

We land at the castle wall, and after a little climbing enter the side facing the mountains. We pass through the garden, where trees seem transplanted from every clime, over a ditch where the drawbridge formerly creaked. We enter the castle yard. The ring of a bell summons a guide who conducts us through an old arched doorway, down broad steps within the castle walls to that side washed by the lake. We can see but little. The windows are but slits in a wall of immense thickness, and so far above our heads that we can discern only a small strip of sunshine, as we listen to the dash of the waves without.

The first apartment we enter is the old military chapel, double arched, with a row of rocky columns down the middle. Next comes the small chamber where condemned criminals spent their last night alive. There is here a sort of incline of solid rock which had to serve the unfortunates as bed. The next apartment is the place of execution, dark as death, where no ray of light enters but what is carried in. Here is the horrid block where many a victim has been immolated, and here the hole in the wall through which the dead bodies were cast into the secret-keeping waters of the lake. We next enter the prison. 'Tis long and dark, and dismal, and grows darker as we advance. A row of seven stone columns extends the whole length. On the third Byron has carved his name, and around it are the names of a thousand others of less note. On the fifth is the staple and ring to which the good Bonnivard was attached during the six long years of his confinement there, and we see the hollow in the stony floor worn by his constant tread.

“Chillon ! thy prison is a holy place  
And thy sad floor an altar : for 'twas trod  
Until his very steps have left a trace,  
Worn as if thy cold pavement were a sod,  
By Bonnivard ! May none these marks efface,  
For they appeal from tyranny to God ! ”

In 1530 Bonnivard was imprisoned here by the Catholic Duke of Savoy. He was released in 1536 by the Bernese who took the castle. Byron represents him telling his tale after his release—

“My hair is grey, but not with years,  
Nor grew it white  
In a single night,  
As men's have done from sudden fears.