

# **Earth, the World and I**

Charlotte Perkins Stetson

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# Earth, the World and I

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"CHILD," said the Earth to me,  
"What can you do?  
Why do you try?  
Can you not see  
That all you are and can ever be  
Is the product of Heredity  
Merely the outcome, sure and true,  
Of other lives gone by?  
Because your ancestors were such,  
Back to primeval slime,  
Therefore you ail and sin so much,  
Therefore 'tis waste of time  
For you to seek to steer your course  
Free of this cumulative force.  
Beast, plant and rock, your story runs  
Back to the power that swings the suns;  
And can you disobey the laws  
That move you from the primal cause?  
Peace, fretful child! Be still!  
And do my will!"

"Child," said the World to me,  
"What can you do?  
Why do you try?  
Can you not see  
That all the effort you have spent  
Is the product of Environment  
That your surroundings govern you,  
And circumstances nigh?  
Because you're born in such an age,  
Because you're taught from such a page,  
Because your friends are so and so  
Therefore you act and feel and know  
Just as you do. In vain you've tried  
To throw this influence aside.  
Fruit of your century and race,  
Your family and dwelling-place,  
Your education, work and friends  
You have no individual ends!

## Earth, the World and I

Peace, fretful child! Be still!  
And do my will!"

Said I to the Earth: "Dear Dirt,  
Your remarks don't hurt,  
Being peacefully, perfectly true  
But the fact of my coming from you  
Does not alter another, my dear  
This fact I am here!  
Evolution's long effort to Be  
Has resulted in me,  
And I hark with respect to your tones  
As I would to my bones  
Should their feelings new utterance give,  
Should they say, 'We allow you to live!'  
Heredity? Yes, I admit  
All you're claiming for it.  
The "first cause" is still running your ranch  
But I'm a collateral branch!  
In which the same power is set free,  
To be handled by me.  
You don't see it? No matter, old friend,  
It's all one in the end."

Said I to the World: "I can take  
No offense at the statements you make.  
They are truthful as far as they go  
But there's much you don't know.  
Your power you correctly define,  
But you fail to see mine.  
You make me, in part, it is true  
But, my friend, who makes you?  
The environment's force on our race  
Is not climate or place  
So much as each new demonstration  
Of our social relation.  
Our strongest impressions we take  
From conditions we make;  
And when we don't like the effect  
We can change can select;  
Can unmake and remake and choose  
The conditions we use!  
Just think what the product will be  
When I make you make me!"