The document continues with additional text.]
That rich folk need, too restless to be wise.
NOW on the fairest of all autumn eves,
When midst the dusty, crumpled, dying leaves
The black grapes showed, and every press and vat
Was newly scoured, this King Admetus sat
Among his people, wearied in such wise
By hopeful toil as makes a paradise
Of the rich earth; for light and far away
Seemed all the labour of the coming day,
And no man wished for more than then he had,
Nor with another's mourning was made glad.
There in the pillared porch, their supper done,
They watched the fair departings of the sun;
The while the soft-eyed well-girt maidens poured
The joy of life from out the jars long stored
Deep in the earth, while little like a king,
As we call kings, but glad with everything,
The wise Thessalian sat and blessed his life,
So free from sickening fear and foolish strife.
BUT midst the joy of this festivity,
Turning aside he saw a man draw nigh,
Along the dusty grey vine-bordered road
That had its ending at his fair abode;
He seemed e'en from afar to set his face
Unto the King's adorn'd reverend place,
And like a traveller went he wearily,
And yet as one who seems his rest to see.
A staff he bore, but nowise was he bent
With script or wallet; so withal he went
Straight to the King's high seat, and standing near,
Seemed a stout youth and noble, free from fear,
But peaceful and unarmed; and though ill clad,
And though the dust of that hot land he had
Upon his limbs and face, as fair was he
As any king's son you might lightly see.

Grey-eyed and crisp-haired, beautiful of limb,
And no ill eye the women cast on him.
BUT kneeling now, and stretching forth his hand,
He said: O thou, the king of this fair land,
Unto a banished man some shelter give,
And help me with thy goods that I may live:
Thou hast good store, Admetus, yet may I,
Who kneel before thee now in misery,
Give thee more gifts before the end shall come
Than all thou hast laid safely in thine home.
RISE up, and be my guest, Admetus said,
I need no gifts for this poor gift of bread,
The land is wide, and bountiful snow.
What thou canst do, to-morrow thou shalt show,
And be my man, perchance; but this night rest
Not questioned more than any passing guest.
Yea, even if a great king thou hast spilt,¹
Thou shalt not answer aught but as thou wilt.
THEN the man rose and said: O King, indeed
Of thine awarded silence have I need;
Nameless I am, nameless what I have done
Must be through many circles of the sun.
But for to-morrow: let me rather tell
On this same eve what things I can do well,
And let me put mine hand in thine and swear
To serve thee faithfully a changing year;
Nor think the woods of Ossa hold one beast
That of thy tenderest yearling shall make feast,
Whiles that I guard thy flocks; and thou shalt bear
Thy troubles easier when thou com'st to hear
The music I can make. Let these thy men
Witness against me if I fail thee, when
War falls upon the lovely land and thee.
THEN the King smiled, and said: So let it be;
Well shalt thou serve me, doing far less than this.

¹script: small wallet or moneybag.
²spilt: destroyed.
He drew out from the rigid-seeming lyre,
And made the circle round the winter fire
More like to heaven than gardens of the May.
So many a heavy thought he chased away
From the King’s heart, and softened many a hate,
And choked the spring of many a harsh debate;
And, taught by wounds, the snatchers of the wolds
Lurked round the gates of less well-guarded folds.
Therefore Admetus loved him, yet withal
Strange doubts and fears upon his heart did fall;
For morns there were when he the man would meet,
His hair wreathed round with bay and blossoms sweet,
Gazing distraught into the brightening east,
Nor taking heed of either man or beast,
Or anything that was upon the earth.
Or sometimes, midst the hottest of the mirth,
Within the King’s hall, would he seem to wake
As from a dream, and his stringed tortoise take
And strike the cords unbidden, till the hall,
Filled with the glorious sound from wall to wall,
Trembled, and seemed as it would melt away,
And sunken down the faces weeping lay
That erewhile laughed the loudest; only he
Stood upright, looking forward steadily
With sparkling eyes as one who cannot weep,
Until the storm of music sank to sleep.
BUT this thing seemed the doubtfulest of all
Unto the King, that should there chance to fall
A festal day, and folk did sacrifice
Unto the gods, ever by some device

Nor for thy service due gifts shalt thou miss:
Behold I take thy faith with thy right hand,
Be thou true man unto this guarded land.
Ho ye! take this my guest, find raiment meet
Wherewith to clothe him; bathe his wearied feet,
And bring him back beside my throne to feast.
But to himself he said: I am the least
Of all Thessalians if this man was born
In any earthly dwelling more forlorn
Than a king’s palace. Then a damsel slim
Led him inside, nought loth to go with him,
And when the cloud of steam had curled to meet
Within the brass his wearied dusty feet,
She from a carved press brought him linen fair,
And a new-woven coat a king might wear,
And so being clad he came unto the feast;
But as he came again, all people ceased
What talk they held soever, for they thought
A very god among them had been brought;
And doubly glad the king Admetus was
At what that dying eve had brought to pass,
And bade him sit by him and feast his fill.
So there they sat till all the world was still,
And ‘twixt the pillars their red torches’ shine
Held forth unto the night a joyous sign.
O henceforth did this man at Phæae dwell,
And what he set his hand to wrought
right well,
And won much praise and love in everything,
And came to rule all herdsmen of the King;
But for two things in chief his fame did grow;
And first that he was better with the bow
Than any ‘twixt Olympus and the sea;
And then that sweet, heart-piercing melody

Olympus: mountain marking the northern border of Thessaly, legendary home of the Greek gods.

wolds: uplands, moors.
less well-guarded folds: Apollo is more pragmatically effective as shepherd here than he is in Euripides’ play, where his music attracts lions and lynxes to the flock (A. P. M. W.).
stringed tortoise: according to myth, Mercury made the first lyre out of a tortoise shell, and gave it to Apollo as a gift.
The man would be away: yet with all this,
His presence doubled all Admetus' bliss,
And happy in all things he seemed to live,
And great gifts to his herdman did he give.
BUT now the year came round again to spring,
And southward to Iolchos went the King;
For there did Pelias hold a sacrifice
Unto the gods, and put forth things of price
For men to strive for in the people's sight;
So on a morn of April, fresh and bright,
Admetus shook the golden-studded reins,
And soon from windings of the sweet-banked lanes
The south wind blew the sound of hoof and wheel,
Clatter of brazen shields and clink of steel,
Unto the herdman's ears, who stood awhile
Hearkening the echoes with a godlike smile,
Then slowly got him foldwards, murmuring:
Fair music for the wooing of a King.
BUT in six days again Admetus came,
With no lost labour or dishonoured name;
A scarlet cloak upon his back he bare,
A gold crown on his head, a falchion fair
Girt to his side; behind him four white steeds,
Whose dams had fed full in Nisaea12 meads;
All prizes that his valiant hands had won
Within the guarded lists of Tyro's son.11
Yet midst the sound of joyous minstrelsy
No joyous man in truth he seemed to be;
So that folk looking on him said: Behold,
The wise King will not show himself too bold

**FALCHION:** a broad curved sword, with its sharp edge on the convex side.

12**Nisaean:** Nisaea, a stretch of grassland in Media, south of the Caspian Sea, was famous for its horses.

11**Tyro's son:** According to myth, Pelias was the son of Tyro and Neptune, god of the sea. Her ghost appears in Hades in the Odyssey, Bk. XI (A. P. M. W.).

Amidst his greatness: the gods too are great,
And who can tell the dreadful ways of fate?
HOWE'ER it was, he got him through the town,
And midst their shouts at last he lighted down
At his own house, and held high feast that night;
And yet by seeming had but small delight
In aught that any man could do or say:
And on the morrow, just at dawn of day,
Rose up and clad himself, and took his spear,
And in the fresh and blossom-scented air
Went wandering till he reached Boebeis' shore;
Yet by his troubled face set little store
By all the songs of birds and scent of flowers;
Yea, rather unto him the fragrant hours
Were grown but dull and empty of delight.
SO going, at the last he came in sight
Of his new herdman, who that morning lay
Close by the white sand of a little bay
The teeming ripple of Boebeis lapped;
There he in cloak of white-wooled sheepskin wrapped
Against the cold dew, free from trouble sang,
The while the heifers' bells about him rang
And mingled with the sweet soft-throated birds
And bright fresh ripple: listen, then, these words
Will tell the tale of his felicity,
Halting and void of music though they be.

**SONG:**

DWELLERS on the lovely earth,
Why will ye break your rest and mirth
To weary us with fruitless prayer;
Why will ye toil and take such care
For children's children yet unborn
And garner store of strife and scorn
To gain a scarce-remembered name,
Cumbered with lies and soiled with shame?
And if the gods care not for you,  
What is this folly ye must do  
To win some mortal’s feeble heart?  
O fools! when each man plays his part,  
And heed his fellow little more  
Than these blue waves that kiss the shore  
Take heed of how the daisies grow.  
O fools! and if ye could but know  
How fair a world to you is given.

O BROODER on the hills of heaven,  
When for my sin thou driv’st me forth,  
Hadst thou forgot what this was worth,  
Thine own hand had made? The tears of men,  
The death of threescore years and ten,  
The trembling of the timorous race;  
Had these things so bedimmed the place  
Thine own hand made, thou couldst not know  
To what a heaven the earth might grow  
If fear beneath the earth were laid,  
If hope failed not, nor love decayed?  
HE stopped, for he beheld his wandering lord,  
Who, drawing near, heard little of his word,  
And noted less; for in that haggard mood  
Nought could he do but o’er his sorrows brood,  
Whate’er they were; but now being come anigh,  
He lifted up his drawn face suddenly,  
And as the singer gat him to his feet,  
His eyes Admetus’ troubled eyes did meet,  
As with some speech he now seemed labouring,  
Which from his heart his lips refused to bring.

Then spoke the herdsman: Master, what is this,  
That thou, returned with honour to the bliss  
The gods have given thee here, still makest show  
To be some wretch bent with the weight of woe?  
What wilt thou have? What help there is in me  
Is wholly thine, for in felicity  
Within thine house thou still hast let me live,  
Nor grudged most noble gifts to me to give.  
YEA, said Admetus, thou canst help indeed,  
But as the spring shower helps the unsown mead.  
Yet listen: at Iolchos the first day  
Unto Diana’s house I took my way,  
Where all men gathered ere the games began;  
There, at the right side of the royal man  
Who rules Iolchos, did his daughter stand,  
Who with a suppliant bough in her right hand  
Headed the band of maidens; but to me  
More than a goddess did she seem to be,  
Nor fit to die; and therewithal I thought  
That we had all been thither called for nought  
But that her bridegroom Pelias might choose,  
And with that thought desire did I let loose,  
And striving not with Love, I gazed my fill,  
As one who will not fear the coming ill:  
Ah, foolish were mine eyes, foolish my heart,  
To strive in such a marvel to have part!  
What god shall wed her rather? no more fear  
Than vexes Pallas vexed her forehead clear,  
Faith shone from out her eyes, and on her lips  
Unknown love trembled; the Phoenician ships

Brooder on the hills of heaven: Zeus, or Jove, king of the gods. The speaker is the god Apollo, banished by Zeus from Mt. Olympus in revenge for the murder of Zeus’s armorers, the Cyclops. A complicated revenge-cycle that sets Apollo against Zeus is central to Euripides’s play, but not to Morris’s tale.

Iolchos: an ancient city near Mount Pelion, noted as the birthplace of Jason.

suppliant: a humble petitioner, in this case, of the gods.
Pallas: Athena.
Phoenician: The Phoenicians were vigorous traders and seafarers in the northeastern Mediterranean.
Within their dark holds nought so precious bring
As her soft golden hair; no daintiest thing
I ever saw was half so wisely wrought
As was her rosy ear; beyond all thought,
All words to tell of, her veiled body showed,
As, by the image of the Three-formed\textsuperscript{a} bowed,
She laid her offering down; then I drawn near
The murmuring of her gentle voice could hear,
As waking one hears music in the morn,
Ere yet the fair June sun is fully born;
And sweeter than the roses fresh with dew
Sweet odours floated round me, as she drew
Some golden thing from out her balmy breast
With her right hand, the while her left hand pressed
The hidden wonders of her girdlestead;\textsuperscript{b}
And when abashed I sank adown my head,
Dreading the God of Love, my eyes must meet
The happy bands about her perfect feet.
What more? thou know'rt perchance what thing love is?
Kindness, and hot desire, and rage, and bliss,
None first a moment; but before that day
No love I knew but what might pass away
When hot desire was changed to certainty,
Or not abide much longer; e'en such stings
Had smitten me, as the first warm day brings
When March is dying; but now half a god
The crowded way unto the lists I trod,
Yet hopeless as a vanquished god at whiles;
And hideous seemed the laughter and the smiles,
And idle talk about me on the way.
BUT none could stand before me on that day,

\textsuperscript{a}Three-formed: The goddess Diana (Artemis in Greek) was also worshipped as Luna (Selene) in the heavens, and Hecate in the underworld.

\textsuperscript{b}girdlestead: waist.

I was as god-possessed, not knowing how
The King had brought her forth but for a show,
To make his glory greater through the land:
Therefore at last victorious did I stand
Among my peers, nor yet one well-known name
Had gathered any honour from my shame.
For there indeed both men of Thessaly,
\textsuperscript{c}Etolians,\textsuperscript{d} Thebans,\textsuperscript{e} dwellers by the sea,
And folk of Attica\textsuperscript{f} and Argolis,\textsuperscript{g}
Arcadian woodmen,\textsuperscript{h} islanders, whose bliss
Is to be tossed about from wave to wave,
All these at last to me the honour gave,
Nor did they grudge it: yea, and one man said,
A wise Thessalian with a snowy head,
And voice grown thin with age: O Pelias,
Surely to thee no evil thing it was
That to thy house this rich Thessalian
Should come, to prove himself a valiant man
Amongst these heroes; for if I be wise
By dint of many years, with wistful eyes
Dost he behold thy daughter, this fair maid;
And surely, if the matter were well weighed,
Good were it both for thee and for the land
That he should take the damsel by the hand
And lead her hence, for ye near neighbours dwell;
What sayest thou, King, have I said ill or well?
WITH that must I, a fool, stand forth and ask
If yet there lay before me some great task

\textsuperscript{c}Etolians: citizens of Aetolia, a region south of Thessaly in northern Greece.

\textsuperscript{d}Thebans: Thebes was the principal city of Boeotia, lying inland and northwest of Attica and its rival city Athens.

\textsuperscript{e}Attica: culturally distinguished region of ancient Greece which lay at the eastern tip of the country's central peninsula.

\textsuperscript{f}Argolis: region in southeastern Greece, formerly the location of Mycenae.

\textsuperscript{g}Arcadian woodmen: In the central Peloponneseus, Arcadia was considered rustic and isolated by the ancient Greeks.
That I must do ere I the maid should wed;
But Pelias, looking on us, smiled and said:
O neighbour of Larissa, and thou too,
O King Admetus, this may seem to you
A little matter; yea, and for my part
E’en such a marriage would make glad my heart;
But we the blood of Salomeus who share
With godlike gifts great burdens also bear,
Nor is this maid without them, for the day
On which her maiden zone she puts away
Shall be her death-day, if she wed with one
By whom this marvelous thing may not be done,
For in the traces neither must steeds paw
Before my threshold, or white oxen draw
The wain that comes my maid to take from me,
Far other beasts that day her slaves must be:
The yellow lion ‘neath the lash must roar,
And by his side unscared, the forest boar
Toil at the draught: what sayest thou then hereto,
O lord of Pherae, wilt thou come to woo
In such a chariot, and win endless fame,
Or turn thine eyes elsewhere with little shame?
WHAT answered I? O herdsman, I was mad
With sweet love and the triumph I had had.
I took my father’s ring from off my hand,
And said: O heroes of the Grecian land,
Be witnesses that on my father’s name
For this man’s promise, do I take the shame
Of this deed undone, if I fail herein;
Fear not, O Pelias, but that I shall win

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This ring from thee, when I shall come again
Through fair Iolchos, driving that strange wain.
Else by this token, thou, O King, shalt have
Pherae my home, while on the tumbling wave
A hollow ship my sad abode shall be.
So driven by some hostile deity,
Such words I said, and with my gifts hard won,
But little valued now, set out upon
My homeward way: but nearer as I drew
To mine abode, and ever fainter grew
In my weak heart the image of my love,
In vain with fear my boastful folly strove;
For I remembered that no god I was
Though I had chanced my fellows to surpass;
And I began to mind me in awhile
What murmur rose, with what a mocking smile
Pelias stretched out his hand to take the ring,
Made by my drunkard’s gift now twice a king:
And when unto my palace-door I came
I had awakened fully to my shame;
For certainly no help is left to me,
But I must get me down unto the sea
And build a keel, and whatsoever things I may
Set in her hold, and cross the watery way
Whither Jove bids, and the rough winds may blow
Unto a land where none my folly know,
And there begin a weary life anew.
EAGER and bright the herdsman’s visage grew
The while this tale was told, and at the end
He said: Admetus, I thy life may mend,
And thou at lovely Pherae still may dwell;
Wait for ten days, and then may all be well,
And thou to fetch thy maiden home may go
And to the King thy team unheard-of show.
And if not, then make ready for the sea,
Nor will I fail indeed to go with thee,
And 'twixt the halyards and the ashen oar
Finish the service well begun ashore;
But meanwhile do I bid thee hope the best;
And take another herdsman for the rest,
For unto Ossa\textsuperscript{a} must I go alone
To do a deed not easy to be done.
THEN springing up he took his spear and bow
And northward by the lake-shore 'gan to go;
But the King gazed upon him as he went,
Then, sighing, turned about, and homeward bent
His lingering steps, and hope began to spring
Within his heart, for some betokening
He seemed about the herdsman now to see
Of one from mortal cares and troubles free.
AND so midst hopes and fears day followed day,
Until at last upon his bed he lay
When the grey, creeping dawn had now begun
To make the wide world ready for the sun
On the tenth day: sleepless had been the night
And now in that first hour of gathering light
For weariness he slept, and dreamed that he
Stood by the border of a fair, calm sea
At point to go a-shipboard, and to leave
Whatever from his sire he did receive
Of land or kingship; and withal he dreamed
That through the cordage a bright light there gleamed
Far off within the east; and nowise sad
He felt at leaving all he might have had,
But rather as a man who goes to see
Some heritage expected patiently.
But when he moved to leave the firm fixed shore,
The windless sea rose high and 'gan to roar,
And from the gangway thrust the ship aside,
Until he hung over a chasm wide

\textsuperscript{a}Ossa: a high mountain in Thessaly.

\textsuperscript{a}and dreamed that he . . . : Admetus's complex dream is Morris's addition.

Vocal with furious waves, yet had no fear
For all the varied tumult he might hear,
But slowly woke up to the morning light
That to his eyes seemed passed all memory bright;
And then strange sounds he heard, whereat his heart
Woke up to joyous life with one glad start,
And nigh his bed he saw the herdsman stand,
Holding a long white staff in his right hand,
Carved with strange figures; and withal he said:
AWAKE, Admetus! loiter not a-bed,
But haste thee to bring home thy promised bride,
For now an ivory chariot waits outside,
Yoked to such beasts as Pelias bade thee bring;
Whose guidance thou shalt find an easy thing,
If in thine hands thou holdest still this rod,
Whereon are carved the names of every god
That rules the fertile earth; but having come
Unto King Pelias' well-attended home,
Abide not long, but take the royal maid,
And let her dowry in thy wain be laid,
Of silver and fine cloth and unmixed gold,
For this indeed will Pelias not withhold
When he shall see thee like a very god.
Then let thy beasts, ruled by this carven rod,
Turn round to Phere; yet must thou abide
Before thou comest to the streamlet's side
That feed its dykes; there, by the little wood
Wherein unto Diana men shed blood,
Will I await thee, and thou shalt descend
And hand-in-hand afoot through Phere wend;
And yet I bid thee, this night let thy bride
Apart among the womenfolk abide;
That on the morrow thou with sacrifice
For these strange deeds may pay a fitting price.
BUT as he spoke, with something like to awe,
His eyes and much-changed face Admetus saw,
And voiceless like a slave his words obeyed;
For rising up no more delay he made,
But took the staff and gained the palace-door
Where stood the beasts, whose mingled whine and roar
Had wrought his dream; there two and two they stood,
Thinking, it might be, of the tangled wood,
And all the joys of the food-hiding trees;
But harmless as their painted images
'Neath some dread spell; then, leaping up, he took
The reins in hand and the bossed leather shuck,
And no delay the conquered beasts durst make
But drew, not silent; and folk just awake
When he went by, as though a god they saw,
Fell on their knees, and maidens came to draw
Fresh water from the foun; sank trembling down,
And silence held the babbling wakened town.
So 'twixt the dewy hedges did he wend,
And still their noise afar the beasts did send,
His strange victorious advent to proclaim,
Till to Iolchos at the last he came,
And drew anigh the gates, whence in affright
The guards fled, helpless at the wondrous sight;
And through the town news of the coming spread
Of some great god; so that the scared priests led
Pale suppliants forth; who in unmeet attire
And hastily-caught boughs and smouldering fire
Within their censers, in the market-place
Awaited him with many an upturned face,
Trembling with fear of that unnamed new god;
But through the midst of them his lions trod

With noiseless feet, nor noted aught their prey,
And the boars' hooves went pattering on the way,
While from their churning tusks the white foam flew
As raging, helpless, in the trace they drew.
BUT Pelias, knowing all the work of fate,
Sat in his brazen-pillared porch to wait
The coming of the King; the while the maid
In her fair marriage garments was arrayed,
And from strong places of his treasury
Men brought fine scarlet from the Syrian sea,
And works of brass, and ivory, and gold;
But when the strange-yoked beasts he did behold
Come through the press of people terrified,
Then he arose and o'er the clamour cried:
Hail, thou, who like a very god art come
To bring great honour to my damsel's home;
And when Admetus tightened rein before
The gleaming, brazen-wrought, half-opened door,
He cried to Pelias: Hail, to thee, O King!
Let me behold once more my father's ring,
Let me behold the prize that I have won,
Mine eyes are wearying now to look upon.
Fear not, he said, the Fates are satisfied;
Yet wilt thou not descend and here abide,
Doing me honour till the next bright morn
Has dried the dew upon the new-sprung corn,
That we in turn may give the honour due
To such a man that such a thing can do,
And unto all the gods may sacrifice?
Nay, said Admetus, if thou call'st me wise,
And like a very god thou dost me deem,
Shall I abide the ending of the dream
And so gain nothing? nay, let me be glad
That I at least one godlike hour have had

*bossed*: embossed, furnished with convex ornaments, or bosses. Morris's line appears in the OED as an example of the word's usage.

*scarlet*. . . . *Sea*: Syrian and Phoenician weavers used a dye distilled from shellfish to make fine purple and scarlet cloth.
At whatsoever time I come to die,
That I may mock the world that passes by,
And yet forgets it. Saying this, indeed,
Of Pelias did he seem to take small heed,
But spoke as one unto himself may speak,
And still the half-shut door his eyes did seek,
Wherethrough from distant rooms sweet music came,
Setting his overstrained heart a-flame,
Because amidst the Lydian flutes\textsuperscript{13} he thought
From place to place his love the maidens brought.
THEN Pelias said: What can I give to thee
Who fail'st so little of divinity?
Yet let my slaves lay these poor gifts within
Thy chariot, while my daughter strives to win
The favour of the spirits of this place,
Since from their altars she must turn her face
For ever now; hearken, her flutes I hear,
From the last chapel doth she draw anear.
THEN by Admetus' feet the folk 'gan pile
The precious things, but he no less the while
Stared at the door ajar, and thought it long
Ere with the flutes mingled the maidens' song,
And both grew louder, and the scarce-seen floor
Was fluttering with white raiment, and the door
By slender fingers was set open wide,
And midst her damsels he beheld the bride
Ungirt, with hair unbound and garlanded:
Then Pelias took her slender hand and said:
Daughter, this is the man that takes from thee
Thy curse midst women. Think no more to be
Childless, unloved, and knowing little bliss!
But now behold how like a god he is,

\textsuperscript{13}Lydian flutes: Lydia was famous for its lyrical music. In the \textit{Republic}, Plato forbade his guardians to listen to music composed in the Lydian mode, for fear it would make them irresolute.

\textsuperscript{14}Jove's bird: the eagle.
That from their old fear and new pleasure sprung,
Nor noted aught of what the damsels sung,
Or of the flowers that after them they cast,
But like a dream the guarded city passed,
And 'twixt the song of birds and blossoms' scent
It seemed for many hundred years they went,
Though short the way was unto Phera's gates.
Time they forgot, and gods, and men, and fates,
However nigh unto their hearts they were.
The woodland boars, the yellow lords of fear,
No more seemed strange to them, but all the earth
With all its changing sorrow and wild mirth.
In that fair hour seemed new-born to the twain,
Grief seemed a play forgot, a pageant vain,
A picture painted, who knows where or when,
With soulless images of restless men;
For every thought but love was now gone by,
And they forgot that they should ever die.

UT when they came anigh the sacred wood,
There, biding them, Admetus' herdsman stood,
At sight of whom those yoke-fellows unchecked
Stopped dead, and little of Admetus recked
Who now, as one from dreams not yet awake,
Drew back his love and did his wain forsake,
And gave the carven rod and guiding bands
Into the waiting herdsman's outstretched hands.
But when he would have thanked him for the thing
That he had done, his speechless tongue must cling
Unto his mouth, and why he could not tell.
But the man said: No words! thou hast done well
To me, as I to thee; the day may come
When thou shalt ask me for a fitting home,
Nor shalt thou ask in vain; but hasten now,
And to thine house this royal maiden show,

Then give her to thy women for this night.
But when thou wakest up to thy delight
To-morrow, do all things that should be done,
Nor of the gods, forget thou anyone,
And on the next day will I come again
To tend thy flocks upon the grassy plain.
But now depart, and from thine house send here
Chariot and horse, these gifts of thine to bear
Unto thine house, and going, look not back
Lest many a wished-for thing thou com'st to lack.
THEN hand in hand together, up the road
The lovers passed unto the King's abode,
And as they went, the whining snort and roar
From the yoked beasts they heard break out once more
And then die off, as they were led away;
But whether to some place lit up by day,
Or, 'neath the earth, they knew not, for the twain
Went hastening on, nor once looked back again.
But soon the minstrels met them, and a band
Of white-robed damsels flowery boughs in hand,
To bid them welcome to that pleasant place.
Then they, rejoicing much, in no long space
Came to the brazen-pillared porch, whereon
From 'twixt the passes of the hills yet shone
The dying sun; and there she stood awhile
Without the threshold, a faint tender smile
Trembling upon her lips 'twixt love and shame,
Until each side of her a maiden came
And raised her in their arms, that her fair feet
The polished brazen threshold might not meet,"n
And in Admetus' house she stood at last.
But to the women's chamber straight she passed
Bepraised of all, and so the wakeful night
Lonely the lovers passed e'en as they might.

"that her fair feet . . . : Bad luck was believed to result if a bride stumbled on the threshold of her new home (Edwin Radford, Encyclopedia of Superstitions, Hutchinson, London, 1961, 327).
BUT the next day with many a sacrifice,
Admetus wrought, for such a well-won prize,
A life so blest, the gods to satisfy,
And many a matchless beast that day did die
Upon the altars; nought unlucky seemed
To be amid the joyous crowd that gleamed
With gold and precious things, and only this
Seemed wanting to the King of Phæra's bliss,
That all these pageants should be soon past by,
And hid, by night fair spring blossoms lie.

ET on the morrow-morn Admetus came,
A haggard man oppressed with grief
and shame
Unto the spot beside Boebeis' shore
Whereby he met his herdsman once before,
And there again he found him flushed and glad
And from the babbling water newly clad,
Then he with downcast eyes these words began:
O thou, whatso thy name is, god or man,
Hearken to me; meseemeth of thy deed
Some dread immortal taketh angry heed.
Last night the height of my desire seemed won,
All day my weary eyes had watched the sun
Rise up and sink, and now was come the night
When I should be alone with my delight;
Silent the house was now from floor to roof,
And in the well-hung chambers, far afooth
The feasters lay; the moon was in the sky;
The soft spring wind was wafting lovingly
Across the gardens fresh scents to my sweet,
As, troubled with the sound of my own feet,
I passed betwixt the pillars, whose long shade
Black on the white red-veined floor was laid:
So happy was I that the brier-rose,
Rustling outside within the flowery close,
They coil about me now, my lips to kiss.
O love, why hast thou brought me unto this?
Alas, my shame! trembling, away I slunk,
Yet turning saw the fearful coil had sunk
To whence it came, my love's limbs freed I saw,
And a long breath at first I heard her draw
As one redeemed, then heard the hard sobs come,
And wailings for her new accursed home.
But there outside across the door I lay,
ike a scourged hound, until the dawn of day;
And as her gentle breathing then I heard
As though she slept, before the earliest bird
Began his song, I wandered forth to seek
Thee, O strange man, e'en as thou seest me, weak
With all the torment of the night, and shamed
With such a shame as never shall be named
To aught but thee. Yea, yea, and why to thee?
Perchance this ends all thou wilt do for me?
What then, and have not a cure for that?
Lo, yonder is a rock where I have sat
Full many an hour while yet my life was life,
With hopes of all the coming wonder rife.
No sword hangs by my side, no god will turn
This cloudless hazy blue to black, and burn
My useless body with his lightning flash;
But the white waves above my bones may wash,
And when old chronicles our house shall name
They may leave out the letters and the shame;
That make Admetus, once a king of men:
And how could I be worse or better then?
AS one who notes a curious instrument
Working against the maker's own intent,
The herdsman eyed his wan face silently,
And smiling for a while; and then said he:
Admetus, thou, in spite of all I said,
Hast drawn this evil thing upon thine head,

For getting her who erewhile laid the curse
Upon the maiden, so for fear of worse
Go back again; for fair-limbed Artemis
Now bars the sweet attainment of thy bliss;
So taking heart, yet make no more delay,
But worship her upon this very day,
Nor spare for aught, and of thy trouble make
No semblance unto any for her sake;
And thick upon the fair bride-chamber floor
Strew dittany, and on each side the door
Hang up such poppy-leaves as spring may yield;
And for the rest, myself may be a shield
Against her wrath: nay, be thou not too bold
To ask me that which may not now be told.
Yea, even what thou deemest, hide it deep
Within thine heart, and let thy wonder sleep,
For surely thou shalt one day know my name,
When the time comes again that autumn's flame
Is dying off the vine-boughs, overturned,
Stripped of their wealth. But now let gifts be burned
To her I told thee of, and in three days
Shall I by many hard and rugged ways
Have come to thee again to bring thee peace.
Go, the sun rises and the shades decrease.
THEN, thoughtfully, Admetus got him back,
Nor did the altars of the Huntress lack
The fattest of the flocks upon that day.
But when night came, in arms Admetus lay
Across the threshold of the bride-chamber,
And naught amiss that night he noted there,
But durst not enter, though about the door
Young poppy-leaves were twined, and on the floor,
Not flowered as yet, with downy leaves and grey,
Fresh dittany beloved of wild goats lay.

\textsuperscript{a}Artemis: Greek name for Diana, goddess of hunting, chastity, and the moon.
\textsuperscript{b}dittany, dictamus Creticus, or dittany of Crete, once noted for its alleged medicinal virtues and ability to repel weapons.
But when the whole three days and nights were done,
The herdsman came with rising of the sun,
And said: Admetus, now rejoice again,
Thy prayers and offerings have not been in vain
And thou at last mayst come unto thy bliss;
And if thou askst for a sign of this,
Take thou this token; make good haste to rise,
And get unto the garden-close that lies
Below these windows sweet with greenery,
And in the midst a marvel shalt thou see,
Three white, black-hearted poppies
Though this is but the middle of the spring.
NOR was it otherwise than he had said,
And on that day with joy the twain were wed,
And 'gan to lead a life of great delight;
But the strange woeful history of that night,
The monstrous car, the promise to the King,
All these through weary hours of chiselling
Were wrought in stone, and in Diana's wall
Set up, a joy and witness unto all.
BUT neither so would wingèd time abide,
The changing year came round to autumn-tide,
Until at last the day was fully come
When the strange guest first reached Admetus' home.
Then, when the sun was redening to its end,
He to Admetus' brazen porch did wend,
Whom there he found feathering a poplar dart,
Then said he: King, the time has come to part,
Come forth, for I have that to give thine ear
No man upon the earth but thou must hear.
THEN rose the King, and with a troubled look
His well-steeled spear within his hand he took,
And by his herdsman silently he went
As to a peàked hill his steps he bent,
Nor did the parting servant speak one word,
As up they climbed, unto his silent lord:
Till from the top he turned about his head
From all the glory of the gold light, shed
Upon the hill-top by the setting sun;
For now indeed the day was well-nigh done,
And all the eastern vale was grey and cold;
But when Admetus he did now behold,
Panting beside him from the steep ascent,
One much-changed godlike look on him he bent,
And said: O mortal, listen, for I see
Thou deemest somewhat of what is in me;
Fear not! I love thee, even as I can
Who cannot feel the woes and ways of man
In spite of this my seeming: for indeed
Now thou behold'st Jove's immortal seed;
And what my name is I would tell thee now,
If men who dwell upon the earth as thou
Could hear the name and live; but on the earth,
With strange melodious stories of my birth,
Phoebus\textsuperscript{a} men call me, and Latona's\textsuperscript{b} son.
AND now my servitude with thee is done,
And I shall leave thee toiling on thine earth,
This handful, that within its little girth
Holds that which moves you so, O men that die;
Behold, to-day thou hast felicity,
But the times change, and I can see a day
When all thine happiness shall fade away;
And yet be merry, strive not with the end!
Thou canst not change it; for the rest, a friend
This year has won thee who shall never fail:
But now indeed, for nought will it avail

\textsuperscript{a}white, black-hearted poppies: This allusion is added by Morris. The white poppy (papaver somniferum) is the source of "black-hearted" opium, and therefore associated with night and tranquility (Margaret Freeman, \textit{Herbs for the Medieval Household}, NY, 1943, 27).

\textsuperscript{b}Phoebus: Apollo.

\textsuperscript{c}Latona: mortal consort of Zeus, and mother of Apollo and Diana.
To say what I may have in store for thee,
Of gifts that men desire; let these things be,
And live thy life, till death itself shall come,
And turn to nought the storehouse of thine home;
Then think of me; these feathered shafts behold,
That here have been the terror of the wold,
Take these, and count them still the best of all
Thine envied wealth, and when on thee shall fall
By any way the worst extremity,
Call upon me before thou com'st to die,
And lay these shafts with incense on a fire,
That thou may'st gain thine uttermost desire. 43
E ceased, but ere the golden tongue was still
An odorous mist had stolen up the hill,
And to Admetus first the god grew dim,
And then was but a lovely voice to him,
And then at last the sun had sunk to rest,
And a fresh wind blew lightly from the west
Over the hill-top, and no soul was there;
But the sad dying autumn field flowers fair,
Rustled dry leaves about the windy place,
Where even now had been the godlike face,
And in their midst the brass-bound quiver lay.
Then, going further westward, far away,
He saw the gleaming of Peneus wan
'Neath the white sky, but never any man,
Except a grey-haired shepherd driving down
From off the long slopes to his fold-yard brown
His woolly sheep, with whom a maiden went,
Singing for labour done and sweet content
Of coming rest; with that he turned again,
And took the shafts up, never sped in vain,

*and lay these shafts...* In Euripides, Apollo explicitly offers to postpone Admetus's death if someone else agrees to die in Admetus's place. The arrow-burning signal that summons Apollo is not in any ancient source, but parallels well-known folktale motifs.
Or when the temple of the sea-born one
With glittering crowns and gallant raiment shone,
Fairer the maidens seemed by no chain bound,
But such as amorous arms might cast around
Their lovely bodies, than the wretched band
Who midst the shipmen by the gangway stand;
Each lonely in her speechless misery,
And thinking of the worse time that shall be,
When midst of folk who scarce can speak her name,
She bears the uttermost of toil and shame.
BETTER to him seemed that victorious crown,
That midst the reverent silence of the town
He oft would set upon some singer's brow,
Than was the conqueror's diadem, blest now
By lying priests, soon, bent and bloody, hung
Within the thorn, by linnets well besung,
Who think but little of the corpse beneath,
Though ancient lands have trembled at his breath.**
BUT to this King, fair Ceres' gifts, the days
Whereon men sung in flushed Lyæus' praise***
Tales of old time; the bloodless sacrifice
Unto the goddess of the downcast eyes
And soft persuading lips; the ringing lyre
Unto the bearer of the holy fire
Who once had been amongst them; things like these
Seemed meet to him men's yearning to appease.
These were the triumphs of the peaceful king.
AND so, betwixt seed-time and harvesting,
With little fear his life must pass away;
And for the rest, he, from the self-same day
That the god left him, seemed to have some share
In that same godhead he had harboured there:
In all things grew his wisdom and his wealth,
And folk beholding the fair state and health

Wherein his land was, said, that now at last
A fragment of the Golden Age was cast
Over the place, for there was no debate,
And men forgot the very name of hate.
NOR failed the love of her he erst had won
To hold his heart as still the years wore on,
And she, no whit less fair than on the day
When from Iolchos first she passed away,
Did all his will as though he were a god,
And loving still, the downward way she trod.
Honour and love, plenty and peace, he had;
Nor lacked for aught that makes a wise man glad,
That makes him, like a rich well-honoured guest,
Scarcely sorry when the time comes for the rest
That at the end perforce must bow his head.
AND yet, was death not much remembered,
As still with happy men the manner is?
Or, was he not so pleased with this world's bliss,
As to be sorry when the time should come
When but his name should hold his ancient home
While he dwelt nowhere? either way indeed,
Will be enough for most men's daily need,
And with calm faces they may watch the world,
And note men's lives hither and thither hurried,
As folk may watch the unfolding of a play.
Nor this, nor that was King Admetus' way;
For neither midst the sweetness of his life
Did he forget the ending of the strife,
Nor yet for heavy thoughts of passing pain
Did all his life seem lost to him or vain,
A wasteful jest of Jove, an empty dream;
Rather before him did a vague hope gleam,
That made him a great-hearted man and wise,
Who saw the deeds of men with far-seeing eyes,
And dealt them pitying justice still, as though
The inmost heart of each man he did know;

**Nor yet for him must idle soldiers range . . . .: Morris added these pointed images of peace and war.
***Lyæus: "Lyæus" was one of the titles of Bacchus.
This hope it was, and not his kingly place
That made men's hearts rejoice to see his face
Rise in the council hall; through this, men felt
That in their midst a son of man there dwelt
Like and unlike them, and their friend through all;
And still as time went on, the more would fall
This glory on the King's beloved head,
And round his life fresh hope and fear were shed.
YET at the last his good days passed away,
And sick upon his bed Admetus lay,
'Twixt him and death nought but a lessening veil
Of hasty minutes; yet did hope not fail,
Nor did bewildering fear torment him then,
But still, as ever, all the ways of men
Seemed clear to him; but he, while yet his breath
Still held the gateway 'gainst the arms of death,
Turned to his wife, who, bowed beside the bed,
Wept for his love, and dying goodwill,
And bade her put all folk from out the room,
Then going to the treasury's rich gloom
To bear the arrows forth, the Lycian's gift."
So she, amidst her blinding tears, made shift
To find laid in the inmost treasury
Those shafts, and brought them unto him; but he,
Beholding them, beheld therewith his life,
Both that now past, with many marvels rie,
And that which he had hoped he yet should see.
THEN spoke he faintly: Love, 'twixt thee and me
A film has come, and I am failing fast:
And now our ancient happy life is past;
For either this is death's dividing hand,
And all is done, or if the shadowy land
I yet escape, full surely if I live
The god with life some other gift will give,

And change me unto thee: e'en at this tide
Like a dead man among you all I bide,
Until I once again behold my guest,
And he has given me either life or rest:
Alas, my love! that thy too loving heart
Nor with my life or death can have a part.
O cruel words! yet death is cruel too:
Stoop down and kiss me, for I yearn for you
E'en as the autumn yearneth for the sun.
O love, a little time we have been one,
And if we now are twain, weep not therefor;
For many a man on earth desireth sore
To have some mate upon the toilsome road,
Some sharer of his still increasing load,
And yet for all his longing and his pain
His troubled heart must seek for love in vain,
And till he dies still must he be alone.
But now, although our love indeed is gone,
Yet to this land as thou art loyal and true,
Set now thine hand to what I bid thee do;
Because I may not die; rake up the brands
Upon the hearth, and from these trembling hands
Cast incense thereon, and upon them lay
These shafts, the relics of a happier day,
Then watch with me; perchance I may not die,
Though the supremest hour now draws anigh
Of life or death: O thou who madest me,
The only thing on earth alike to thee,
Why must I be unlike to thee in this?
Consider, if thou dost not do amiss
To slay the only thing that feareth death
Or knows its name, of all things drawing breath
Upon the earth: see now for no short hour,
For no half-halting death, to reach me slower
Than other men, I pray thee: what avail
To add some trickling grains unto the tale

*the Lycian's gift: Apollo was often called Lykeios, perhaps from Lycia, a
region in south-west Asia Minor.*
Soon told, of minutes thou dost snatch away
From out the midst of that unending day
Wherein thou dwellest? rather grant me this,
To right me wherein thou hast done amiss,
And give me life like thine for evermore.
SO murmured he, contending very sore
Against the coming death; but she meanwhile,
Faint with consuming love, made haste to pile
The brands upon the hearth, and thereon cast
Sweet incense, and the feathered shafts at last;
Then, trembling, back unto the bed she crept,
And lay down by his side, and no more wept,
Nay scarce could think of death for very love
That in her faithful heart for ever strove
‘Gainst fear and grief: but now the incense-cloud
The old familiar chamber did ensnatch,
And on the very verge of death drawn close
Wrapt both their weary souls in strange repose,
That through sweet sleep sent kindly images
Of simple things; and in the midst of these,
Whether it were but parcel of their dream,”
Or that they woke to it as some might deem,
I know not, but the door was opened wide,
And the King’s name a voice long silent cried,
And Phoebus on the very threshold trod.
And yet in nothing liker to a god
Than when he ruled Admetus’ herds; for he
Still wore the homespun coat men used to see
Among the heifers in the summer morn,
And round about him hung the herdsman’s horn;
And in his hand he bore the herdsman’s spear
And cornel bow, “the prowling dog-wolf’s fear;

Though empty of its shafts the quiver was.
HE to the middle of the room did pass,
And said: Admetus, neither all for nought
My coming to thee is, nor have I brought
Good tidings to thee; poor man, thou shalt live
If any soul for thee sweet life will give
Enforced by none: for such a sacrifice
Alone the Fates can deem a fitting price
For thy redemption; in no battle-field,
Maddeneth hope of glory life to yield,
To give it up to heal no city’s shame
In hope of gaining long-enduring fame;
For whoso’s death for thee must believe
That thou with shame that last gift wilt receive,
And strive henceforward with forgetfulness
The honied draught of thy new life to bless.
Nay, and morrow such a glorious heart
Who loves thee well enough with life to part
But for thy love, with life must lose love too,
Which e’en when wrapped about in weeds of woe
Is godlike life indeed to such an one.
And now behold, three days ere life is done
Do the Fates give thee, and I, even I,
Upon thy life have shed felicity
And given thee love of men, that they in turn
With fervent love of thy dear love might burn.
The people love thee and thy silk-clad breast,“
Thine open doors have given thee better rest
Than woods of spears or hills of walls might do,
And even now in wakefulness and woe
The city lies, calling to mind thy love,
Wearying with ceaseless prayers the gods above.
But thou, thine heart is wise enough to know
That they no whit from their decrees will go.

"dream: Apollo’s dream-message enables Morris to mitigate somewhat
Admetus’s guilt. In Euripides, Admetus asks his parents to die for him, and
reviles them when they refuse.

cornel bow: the wood of the Cornelian cherry tree, cornus masculata, was
noted for its hardness and toughness. Morris’s line is cited in the OED as an
example of the use of “cornel.”

*silk-clad breast: Admetus trusts his people enough to wear silk among them,
rather than armor."
SO saying, swiftly from the room he passed;  
But on the world no look Admetus cast,  
But peacefully turned round unto the wall  
As one who knows that quick death must befall:  
For in his heart he thought: Indeed too well  
I know what men are, this strange tale to tell  
To those that live with me: yea, they will weep,  
And o'er my tomb most solemn days will keep,  
And in great chronicles will write my name,  
Telling to many an age my deeds and fame.  
For living men such things as this desire,  
And by such ways will they appease the fire  
Of love and grief: but when death comes to stare  
Full in men's faces, and the truth lays bare,  
How can we then have wish for anything,  
But unto life that gives us all to cling?  
So said he, and with closed eyes did await,  
Sleeping or waking, the decrees of fate.  

BUT now Alcestis rose, and by the bed  
She stood, with wild thoughts passing through her head.  
Dried were her tears, her troubled heart and sore  
Throbbed with the anguish of her love no more.  
A strange look on the dying man she cast,  
Then covered up her face and said: O past!  
Past the sweet times that I remember well!  
Alas, that such a tale my heart can tell!  
Ah, how I trusted him! what love was mine!  
How sweet to feel his arms about me twine,  
And my heart beat with his! what wealth of bliss  
To hear his praises! all to come to this,  
That now I durst not look upon his face,  
Lest in my heart that other thing have place,  
That which I knew not, that which men call hate.  
O ME, the bitterness of God and fate!  

A little time ago we two were one;  
I had not lost him though his life was done,  
For still was he in me; but now alone  
Through the thick darkness must my soul make moan,  
For I must die: how can I live to bear  
An empty heart about, the nurse of fear?  
How can I live to die some other tide,  
And, dying, hear my loveless name outcried  
About the portals of that weary land  
Whereby my shadowy feet should come to stand.  

ALCESTIS! O Alcestis, hadst thou known  
That thou one day shouldst thus be left alone,  
How hadst thou borne a living soul to love!  
Hadst thou not rather lifted hands to Jove,  
To turn thine heart to stone, thy front to brass,  
That through tis wondrous world thy soul might pass,  
Well pleased and careless, as Diana g"s  
Through the thick woods, all pitiless of those  
Her shafts smite down? Alas! how could it be?  
Can a god give a god's delights to thee?  
Nay rather, Jove, but give me once again,  
If for one moment only, that sweet pain,  
The love I had while still I thought to live!  
Ah! wilt thou not, since unto thee I give  
My life, my hope? But thou, I come to thee.  
Thou sleepest: O wake not, nor speak to me!  
In silence let my last hour pass away,  
And men forget my bitter feeble day.  

ITH that she laid her down upon the bed,  
And nesting to him, kissed his weary head,  
And laid his wasted hand upon her breast,  
Yet woke him not; and silence and deep rest  
Fell on that chamber. The night wore away  
Mid gusts of wailing wind, the twilight grey  
Stole o'er the sea, and wrought his wondrous change  
On things unseen by night, by day not strange,  

\textsuperscript{86}O past: In Euripides, Alcestis's last words to her grieving family emphasize courage and honor more than love. Morris's allusion to the heedlessness of the gods is echoed elsewhere in \textit{The Earthly Paradise}.  

\textsuperscript{87}front: forehead.
But now half seen and strange; then came the sun,
And therewithal the silent world and dun
Waking, waxed many-coloured, full of sound,
As men again their heap of troubles found,
And woke up to their joy or misery.
BUT there, unmoved by aught, those twain did lie,
Until Admetus' ancient nurse drew near
Unto the open door, and full of fear
Beheld them moving not, and as folk dead;
Then, trembling with her eagerness and dread,
She cried: Admetus! art thou dead indeed?
Alcestis! livest thou my words to heed?
Alas, alas, for this Thessalian folk!
BUT with her piercing cry the King awoke,
And round about him wildly 'gan to stare,
As a bewildered man who knows not where
He has awakened: but not thin or wan
His face was now, as of a dying man,
But fresh and ruddy; and his eyes shone clear,
As of a man who much of life may bear.
And at the first, but joy and great surprise
Shone out from those awakened, new-healed eyes;
But as for something more at last he yearned,
Unto his love with troubled brow he turned,
For still she seemed to sleep: alas, alas!
Her lonely shadow even now did pass
Along the changeless fields, oft looking back,
As though it yet had thought of some great lack.
And here, the hand just fallen from off his breast
Was cold; and cold the bosom his hand pressed.
And even as the colour lit the day
The colour from her lips had waned away;
Yet still, as though that longed-for happiness
Had come again her faithful heart to bless,
Those white lips smiled, unwrinkled was her brow,
But of her eyes no secrets might he know,
For, hidden by the lids of ivory,

Had they beheld that death a-drawing nigh.
THEN o'er her dead corpse King Admetus hung,
Such sorrow in his heart as his faint tongue
Refused to utter; yet the just-past night
But dimly he remembered, and the sight
Of the Far-darter, and the dreadful word
That seemed to cleave all hope as with a sword:
Yet stronger in his heart a knowledge grew,
That nought it was but her fond heart and true
That all the marvel for his love had wrought,
Whereby from death to life he had been brought;
That dead, his life she was, as she had been
His life's delight while still she lived a queen.
And he fell wondering if his life were gain,
So wrapt as then in loneliness and pain;
Yet therewithal no tears would fill his eyes,
For as a god he was. Then did he rise...

And gat him down unto the Council-place,
And when the people saw his well-loved face
They cried aloud for joy to see him there,
And earth again to them seemed blest and fair.
And though indeed they did lament in turn,
When of Alcestis' end they came to learn,
Scarce was it more than seeming, or, at least,
The silence in the middle of a feast,
When men have memory of their heroes slain
So passed the order of the world again,
Victorious Summer crowning lusty Spring,
Rich Autumn faint with wealth of harvesting,
And Winter the earth's sleep; and then again
Spring, Summer, Autumn, and the Winter's pain;
And still and still the same the years went by.

BUT Time, who slays so many a memory,

Far-darter: Apollo.

Then did he rise...: In Euripides' play, by contrast, Admetus' behavior after Alcestis' death is querulous and hypocritical. He castigates his father yet again, for example, for the latter's refusal to die in Alcestis' place.
Brought hers to light, the short-lived loving Queen;
And her fair soul, as scent of flowers unseen,
Sweetened the turmoil of long centuries.

For soon, indeed, Death laid his hand on these,
The shouters round the throne upon that day.
And for Admetus, he, too, went his way,
Though if he died at all I cannot tell;
But either on the earth he ceased to dwell,
Or else, oft born again, had many a name. 4

But through all lands of Greece Alcestis' fame
Grew greater, and about her husband's twined,
Lived, in the hearts of far-off men enshrined.
See I have told her tale, though I know not
What men are dwelling now on that green spot
Anigh Boebeis, or if Phœæ still,
With name of changed perchance, adown the hill
Still shows its white walls to the rising sun.
The gods at last remember what is done.

"And for Admetus . . . .: Morris has radically changed Euripides's ending. In the play, Hercules rescues Alcestis from Death, after which a finally-chastened Admetus avers that "From this day forth we must remake our lives / And make them better than they were before / Happiness is mine, and now I know it" (1486-1488). In Apollodorus's tale, by contrast, Persephone simply returns Alcestis to earth (I 9:19). Morris may have sacrificed these resurrection scenes to focus attention on the greatness of Alcestis's sacrifice, or perhaps simply to underscore once again the fragility of life and indifference of the gods.

Yet, with the measured falling . . . .: One of Morris's clear aims for his narrative poetry was to reconcile for a moment his readers and himself—"in spite of hope long past away"—with [our] "lives so wasted, in despite of death."