

planets which gravitate round the central orb. Wondrous as are its beauties of vale and hill, of wood and lea, of lake and stream, of emerald pastures and flashing waters, it is conceivable that far more brilliant are the scenes of either or all of those remote suns which the magic glass barely brings within the reach of scientific curiosity, and which, nevertheless, hang but on the dim frontiers of the Infinite.

Since the Earth is a planet (*πλανητες*, "a wanderer"), it becomes necessary that we should accurately ascertain what ideas are usually conveyed by that designation.

The Planets, then, are stars which incessantly revolve around the sun, the central orb of our limited system. The Sun retains the planets in somewhat similar fashion as the groom holds at the end of his curbing rein the horse swift wheeling round his circular manége. This image—a vulgar one, undoubtedly—does, nevertheless, convey an accurate idea of the kind of action which the Sun exercises on the Earth; the latter completing its revolution round the former in the space of one year [365 days, 6 hours, 9 min., $10\frac{75}{100}$ sec.] Only, while the rein of the groom is a material and visible bond, that of the Sun is invisible, mysterious, not appreciable in its nature, and not recognizable except by its effects, like the influence which an electricised body possesses over light insubstantial objects. Its attractive power suffices to compel the terrestrial globe to describe around it a constant and regular orbit.

We must distinguish the Planets from the Stars. While on the celestial vault the latter blend together,—for their dimensions and their splendours seem alike,—an abyss, as it were, intervenes between their function and that of the planets. A star is nothing less than a sun, which shines, like our own Sun, with a light peculiar to itself, and owes its resplendence to the fires which it evolves from its body. Thus, the fixed stars are the luminous centres of systems resembling our solar world, while the planets are only secondary stars revolving around our Sun.

The Earth, then, as we have said, is but one of the planets which