

## MEDICINE

# Little Girls Turn Blue From Silver in Their Medicine

FOR the rest of their lives ten little girls will face the world with blue or slate-gray complexions.

Within the last year these girls, as well as five boys, have developed argyria, a discoloration of the skin or tissues resulting from the free use of silver preparations. At present, no treatment for the condition is known.

Dr. L. Edward Gaul and A. H. Staud, New York City, point to the alarming increase in argyria (*Journal, American Medical Association*, April 20). Seventy cases of this permanent discoloration of the skin have been reported, it is declared. The number of cases has increased more than 100 per cent. in the last five years, these medical workers state.

The disfigurement of the fifteen children mentioned, all of whom are under 10 years of age, followed the use in the nose and throat of solutions containing silver for the treatment of colds and

allied conditions. Argyrol, collargol and neo-silvol are the silver compounds involved, according to the report of these two scientists, both of whom are connected with the New York Post Graduate Medical School and Hospital, Columbia University.

Some of the cases among adults have been traced to the use of silver arsphenamine in the treatment of syphilis.

The human body, state Dr. Gaul and Mr. Staud, can retain only so much silver—an equivalent of 8 grams of silver arsphenamine. If more than 7 grams from this or any source is taken in argyria develops.

The discoloration first appears on the face, neck, hands and the half-moons of the finger nails, as a result of the chemical action of the light on the retained silver. Whether a person is a blond or a brunet is a factor, as well as the amount of fat on the body.

*Science News Letter, May 25, 1935*

on the esophagus, causing symptoms of stricture, or it may compress the lung markedly, giving rise to symptoms simulating tuberculosis.

Dr. Bishop reported two such cases, one of which was confirmed by examination of the chest after the patient's death. He stressed the importance of X-ray examination and the use of barium in studying the esophagus when it seems to be constricted, in order to diagnose the condition correctly. Treatment of the enlarged left auricle and the disturbance it causes depends on correct diagnosis and the avoidance of such procedures as tapping the chest cavity to draw off supposed accumulation of fluid and exploratory operations.

*Science News Letter, May 25, 1935*

## PHYSIOGRAPHY

## Russian Proposes Mapping Earth's Radioactivity

MAPPING all the variations of natural radioactivity over the earth is a project put forward by Dr. V. I. Vernadsky of the U. S. S. R. Academy of Sciences. Intensity of radioactivity in each locality would be indicated on the map as a vertical projection, making possible the tracing of "isoradioactive" lines.

Such a map would have a two-fold importance. For the benefit of "pure" science, it would help to bring out more clearly the distribution of crustal rocks in order of their geologic age, for the ages of rocks are indicated in part by their degree of radioactivity. On the applied science side, it might help locate new helium wells, since helium is everywhere a natural product of radioactive decomposition of the rocks, though in only one or two places known at present have conditions been such as to bring about its accumulation in economically paying quantities.

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# Heart Enlargement Confused With Tuberculosis and Tumor

PATIENTS apparently suffering from tuberculosis, others who appear to have chest tumors and still others with symptoms of stricture of the esophagus, food passage between mouth and stomach, may instead be suffering from enlargement of the left auricle of the heart, Dr. Louis Faugeres Bishop, Jr., of New

York City, told members of the American College of Physicians.

The left auricle is the heart cavity receiving oxygen-carrying blood from the lungs and delivering it to the left ventricle which pumps this blood to the rest of the body. When this part of the heart becomes extremely enlarged it may press

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## RADIO

Tuesday, May 28, 3:30 p. m., E.S.T.

FOODS WE EAT AND WHY WE EAT THEM, by Prof. R. Adams Dutcher, Department of Agricultural and Biological Chemistry, Pennsylvania State College.

Tuesday, June 4, 3:30 p. m., E.S.T.

THE MEANING OF MATHEMATICS, by Dr. E. R. Hedrick, Professor of Mathematics, University of California at Los Angeles.

In the Science Service series of radio addresses given by eminent scientists over the Columbia Broadcasting System.