



* * • SYMBOLS FOR STARS IN ORDER OF BRIGHTNESS

Venus Leaving Evening Sky

by James Stokley

Evenings in early August bring us the last glimpses of Venus, the planet which shone so brilliantly in the west during spring and early summer.

It's still visible, low in the west, soon after sunset but it descends below the horizon about an hour later. Shining far more brightly than any other planet, or any star, Venus is easily located—if the sky is clear.

Each night, as it draws closer to the sun, the planet will set a little earlier and will be harder to locate. After mid-August, it will be difficult to see at all. On Aug. 29 it will be practically in line with the sun, at the position called "inferior conjunction." Then it raises and sets with the sun.

Even on Aug. 1 Venus sets before the times of the accompanying maps; hence, it does not appear on them. These show the sky as it looks about 11:00 p.m. your own kind of daylight

saving time on Aug. 1; 10:00 p.m. on Aug. 15; and 9:00 p.m. on Aug. 31.

In the southwest, Mars is shown in Libra, the scales. Still as bright as a first magnitude star, it also has faded from its splendor in April, when it approached closest to earth for this trip around the sun.

Jupiter, the third brilliant planet of recent months, passes behind the sun on Aug. 8, and cannot be seen this month. However, Saturn is replacing it in the evening sky. This planet, whose rings make it such a fascinating object when viewed through a telescope, barely gets on our maps, near the eastern horizon. Saturn rises rather late, in the constellation of Pisces, the fishes. It's about as bright as Mars, but looks considerably fainter because of its low altitude. The earth's atmosphere absorbs more of its light than if it were higher in the sky.

Directly overhead shines the brightest star of the evening. This is Vega, in Lyra, the lyre, second-brightest star in the nighttime sky for most of the U.S. Only Sirius, the dog star, prominent in winter, is more brilliant.

Below Vega, toward the east, stands Cygnus, the swan, with Deneb as the brightest star. Some stars of this group form an asterism called the Northern Cross, because of its shape. South of the swan is Aquila, the eagle, with Altair, another star of the first magnitude.

Low in the southwest is Antares, part of Scorpius, the scorpion. It, too, is first magnitude but like Saturn, its low altitude causes considerable diminution of its light. The name Antares means "rival of Mars." It was given by an early Greek astronomer, Ptolemy, doubtless because both are red. With Mars itself nearby this month, one can easily compare them.

In the west, in Boötes, the herdsman, stands Arcturus. A good way to locate it is to look in the northwest for the familiar Big Dipper in Ursa Major, the great bear. Following the curve of the Dipper's handle southward you soon come to Arcturus. The "pointers" are in the bowl of the Dipper. Their direction (toward the right) takes you to Polaris, the pole star.

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