

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 13, 1932

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BASEMENT AIR

When most dwelling houses had cellars, and before they had basements, cellar air was looked upon as very unhealthful, though its dangers were undoubtedly much exaggerated. The modern basement deserves still less the bad reputation it has inherited from its predecessor. Reasons why its atmosphere is, as a rule, better for mankind than that of the rest of the house are pointed out by Dr. E.V. Hill in the Aerologist.

"In the summer time," he says, "the large area of surface in contact with the ground conducts the heat from the basement, and the basement air is many degrees cooler than the air of the floors above. A well-known London physician has achieved an enviable reputation for successfully handling the summer ills of children even in the slums. He sends the children to live in the basement, where the air is cooler and cleaner than in their homes or the streets. In the winter time the same condition that makes basement air cool in summer now makes it warm. The heat from the ground, which is warmer than the outside air in cold weather, is conducted into the basement, making the latter warm. If basement air is used, a considerable saving in the fuel bill is the result.

"There are, as a usual thing, no rugs and draperies in the basement, no cooking, sleeping, dusting or the innumerable other activities commonly carried on above."

He adds that basement air usually contains less dust and fewer bacteria than the air of the floors above and is less likely to be contaminated by unrecognized gas leaks, as the latter are, in general, commoner in the vicinity of gas stoves and other fixtures than at the simple line connections in the basement.

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