



## Bright winter stars shine in south

by James Stokley

With the coming of February the brilliant stars of winter have replaced the display of bright planets so prominent on evenings of late autumn and early winter.

Venus has gone from the evening sky, to become a morning "star," conspicuous in the east at dawn. In the first days of the month perhaps you'll still get a glimpse of Jupiter at dusk, very low in the west. On Feb. 1 it sets about 40 minutes after sunset. On the 13th it will set with the sun.

Mars is still in the constellation of Taurus, shining with characteristic redness in the west. Although it has faded to about a sixteenth of its brightness in October it is still equal to a first-magnitude star. From its nearest approach on Oct. 16 of 43 million miles it has receded to 106 million at the beginning of February.

Seldom-seen Mercury, innermost of the planets, will be visible about Feb. 9, when it will be farthest east of the sun. On that day it will set about an hour and a half after the sun, as seen

from 40° north latitude. About Feb. 5, even though it will set earlier, it will be a little brighter, and you may be able to locate it in the gathering dusk.

Saturn also is visible high in the south and about twice as bright as Mars. It's in the western end of Gemini.

The stars and constellations are shown on the accompanying maps, as they appear about 11:00 p.m., local daylight saving time, on Feb. 1, an hour earlier in the middle of the month and two hours earlier at the end.

The brightest star shown is Sirius, in the south in Canis Major. Higher and to the right is Orion, with Betelgeuse and Rigel. Farthest right is Taurus, where Mars stands, with bright Aldebaran, slightly fainter than Mars. Somewhat higher is Auriga, with Capella.

In Gemini, toward the left, Pollux is the brightest star. Canis Minor, with Procyon, is below this group. Another first-magnitude star, almost as bright as Pollux, is Regulus, which shines in the east in Leo.

Just above the southern horizon, below Canis Major, our map shows three

constellations that are probably not familiar even to those who can recognize many of the sky's features. They are Puppis, Pyxis and Columba, now as high as we ever see them from the United States. Only when directly south, as they are on February evenings, do they rise above our horizon. □

### CELESTIAL TIME TABLE

Feb.	EDT	
3	noon	Moon passes north of Saturn
5	8:00 pm	Moon nearest, distance 223,000 miles
6	7:24 pm	Full Moon
9	4:00 am	Mercury farthest east of sun
13	3:10 am	Algol (variable star in Perseus) at minimum brightness
	noon	Jupiter behind sun
	8:04 pm	Moon in last quarter
15	11:00 pm	Algol at minimum
18	4:00 am	Moon farthest, distance 252,000 miles
	8:50 pm	Algol at minimum
	11:00 pm	Moon passess south of Venus
22	1:34 am	New Moon
24	5:00 pm	Mercury between sun and earth
27	8:00 am	Venus at greatest brilliancy

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