

Stars of February

CELESTIAL TIME TABLE				
Feb.	3	1:23 a.m. EST	Moon in last quarter	
	8	4:00 a.m.	Mercury between sun and earth	
	11	12:17 a.m.	New Moon	
		11:00 p.m.	Moon farthest, distance 252,700 miles	
	13	10:00 a.m.	Moon passes north of Venus	
		7:00 p.m.	Moon passes north of Jupiter	
	17	2:00 p.m.	Venus passes south of Jupiter	
		11:20 p.m.	Algol (variable star in Perseus) at minimum brightness	
	19	2:39 a.m.	Moon in first quarter	
	20	8:10 p.m.	Algol at minimum	
	22	6:00 a.m.	Moon passes south of Saturn	
	25	6:00 p.m. EDT	Moon nearest, distance 221,500 miles	
		9:15 p.m.	Full Moon	

by James Stokley

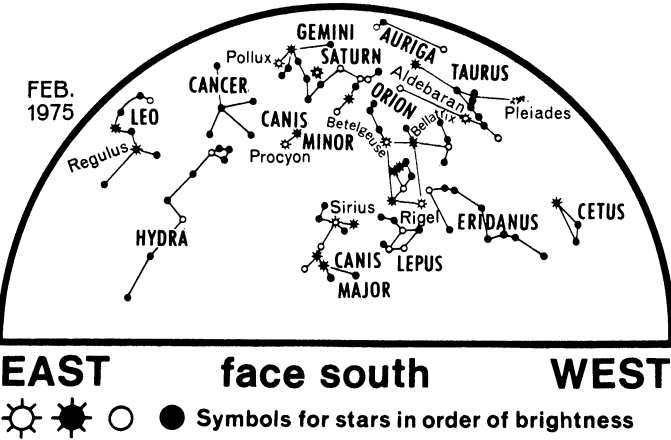
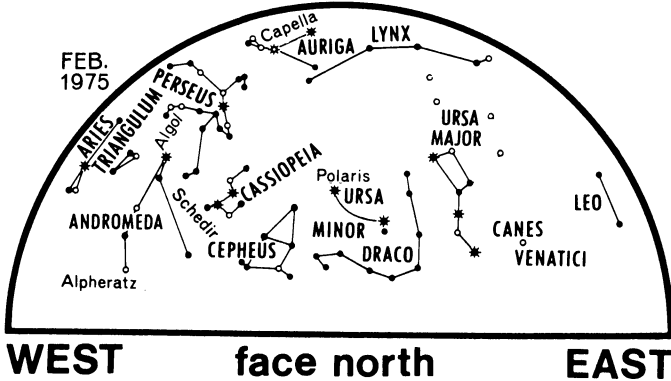
A close approach of the two brightest planets will be a striking spectacle in the western evening sky during February. On Feb. 17 brilliant Venus will dash past the more sluggish Jupiter. When closest Venus will be to the south, within a fifth of a degree of the other planet. This is less than half the apparent diameter of the moon. Conjunction, when the two are on the same north-south line in the sky, comes about 2 p.m., EST. In North Ameri-

ca daylight will hide the planets to the naked eye.

As the sky darkens that evening they will become visible, still close. Venus (minus 3.4 on the astronomical scale of magnitude or brightness) will appear first. A little later you'll see Jupiter to the right and about a fifth as bright. It will be a little brighter than Sirius, the most brilliant star, shining in the south in Canis Major.

You'll find it interesting to watch these planets as they approach and then draw

apart. On Feb. 1 Venus will set about an hour and a half after sunset, as twilight ends. Jupiter, considerably higher, will set nearly an hour and a half later. But Venus will be moving away from the sun and toward Jupiter. (The crescent moon will pass north of Jupiter on the 13th.) On the evening of Feb. 16 Venus will still be a little below Jupiter. After the 17th Venus will climb still higher and by March 1 will set more than two hours after sunset. Jupiter will then set about an hour and a half after the sun. □



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