

THE EARTH FIEND'S
BALLAD MADE & ETCHED
BY WILLIAM STRANG



LONDON: WILKINSON, THEWIS, AND
JOHN ALLEN, IN VICO STREET,
1866.

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THE EARTH FIEND

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*John Strong -
F. Goulding*



THE·EARTH·FIEND·A
BALLAD·MADE·&·ETCHED
BY·WILLIAM·STRANG·



LONDON·ELKIN·MATHEWS·AND
JOHN·LANE·IN·VICO·STREET·
MDCCCXCII



THE EARTH FIEND

PART I

LET folk wha ghaist tales disbelieve

Pass this ane by ;

But folk as wise, and folk as stieve,

As stout o' heart, as firm o' nieve,

Ken it's nae lie.

A callant braw took Havock farm,

Doon by the glen,

And vowed that he, by toil o's arm,

A hame wad mak' baith snug and warm,

Croose but and ben.

And Jean, the lass at Pate Traquair's,
For wife he 'd hae ;
Ne'er pressed wi' doots, or fashed wi' fears,
He 'd win a rowth o' horse and mears,
Some coming day.

Sic dreams o' buirdly sheep and cattle,
And heaps o' neeps,
And golden guineas' cheering rattle.
A winsome wean wi' winsome prattle
About him creeps.

Wi' claes a credit to the toon
On Day o' Rest,
And jaunty hat and shining shoon,
He to the Kirk wad cock his croon
Amang the best.



Noo is he settled to his wark,
O' wark a spate ;
He's at the pleugh while wakes the lark,
An's skelpin' at it after dark—
Baith ear and late.

They sit beside the fuffin' leerie,
Wi' crack and claver ;
The lang, lang nichts are aye sae cheerie,
When sitting cosy wi' his dearie,
To joke and haver.

He tells her o' his hopes and cares
For future years,
His buyings, sellings, gains, repairs ;
His every joy and fear she shares,
Her een in tears.

And when arrives the hour o' rest
 He takes the books,
The guid auld Psalms he likes the best,
Then prays that they and theirs be blest,
 And heavenward looks.

But yet, for a' his care and cark,
 Dame Fortune sour
Has hardly blessed him wi' a sark;
Her buffets sair gar him look dark,
 And unco dour.

He kens his skill and fruitful soil
 Should hae reward;
Instead o' this, for a' his toil,
Ill hap contrives his wark to spoil,
 And mak's life hard.



The grey gull wheels o'er sodden stooks,
 When hairst's at hand ;
A' rusty grow the reaping-hooks,
The tearfu' sky mak's grumly brooks
 O'er a' the land.

His trust in Heaven gets mony a shock,
 And mony a skelp ;
Till he bethinks o' Grey Meg Brock,
The auld witch-wife below the rock—
 She'll gie him help.

A beldam hag ; wi' eagle beak
 And fiery een ;
Wi' snaky locks by either cheek,
And shouthers thrawn like a swee cleek,
 And no owre clean.

She bade him sit by chimney cheek,
Nor reck a roastin',
And cannily at her to keek,
Though nearly greetin' wi' the reek,
And sairly hoastin'.

'Rax oot your loof to me,' she squeels,
'And show nae fricht,
Nor mak' a sound, or aff the reels
Your life shall run, and to the deils
Ye'll post this nicht.'

Wi' deidly fear cauld at his heart,
Wi' terror blin',
He yet behoves to do his part,
But, fegs! he got an unco start,
That gar'd him grin.



She's ta'en a gullie keen and bricht,
And bled her thrapple ;
Into his hand, as still as nicht,
The warm bluid rins before his sicht,
As thick as sapple.

Like some hushed pool, with willowed bank,
A' grim and stark,
Whose shifting shadows, long and lank,
Far in its depths, 'neath sedges rank,
Glidc in the dark,

She bade him scan with fixèd gaze
His gruesome glass,
Where like a show within a haze,
Figures and fields, a moving maze,
Like deid wraiths pass.

Himsel' he sees wi' swinging stride,
 Through miry clay,
Cast wide the grain on ilka side,
Alang and back the furrows wide,
 The lea-lang day.

He sees himsel' wi' busy brain,
 To mak' ends meet,
Toiling as if wi' mark o' Cain,
Frozen wi' cauld, or drenched wi' rain,
 Or cut wi' sleet.

This vision fades. A fearsome ghaist
 Grows on his sicht,
And spairging through the mirky waste,
He sees his foe wi' hellish haste,
 Work harm at nicht.



He blights wi' deidly power his sawin',
 He lames the kye,
And slyly sours his gude hay mawin',
His chickens' necks he puts a thraw in,
 And mair forbye.

The frichtit chiel's now got a glisk
 O' his ill hap ;
His fears are gane, his heart is brisk :
'I'll waur yon carle whate'er the risk.
 Here, haud your lap.'

PART II

ALL bare beneath a cruel sky,
 Their glory past,
The clippit fields all silent lie,
The sheep to sheltering hollows fly,
 Frae biting blast.

And o'er the fields at midnight hour,
 'Neath pit-mirk carry,
The gudeman seeks to try his power
'Gainst ghosts or a' the deils that glower,
 Their spells to parry.

A down the burn wi' short'nin' breath,
 And by the plantin',
Whaur auld Ned Connal made his death ;
He closer grips his fechtin' graith,
 His heart is rantin'.

At his toon-en' he mak's a pause
 Beyond the dyke ;
He hears a soun' like roupy craws,
An' keeks about to ken the cause :
 'What ails the tyke?'

Noo straught in front as he was thinkin',
 Ere he could grip it,
The wild, unearthly wight cam' linkin',
And roun' the gudeman swift went jinkin',
 And by him slippit.

Frae liken sights may we be free,
And Gude protect us ;
If we the like o't hae to see,
Ill will it be to bear the dree
Till Heaven direct us.

A head atween his shouthers sunk,
Wi' matted locks ;
To skin and bone he maist was shrunk,
His shins nae thicker than a spunk
Or gude kale stocks.

A' brown and hairy was his form,
E'en to his claws ;
An auld bit sack to keep him warm,
Puir shelter frae the winter's storm,
Was a' his brows.



Wi' hirplin' gait and sidelin' wauchlin'
 He slid awa',
And after him the gudeman bauchlin'
Gets a sair dunt that sends him sprachlin'
 Against the wa'.

But up and hard upon his heels
 He mak's guid speed :
Each deidly claughts and buffets feels,
Until the warld about him reels,
 But disna heed.

Wi' lockèd teeth and pantin' breast,
 And ne'er a word,
But girnin' like the savage beast,
They twist and thraw frae wast to east,
 A' filed wi' yird.

Till, when the gudeman gets a rack,
An's sair put to,
He heaves the bogle on his back,
And chokes him till he's nearly black,
And gars him grue.

Oh, stay your hand, and gie me breath,
I'll cry a barlie ;
I'm but a serf to wark ye skaith,
But I'll help ye noo and serve ye baith,
Baith late and earlie.



P A R T I I I

Wi' simple faith the farmer chiel
 Accepts his offer ;
The fiend toils like the very deil,
And Fortune seems to bless his creel
 And fills the coffer.

Noo Simmer, like a canty quean
 In a' her braws,
Smiles on the land, and a' in green
She decks the hills and vales between,
 And birken shaws.

The daisy gleams close by the rills
 That wimple owre,
The heather purples a' the hills,
And clover bloom the meadow fills,
 To show her power.

And then comes Autumn soberly,
 And tints wi' gold
The woods and pastures waving free,
And saftly studs the lapping sea
 Wi' gems untold.

And here and there a leaf grows sere,
 The swallows flee,
And orchards blazon out their gear ;
In ripened glory far and near,
 Flames every tree.

Look till him noo—his swagging paunch

Wad grace a miller ;

So red his face, so plump his haunch,

His very look and gait sae staunch

Betoken siller.

'Tis not for him at dawn to toil,

There 's men and lasses ;

He hardly cares his hand to soil ;

Wi' Jean, wha used to slave and moil,

Time idly passes.

Year in, year out, their crops succeed,

They wish nae mair ;

They muckle get, they little need,

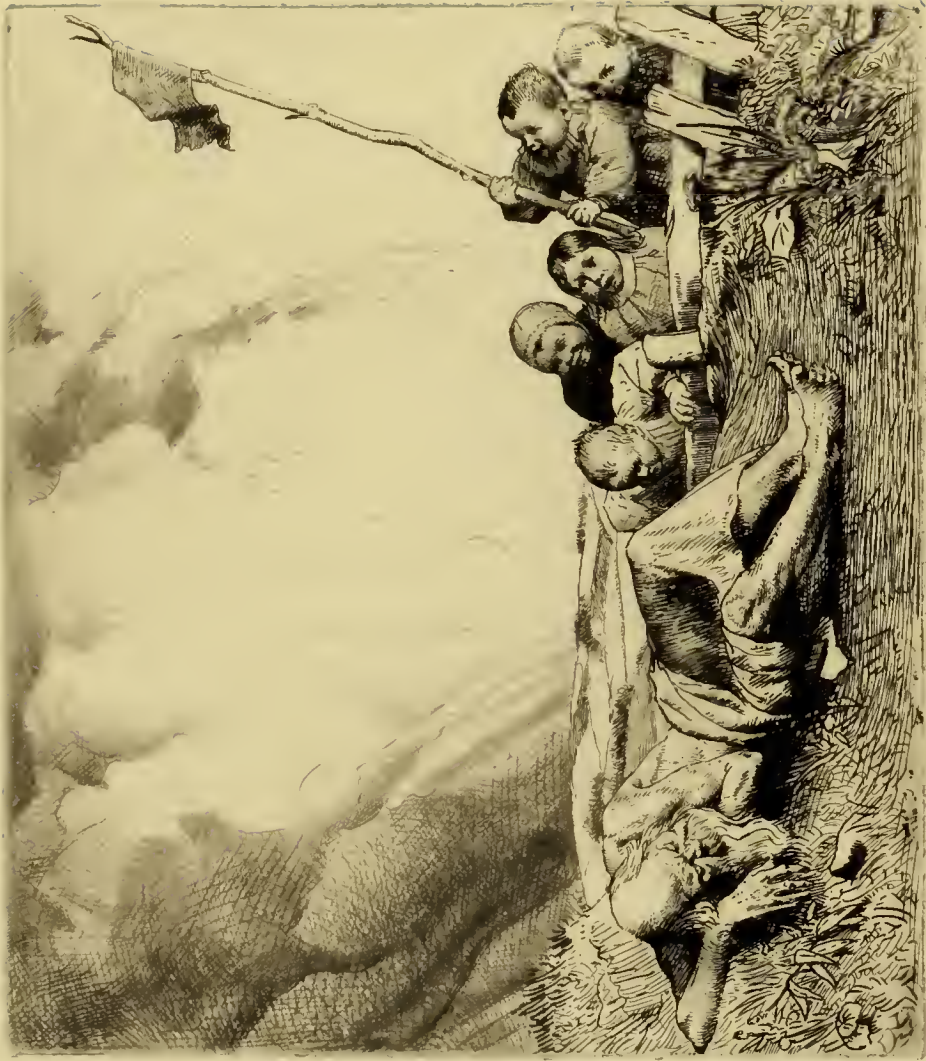
They richer grow, yet havena greed,

They help the puir.

The fiend's still thrang as thrang can be,
And works wi' vim,
He asks nae keep, and big and wee,
Lang friendly grown, crowd to his knee,
Nor think him grim.

The weans his pranks and jokes enjoy,
He'll spin their peerie,
Or flie their dragon; at a ploy
There's nane to beat him, man or boy,
And nane sae cheerie.

He'll ba' the waukrife, fashious weans,
Or soothe their fricht;
Yet tho' they speir wi' muckle pains,
Nane ken whaur lie his weary banes
A' through the nicht.



'Tis hairst time, and the fields resound
 Wi' ring o' scythe,
The laugh o' shearer, weather-browned,
Who treads with rhythmic step the ground,
 Keeps a' folk blythe.

And now the midday meal comes nigh :
 The strauchtenin' back,
The tools cast doon wi' restfu' sigh,
Give ease which only toil can buy,
 And lightsome crack.

The lazy farmer, sair distrest
 Wi' heat and sleep,
Seeks a cool nook to tak' his rest,
An's soon wi' dreams amang the blest,
 In slumbers deep.

Oh wake, oh wake, gudeman, and flee,
 There's muckle skaith ;
For wife and weans ill maun it be
Ye thole the ill ye canna see,
 And meet your death.

The fiend, on vengefu' thochts intent,
 Slinks frae the field,
Wi' gliding steps, and shouthers bent,
He eager seeks, wi' heid asklent,
 The farmer's bield.

* * * *

By ditch and dyke the blinkin' deil,
 This way, that way,
Keeks till he spies the hapless chiel
Close by his feet, and wi' a squeal
 He grips his prey.



* * * *

But where 's the gudeman? To and fro
By burn and lane,
The reapers, as they hameward go,
They seek him high, they seek him low,
But a' in vain.

Baith high and low in vain they look;
But, ere the dawn,
A fox, a weasel, and a rook
Have found him stark ahint a stook,
Wi' his neck thrawn.



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