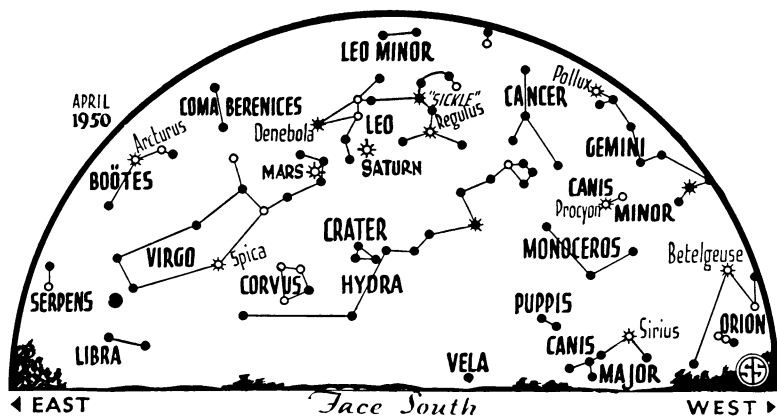




◊ * ○ • SYMBOLS FOR STARS IN ORDER OF BRIGHTNESS

direction from the sun that we are, i. e., to the position called "inferior conjunction."

Mercury is much smaller than the earth, with a diameter of 3100 miles compared to our 7918 miles. Because of its smaller size, gravity on the surface of Mercury is less than a third of what we experience. A man of 200 pounds here would weigh only 58 pounds on the surface of that planet.

Mercury Not Resort Material

However, even if some day men are able to travel by rocket ships to other planets, it is hardly likely that Mercury will be a very popular resort. Like our moon, it seems practically devoid of any atmosphere. In a manner similar to that in which the moon always keeps the same face turned towards the earth, so does Mercury always keep one hemisphere directed toward the sun. With the sun so close and always shining, the temperature of this part of the planet is about 650 degrees Fahrenheit, hot enough for lead to melt. On the opposite face, which never receives any sunshine, it must be extremely cold. In between these regions there is a narrow zone in which the sun occasionally rises a short distance above the horizon, then drops behind it again. Though the average temperature here would have a more reasonable figure, it would still be subjected to great extremes, and hardly a comfortable place to be.

Eclipse of Moon

Another item on the astronomical program for April is a total eclipse of the moon, but it will not be visible from any part of North America. From Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia the beginning will be seen, while the end, which will not be seen from Australia, will in addition be observed from the east coast of South America. Any disappointment that we may feel is ameliorated by the fact that the year will bring another total lunar eclipse on Sept. 26. Then, as in the case of the two lunar eclipses of 1949, practically all of North America will be able to see it.

Time Table for April

April	EST	
1	6:37 p. m.	Moon passes Mars
2	3:49 p. m.	Full moon (total eclipse visible from Europe, Asia and Africa)
3	3:00 p. m.	Moon nearest distance 222,900 miles
5	6:00 a. m.	Venus passes Jupiter
6	4:00 a. m.	Neptune nearest, but still invisible to naked eye, distance 2,721,000,000 miles
9	6:42 a. m.	Moon in last quarter
11	4:00 a. m.	Venus farthest west of sun
12	7:46 a. m.	Moon passes Jupiter
	7:59 p. m.	Moon passes Venus
17	3:25 a. m.	New moon
18	2:00 p. m.	Moon farthest, distance 252,500 miles
21	early a. m.	Meteor shower visible, radiating from constellation of Lyra
22	9:00 p. m.	Mercury farthest east of sun, visible around this date in west just after sunset
25	5:40 a. m.	Moon in first quarter
28	1:42 a. m.	Moon passes Saturn
	5:55 p. m.	Moon passes Mars

Subtract one hour for CST, two hours for MST, and three for PST.

Science News Letter, March 25, 1950

NUCLEAR PHYSICS-GEOLOGY

Age of Uranium Deposits Clue to Their Location

➤ HOW old are U. S. uranium deposits? Government experts reported that the age of radioactive ores may be a key to how they are formed, and more important, where to look for them.

U. S. Geological Survey analysts L. R. Stieff, M. N. Girhard and T. W. Stern in reporting preliminary tests on Colorado carnotite, a source of uranium, have given widely divergent answers: anywhere from 30,000,000 to 600,000,000 years.

The real answer is believed to be under 100,000,000 years, they said. But something has happened to the deposits as the earth's crust formed. Hence different laboratory tests have given different results.

The real age of such deposits may throw light on the origin of radioactive elements and guide prospectors in more systematic exploration.

Science News Letter, March 25, 1950

MEDICINE

Human Pregnancy Detected Earlier by New Test

➤ A SPEEDY test for detecting pregnancy at an early date and which also helps predict whether the pregnancy will be normal or end in spontaneous abortion is reported in the first issue of a new scientific journal, FERTILITY AND STERILITY (Jan.).

The test was devised by Dr. Edmond J. Farris of the Wistar Institute, Philadelphia. It is done with rats. Results of the test are known within 24 hours. The test detects pregnancy as early as the 31st day of the menstrual cycle, whereas the 43rd day is the earliest for other tests. This means the patient and her physician can know whether she is pregnant about two weeks earlier than by other tests.

Redness of the ovaries of the immature white rat 24 hours after a few drops of the woman's urine has been injected under the rat's skin tells whether she is pregnant. The degree of redness is important. A strong color indicates a normal pregnancy. A weak color reaction suggests that the woman will lose the baby by spontaneous abortion.

Certain nonpregnancy conditions, such as ovulation and the menopause, will also produce the red color reaction. But in these conditions the reddening of the rat's ovaries is at its maximum within two hours, whereas pregnancy does not produce its greatest reddening for 15 to 24 hours later.

Science News Letter, March 25, 1950

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