

In Bondage

Claude McKay

I would be wandering in distant fields
 Where man, and bird, and beast, lives leisurely,
 And the old earth is kind, and ever yields
 Her goodly gifts to all her children free;
 5 Where life is fairer, lighter, less demanding,
 And boys and girls have time and space for play
 Before they come to years of understanding—
 Somewhere I would be singing, far away.
 For life is greater than the thousand wars
 10 Men wage for it in their insatiate lust,
 And will remain like the eternal stars,
 When all that shines to-day is drift and dust
 But I am bound with you in your mean graves,
 O black men, simple slaves of ruthless slaves.

Textual Note

This poem also appears in:

- *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920)
- *The Liberator* (August, 1921)

3 ,] *om. Spr.*
 7 understanding] , *add. Spr.*
 8 .] ; *Spr.*
 11 ,] *om. Spr., Lib.*

12 shines] *is Spr., Lib.*
 12 drift] *ashes Spr., Lib.*
 12 dust] : *add. Spr., add. Lib.*
 14 O] *Oh Spr., Lib.*