

[As the song advances, *Apelles drops his pencil, and stands listening in motionless rapture; and when it ceases, he rushes towards Campaspe, and casts himself at her feet.*]

APELLES, (*speaking with passionate emotion.*)

'T is all in vain!

I deemed thy strain would lull to calm repose  
The storm within. But ah! it rages wilder  
Than before,—a whirlwind of the soul!  
I love thee, beautiful! Ay, with a love  
Words cannot tell—yet I must strive to speak,  
Or this hot brain be seethed by its fierce fire.

CAMPASPE, (*in fullering and affrighted tones.*)

The King! beware!

Ah! should he chance to hear!—

APELLES.

I know the danger,  
Fear it but for thee—though I had sworn . . .  
No tortures e'er should wring this secret forth,—  
No anguish tempt me to betray his trust;  
Yet knew I not my feebleness—thy power—  
When this resolve was formed,—I feel them now,  
And care not in what shape death comes to me;  
No, nor how soon, if thou can'st not be mine;  
Scarce dare I hope—yet if those lips would breathe  
One gentle word, one thought to bless, and cheer,  
How would it light the deep and thickening gloom  
Of my despair!

CAMPASPE, (*with tears.*)

Alas! alas, for this!

What can I say? where bid thee comfort seek?  
I, helpless, captive, lonely,—and a slave!  
No freedom—no, nor e'en a right to love,  
Save as my master bids.

(*She drops her veil, and, weeping violently, rises to retire.*)

APELLES (*detaining her.*)

Depart not yet,—

I will be mute—hush'd, breathless as the dead,  
Let but my pulses play, my eye gaze on,  
My heart leap silent up to the glad thought  
That love repays its love; and I will strive  
In thy sweet presence to forget the ills,  
That crush the secret buds of our young hopes.

CAMPASPE.

Better to crush them swiftly and for aye,  
Than with a stealthy hand nurse them to bloom,  
Feeding with their rich growth the greedy worm  
Wrapped in their secret folds. Here let us part—  
Here, where I've learned to feel, how bitterly!  
My hopeless doom, I'll say farewell to joy,  
And from my soul banish all memories,  
Linked with happy thoughts.

APELLES.

Not so, beloved;

I'll fly with thee afar—risk life to win,  
Or with thy gentle leave, confess our love,  
And pray the King—

CAMPASPE, (*eagerly interrupting him.*)

The king! said'st thou?

Breathe in his ear but one of those fond thoughts,  
That have upsprung from the too ardent soil  
Of our young hearts, and thou wilt peril all,  
For days not years will henceforth bound the span  
Of our brief life—Oh! then, beware, beware!  
How thou dost draw thy swift destruction down,  
Since thine's a future, stored with promise rich,  
Despite this passing cloud, and I beseech,  
No shadow may remain of this dark hour,  
To dim the vista of thy opening years.

APELLES.

I crave no future, if unshared by thee!  
Ah! beautiful Campaspe, since the hour  
When first thy smile divine met my rapt gaze,  
One burning thought, one passionate dream of love  
Has filled my soul—that thought has been of thee,  
That haunting dream to call thee all mine own!  
'T was madness and I knew it—so forbore  
The burning words that quivered on my lip,  
As mute thou sat, a study for my art,  
Which, with weak effort, vainly strove to trace  
A copy of thy charms. Ah, on my soul  
That copy is impressed in lines of light,  
Which there shall glow, till life's frail thread  
Is severed by the fates, and love, with death  
Lies cold.

CAMPASPE.

I pray thee, cease!

Thy accents rend my heart, nor can reverse  
My fixed and hopeless doom. Farewell, we part,  
Thou with some cherished hope to cheer thy way,  
I, a sad exile from my sunny home,  
A barbed arrow rankling in my breast,  
Hope's withered blossoms strewn around my path,  
Love's lambent light extinct, and youth's glad  
promise  
Scattered to the winds.

APELLES.

Sweet one, this hand

Shall pluck that arrow from thy wounded breast,  
Revive Hope's flowers, rekindle Love's pure light,  
And bind youth's glorious promises anew;  
Say thou't be mine—Oh, fly afar with me,  
To where my vine-wreathed isle, lies like a gem  
On the Egean wave—amidst its bowers  
We'll build our home—a blessed home of love,  
Which thy entrancing smile shall gild with light,  
And from the inspiration of its beams  
Such forms of beauty 'neath my touch shall glow,  
As on the silent canvas ne'er before  
Sprang into life.

CAMPASPE.

It may not be!

Yet ah, the freedom of that ocean isle!  
Would it were mine! that home of joy, that peace,  
That tranquil calm, from trouble's tempest thoughts,  
How my soul longs to share it!