

Seldom-Seen Mercury in May Skies

Astronomy

Compared with the magnificent spectacle of a total eclipse of the sun, the evening sky in May has little scheduled that is of great importance. The planets Venus and Jupiter, which were so prominent in the west after twilight a month or two ago, have now passed to the neighborhood of the sun and are no longer visible. Mars is still present in the sky, however, and in the middle of the month sets about midnight. It is visible in the southwest during the evening, in the constellation of Cancer, the crab. Saturn, the ringed planet, now rises about 10 P. M. It appears in the late evening as a pale yellow star of the first magnitude between the constellations of Scorpio, the Scorpion, and Sagittarius, the archer.

There is one rarely visible planet, however, that can be seen this month. It is Mercury. So seldom does this get into a position for seeing, that even the great Copernicus who first showed the world that it was a member of the solar system and, together with the earth, revolving around the sun, is said never to have seen it.

Mercury is only 36,000,000 miles from the sun, as compared with 67,000,000 miles for Venus and 93,000,000 miles for the earth. The result is that usually it is so close to the sun that it is completely lost in the brilliant glare. It revolves around the sun once in 88 days. That is to say, its year is equal to 88 days on the earth. However, as it moves, the earth also moves, so that every 116 days it comes between the sun and the earth.

Once in this 116 day period, we see

it to the east of the sun and once to the west of the sun. When to the east, as it is now, the sun sets first, leaving Mercury visible in the evening low in the western sky. At such times, it is said to be the evening star. When on the western side of the sun, it rises before sunrise and is then seen low in the east in the morning, as the morning star.

This month Mercury is at the greatest distance east of the sun, or at greatest eastern elongation, as the astronomer calls it, on May 15. On that date it sets about two hours after the sun and is visible about 20 degrees above the horizon at sunset. Twenty degrees is about half the distance between Regulus, the bright star at the end of the sickle in Leo, in the southwest, and Pollux, the brighter of the two twins, low in the northwest. For about a week before and after this date, Mercury can be seen

as a bright star, low in the western sky at dusk. It should not be difficult to pick it up with the naked eye, but a pair of opera glasses or binoculars may help in locating it. When one once knows where to look for it, it can be easily seen.

Nine first magnitude stars are now in the sky. Regulus, at the end of the handle of the sickle in Leo, the Lion, is one of these, and so is Pollux in Gemini, the twins. Procyon, in Canis Minor, the Little Dog, is low in the west. Capella is in Auriga, the charioteer, low in the northwest. In the southern sky is the bright star Spica, in Virgo, the Virgin. High in the southeast is Arcturus, in Bootes, while low in the southwest is Antares, in Scorpio, the Scorpion. Low in the northwest is Vega, in Lyra, the Lyre, and still lower is Deneb in Cygnus, the Swan. By next month these latter stars will have risen higher in the sky while those in the west will have disappeared from view. Then the summer skies will again be with us.

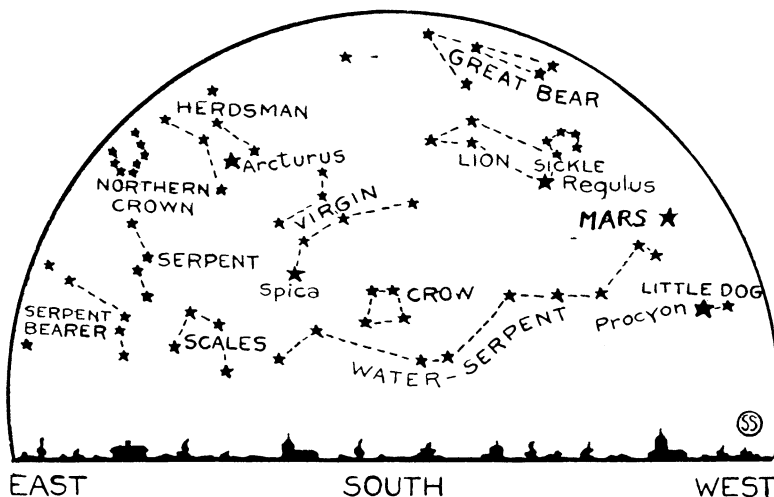
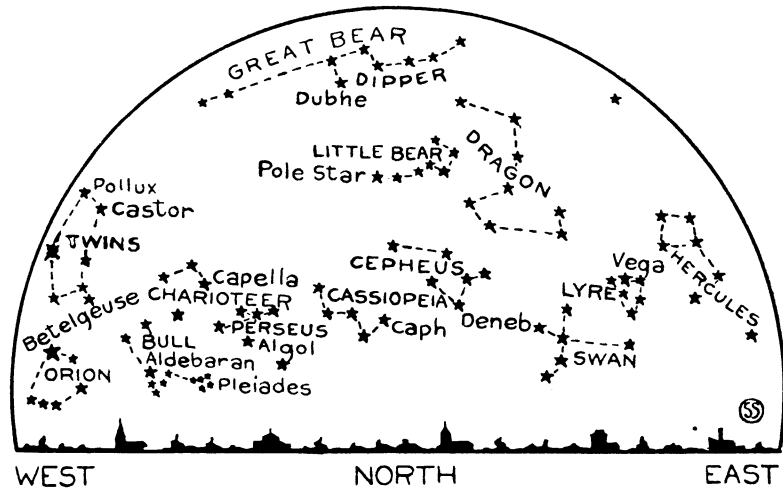
Science News-Letter, May 4, 1929

Yale Gets Brains

Neurology

An unusual collection of brains is coming to Yale for study. They are the brains of fishes, duplicate specimens in the collection of Harry Payne Bingham now housed in the Peabody Museum, and they are destined for dissection and examination as a part of the wide program of the new Institute of Human Relations. A fund of \$5,000 a year, over a period of five years, has been guaranteed for the support of these studies by Mrs. Dudley S. Blossom of Cleveland.

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HOLD THESE MAPS in front of you and face North or South. The upper or lower one will then show the stars of the May evening sky