

# Saturn Only Planet in August Skies

*Astronomy*

By JAMES STOKLEY

The chief astronomical attraction of the August evening skies are the Perseid meteors, which reach their maximum on August 11 and 12, though some are seen even later. In the *SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER* for last week full directions were given for observing them.

So far as the other attractions of the August sky are concerned, the program is rather slim. Most of the planets have departed from the evening sky, and only Saturn remains in the evening sky for more than a brief period after sunset. Mars is in the constellation of Virgo, and sets about an hour after the sun, but Saturn is in Scorpio, not far from the red star Antares, and does not set until about midnight.

Now we are in the midst of the "dog days", when dogs are supposed to go mad. This name has an astronomical origin, for the name dates from the ancient priest astrologers. As Sirius, the so-called "dog star," is the brightest of all the stars in the heavens, it was watched with special attention. Early in July it set just after the sun and then in August it rose just before sunrise. This time of year was especially important to the Egyptians, for then the Nile overflowed and watered their crops, so the priests anxiously watched for the morning rising of Sirius as a signal. And as the star then mingled its own light with that of the sun, it was supposed this additional radiation was responsible for the heat of this time of year, when

dogs, so common in oriental countries, are apt to go mad.

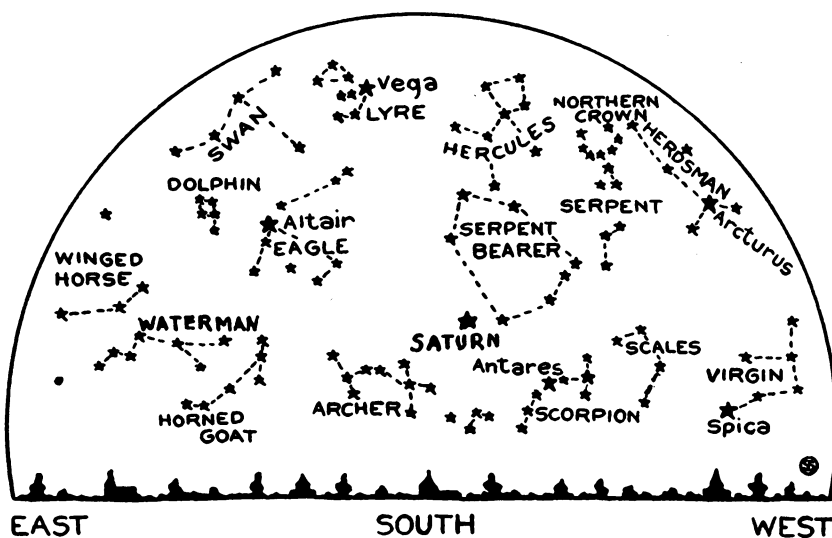
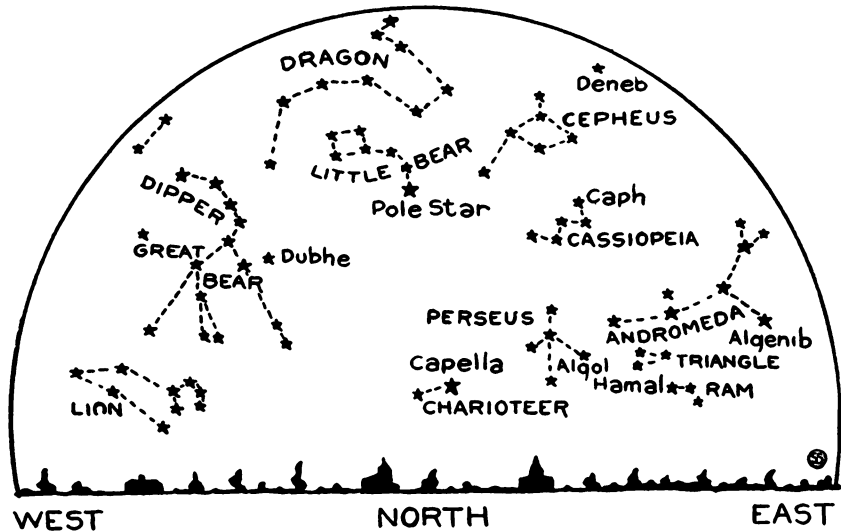
To the unaided eye, Saturn appears merely as a star of the .5 magnitude, a little fainter than Arcturus, the bright star in Bootes, in the western sky. Its steady, untwinkling light distinguishes it from the star. But through even a small telescope, magnifying perhaps 30 or 40 times, the wonderful ring system that makes this planet unique, as far as we know, among celestial bodies, becomes apparent.

Through a large telescope, the sight is even more wonderful, and no one should lose the opportunity of seeing it. In a number of parts of the country great telescopes are opened regularly on certain nights for visitors. Every Friday evening the great 60-inch reflector of the Mount Wilson Observatory in California is open to

visitors. This is reached by stage in a few hours from Los Angeles. At the Lick Observatory, on Mount Hamilton, near San Jose, California, the 36-inch refractor is dedicated to visitors' use every Saturday evening. The 72-inch reflector at Victoria, B. C.; the 20-inch refractor at Denver, Colorado; the telescopes at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.; Drake University, Des Moines; Chabot Observatory, Oakland, California; Lowell Observatory, Flagstaff, Arizona; Allegheny Observatory, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.; University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.; the U. S. Naval Observatory, Washington, D. C., and many others, are all regularly set aside for the visitors to look through. So no matter what part of the country you are in, there is probably a large telescope near you, and you may be assured that the astronomers there will welcome you on their public nights. A number of these institutions require that visitors obtain tickets (free) in advance, in order that they will not be overcrowded, so it would be best to write for details before making a visit. Some of the university observatories are closed to visitors in summer.

Five stars of the first magnitude are present this month in the evening sky. Vega, in Lyra, the Lyre, is nearly overhead. To the west is Arcturus, already mentioned. To the east of Vega is Deneb, in Cygnus, the Swan, or "northern cross", and to the southeast can be seen Altair, in Aquila, the Eagle. Low in the south is the brilliant red Antares, eye of the Scorpion, Scorpio.

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THESE MAPS show the sky as it appears these August evenings. Just hold them in front of you as you face north or south, and the upper or lower will represent the stars you see on a clear night