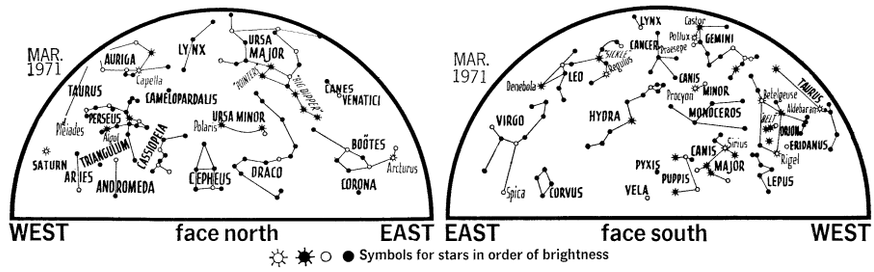
ASTRONOMY

Spring's arrival

by James Stokley



With the arrival of March the stars and constellations are beginning to show their springtime aspect. The winter groups that were so prominent have shifted toward the west.

The maps show the skies as they appear at 10 p.m., local standard time, on March 1. They will appear similarly at 9 p.m. on the 15th, and at 8 p.m. on the 31st.

Orion is still prominent; unlike any other constellation that we can see from the United States it includes two first-magnitude stars. Betelgeuse is above and Rigel is lower.

Left is Canis Major with Sirius—brightest star in the nighttime sky.

Other first-magnitude stars appearing in March are: Aldebaran in Taurus; Procyon in Canis Minor; Pollux in Gemini; Capella in Auriga; Arcturus in Boötes; and Spica in Virgo.

The seven stars that form the Big Dipper are high in the northeast, in Ursa Major.

Saturn, in Aries, is the only planet shown. The last few days of March Mercury will appear low in the west just after sunset. About 1:00 a.m. early in March Jupiter rises. It is followed, about an hour and a half later, by Mars—fainter, although as bright as a first-magnitude star. Nearly two hours before sunrise Venus appears—more than five times as bright as Jupiter.

CELESTIAL TIMETABLE

Mar.	EST	
2	11:10 p.m.	Algol at minimum brightness
3	9:01 p.m.	Moon in first quarter
5	7:50 p.m.	Algol at minimum
11	9:34 p.m.	Full moon
	11:00 p.m.	Moon farthest, distance 252,500 miles
18	6:00 a.m.	Moon passes south of Jupiter
19	9:30 p.m.	Moon in last quarter
20	8:00 a.m.	Moon passes south of Mars
21	1:38 a.m.	Sun over equator, spring begins in Northern Hemisphere
23	12:50 a.m.	Algol at minimum
	8:00 p.m.	Moon passes north of Venus
25	9:40 p.m.	Algol at minimum
26	4:00 a.m.	Moon nearest, distance 222,000 miles
	2:24 p.m.	New moon
27	11:00 p.m.	Moon passes north of Mercury
29	5:00 p.m.	Moon passes north of Saturn

Spring begins (in the Northern Hemisphere) at 1:38 a.m., EST, on March 21. At that moment the sun will be directly above a point on the equator, in the Indian Ocean about 500 miles south of Ceylon.

In late winter the earth is in the direction from the sun toward Leo. Six months from now our planet will be on the opposite side of the sun, which itself will be toward Leo. That constellation won't be visible. But at night we'll see Aquarius in whose direction the sun now stands. □