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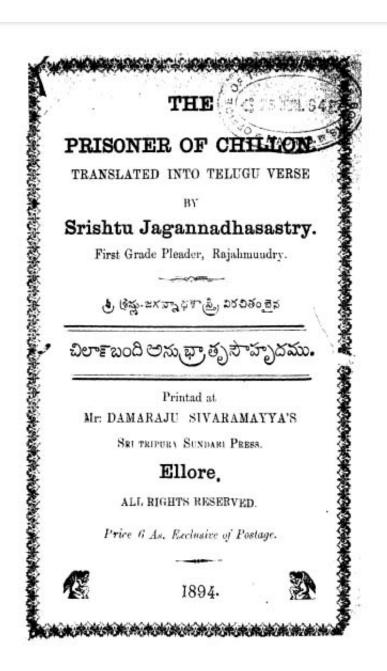
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Date: February 25, 2015





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Eternal spirit of the chainless Mind!
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art:
For there thy habitation is the heart—
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned—
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
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 those marks efface!
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

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There are seven pillars of Gothic mould, In Chillon's dungeons deep and old, There are seven columns, massy and grey, Dim with a dull imprison'd ray, A sunbeam which hath lost its way, And through the crevice and the cleft Of the thick wall is fallen and left; Creeping o'er the floor so damp, Like a marsh's meteor lamp:

... Painful to these eyes
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years—I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score
When my last brother droop'd and died,
And I lay living by his side.

We could not move a single pace,
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight:
And thus together—yet apart,
Fetter'd in hand, but join'd in heart,
'Twas still some solace in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old,

Or song heroically bold;

We heard it ripple night and day;
Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high
And wanton in the happy sky;
And then the very rock hath rock'd,
And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

The flat and turfless earth above The being we so much did love; His empty chain above it leant, Such Murder's fitting monument!

With all the while a cheek whose bloom Was as a mockery of the tomb Whose tints as gently sunk away As a departing rainbow's ray; An eye of most transparent light, That almost made the dungeon bright; And not a word of murmur—not A groan o'er his untimely lot,— A little talk of better days, A little hope my own to raise, For I was sunk in silence—lost In this last loss, of all the most; And then the sighs he would suppress Of fainting Nature's feebleness, More slowly drawn, grew less and less: I listen'd, but I could not hear; I call'd, for I was wild with fear;

I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread Would not be thus admonished;
I call'd, and thought I heard a sound—
I burst my chain with one strong bound,
And rushed to him:—I found him not,
I only stirred in this black spot,
I only lived, I only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew;

I burst my chain with one strong bound, And rushed to him:—I found him not, I only stirred in this black spot, I only lived, I only drew The accursed breath of dungeon-dew;

What next befell me then and there I know not well—I never knew— First came the loss of light, and air, And then of darkness too: I had no thought, no feeling—none— Among the stones I stood a stone, And was, scarce conscious what I wist, As shrubless crags within the mist; For all was blank, and bleak, and grey; It was not night—it was not day; It was not even the dungeon-light, So hateful to my heavy sight, But vacancy absorbing space, And fixedness—without a place; There were no stars, no earth, no time, No check, no change, no good, no crime But silence, and a stirless breath Which neither was of life nor death: A sea of stagnant idleness, Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless!

A light broke in upon my brain,—
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track;

And song that said a thousand things, And seemed to say them all for me! I never saw its like before, I ne'er shall see its likeness more:

It seem'd like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
Or broke its cage to perch on mine,
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!

I know not if it late were free, Or broke its cage to perch on mine, But knowing well captivity, Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!

Or if it were, in winged guise, A visitant from Paradise; For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while Which made me both to weep and smile— I sometimes deem'd that it might be My brother's soul come down to me; But then at last away it flew, And then 'twas mortal well I knew. For he would never thus have flown-And left me twice so doubly lone,— Lone as the corse within its shroud, Lone as a solitary cloud, A single cloud on a sunny day, While all the rest of heaven is clear, A frown upon the atmosphere, That hath no business to appear When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

Returning where my walk begun, Avoiding only, as I trod,

My brothers' graves without a sod; For if I thought with heedless tread My step profaned their lowly bed, My breath came gaspingly and thick, And my crush'd heart felt blind and sick.

My very chains and I grew friends, So much a long communion tends To make us what we are:—even I Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

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