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Lola Ridge  
Freedom  
1911

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Originally published in *Mother Earth*, Vol. VI, no. 4, June 1911.

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# Freedom

Lola Ridge

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Let men be free!  
All violence is but the agony  
Of caged things fighting blindly for the right  
To be and breathe and burn their little hour.  
Bare spirits—not debight  
In smooth-set garments of philosophy;  
But near earth forces, elemental, crude,  
Scarce knowing their invincible, rude power;  
Within the close of their primeval servitude  
Half comatose.

Who, ravening for their depleted dower  
Of so much sun and air and warmth and food,  
And the same right to procreate and love  
As the beasts have and the birds,  
Strike wild—not having words  
To parry with—at the cold force above.

Let men be free!  
Hate is the price  
Of servitude, paid covertly; and vice  
But the unclean recoil of tortured flesh  
Whipped through the centuries within a mesh  
Spun out of priestly art.  
Oh men, arise, be free!—Who breaks one bar  
Of tyranny in this so bitter star  
Has cleansed its bitterness in part.