

**HALF-HOURS WITH THE STARS: A
PLAIN AND EASY GUIDE TO
THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE
CONSTELLATIONS. TRUE FOR
EVERY YEAR**

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Half-hours with the stars: a plain and easy guide to the knowledge of the constellations. True for every year by Richard A. Proctor

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RICHARD A. PROCTOR

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GUIDE
TO THE
KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONSTELLATIONS.

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HALF-HOURS WITH THE STARS:

A PLAIN AND EASY GUIDE

TO

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONSTELLATIONS,

SHOWING, IN 12 MAPS, THE POSITION OF THE PRINCIPAL
STAR-GROUPS NIGHT AFTER NIGHT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, WITH INTRODUCTION
AND A SEPARATE EXPLANATION OF EACH MAP.

TRUE FOR EVERY YEAR.

BY

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'SUNVIEWS OF THE EARTH,' ETC. ETC.



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PREFACE.

THE OBJECT which I have proposed to myself in the preparation of this work has been to teach the beginner the stars in a manner which there can be no misunderstanding. I had the same object in view in preparing my Constellation-Seasons; but experience has shown me that to attain that object it is necessary to consult the beginner himself. I found on doing this that my Constellation-Seasons were not so well suited to the purpose I had in view as I had expected. Meridians and parallels, equator, ecliptic, and tropics, which had seemed to be absolutely necessary to the completeness of the maps, tended only to confuse the beginner. So also did the introduction of fourth-magnitude stars and the less important constellations. Other features of those maps, also, while increasing their utility (I think) to the more advanced student, rendered their meaning less *obvious* than is desirable for the beginner. In these maps I have discarded everything which could by any possibility be confusing. In place of letters indicating the points of the compass, the words *eastern horizon*, *north-eastern horizon*, &c. are written in full, and natural features round each map indicate the fact that the circumference of the map really corresponds to the horizon of the observer. The word 'overhead' is put on the centre of each map in place of 'zenith.' The hours to which each map corresponds for different days are written in according to the simplest mode of expressing them. And, lastly, the days proper for the use of each map will be found to run without interruption from the beginning of the year in Map I., to the end of the year in Map XII.; the interval between successive dates never exceeding four days.

I believe I am not claiming too much for these maps in saying that they are the first series ever published, *which the beginner could not possibly misinterpret, even if he paid no attention to the accompanying letterpress.*

R. A. P.

HALF-HOUR ON THE USE OF THE MAPS.

It is VERY EASY to gain a knowledge of the stars, if the learner sets to work in the proper manner. But he commonly meets with a difficulty at the outset of his task. He provides himself with a set of the ordinary star-maps, and then finds himself at a loss how to make use of them. Such maps tell him nothing of the position of the constellations *on the sky*. If he happen to recognise a constellation, then indeed his maps, if properly constructed, will tell him the names of the stars forming the constellation, and also he may be able to recognise a few of the neighbouring constellations. But when he has done this, he may meet with a new difficulty, even as respects this very constellation. For if he look for it again some months later, he will neither find it in its former place nor will it present the same aspect,—if indeed it happen to be above the horizon at all.

It is clear, then, that what the learner wants is a set of maps specially constructed to show him in what part of the sky the constellations are to be looked for. He ought on any night of the year to be able to turn at once to the proper map, and in that map he ought to see at once what to look for, towards what point of the compass each visible constellation lies, and how high it is above the horizon. And, if possible (as the present work shows is the case), *one* map ought to suffice to exhibit the aspect of the whole heavens, in order that the beginner may not be confused by turning from map to map, and trying to find out how each fits in with the others.

It is to fulfil these requirements that the present maps have been constructed. Each exhibits the aspect of the whole sky at a given day and hour. The circumference of the map represents the natural horizon, the middle of the map representing the part of the sky which lies immediately overhead. If the learner hold one of these maps over his head, so as to look vertically upwards at it, the different parts of the horizon marked in round the circumference being turned towards the proper compass points, he will see the same view of the heavens as he would if he were to lie on his back and look upwards at the sky, only that the map is a planisphere and the sky a hemisphere.

But although this illustration serves to indicate the nature of the maps, the actual mode of using them is more convenient.