

## FOLLOWING A PLANET.

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(Read January 9th, 1894.)

It is by no means a difficult thing for anyone who will take the trouble to observe the heavens, say for half an hour each night on the consecutive clear nights of any month in the year, to assure himself that the stars which shine there maintain, with reference to each other, the same position in the sky, night after night. Perhaps the simplest and consequently the best observation to begin with, will be the recognition of the Great Dipper, not itself a complete constellation, but a very conspicuous group of seven stars in *Ursa Major*. So many people are familiar with the 'Dipper' that any one not himself able to identify it, will find no trouble in getting some friend to point it out for him. The stars are so arranged with reference to each other, that four of them are placed at the corners of a somewhat irregular rectangle—the bowl of the Dipper—while the remaining three extend outwards from one of the corners of the rectangle, nearly parallel to its long axis, and represent the handle. The middle one of these three is not exactly in line with the other two, so that the handle is slightly bent. It may be incidentally mentioned here that this particular star is double, and is a very beautiful object as seen by a small telescope. A very short distance above it is a somewhat smaller star, visible to the naked eye—and popularly known as *Jack*, astride of the pole of the cart, when, what I have called the *Dipper*, is imagined as *Charles' Wain*, a very common name in some parts of England, for this group of stars.

Nothing can be more instructive or convincing to a beginner in star-gazing, than the continuous watching through one whole night—preferably a summer night, in our latitude—of this star group. If this be done it will be found that when the long axis of the Dipper is parallel to the horizon, a position which it is certain to take some time during the period of vigil, then the handle will be extended to the left hand side (west) of the observer, if the Dipper is *right side up*; or to his right hand side, (eastward) if the Dipper is *upside down*. It is in this latter position that it will be seen at twelve o'clock these nights, (middle of