

So, haply meeting in the afternoon
 Some comrades who were playing at the dice,
 He joined them, and forgot all else beside.

The dice were rattling at the merriest,
 And Rhœcus, who had met but sorry luck, 100
 Just laughed in triumph at a happy throw,
 When through the room there hummed a yellow bee
 That buzzed about his ear with down-dropped legs
 As if to light. And Rhœcus laughed and said,
 Feeling how red and flushed he was with loss, 105
 "By Venus!¹ does he take me for a rose?"
 And brushed him off with rough, impatient hand.
 But still the bee came back, and thrice again
 Rhœcus did beat him off with growing wrath.
 Then through the window flew the wounded bee, 110
 And Rhœcus, tracking him with angry eyes,
 Saw a sharp mountain-peak of Thessaly
 Against the red disk of the setting sun,—
 And instantly the blood sank from his heart,
 As if its very walls had caved away. 115
 Without a word he turned, and, rushing forth,
 Ran madly through the city and the gate,
 And o'er the plain, which now the wood's long shade,
 By the low sun thrown forward broad and dim,
 Darkened well-nigh unto the city's wall. 120

Quite spent and out of breath he reached the tree,
 And, listening fearfully, he heard once more
 The low voice murmur "Rhœcus!" close at hand:
 Whereat he looked around him, but could see
 Naught but the deepening glooms beneath the oak. 125
 Then, sighed the voice "O Rhœcus! nevermore
 Shalt thou behold me or by day or night,
 Me, who would fain have blessed thee with a love

¹ **Venus**—The goddess of love, the Aphrodite of the Greeks.