

Miscellaneous.

The Institute Smell.

The Institute Smell is a term applied to that peculiar and indescribable odor so frequently met with to-day in many of our finest hospitals and other institutions. The real cause of this odor was for a long time unknown, and many ineffectual efforts to eradicate it were made, such as the isolation of the kitchen, laundry, and all other rooms, which might have caused it, and the adoption of the "cottage plan" of building, by which the institute is not made of one large building, but of a number of smaller ones, each for its own particular use. But in spite of all these efforts the disagreeable odor still haunted the institute and seemed to increase rather than diminish with frequent cleanings.

A determined attempt to run down the cause of this smell led to the discovery that it emanated from the floors of the building. It was then noticed to be specially prominent in those buildings which had wood, or other organic and absorbent floors, and to be totally lacking in institutes which were provided with inorganic and non-porous flooring material. Further investigation led to the discovery that the wooden floor which daily absorbs dirt and moisture finally became the breeding place for myriads of bacteria, known as the "anaerobic" germ, which term means germs which live out of contact with air and light. These micro-organisms caused the wood to decay, and to emit a peculiar musty odor. The washing of the floors did not injure them, as they lived within the wood, but on the contrary furnished them with the very moisture which was essential to their existence. As the wood became decayed it, together with the cracks between the boards of the floor, became infested with countless other bacteria. The effect of their destructive action was not visible to the eye, but was plainly evident to the sense of smell.

The most aseptic, non-porous, germ-proof floor which we have to-day is the floor covered with the baked clay tile. The clay tile is harder than marble, slate or any other natural stone; even a sharp steel point will not scratch it. It is absolutely non-porous and can not absorb dirt or moisture. It is absolutely sterile as far as germs are concerned. The joints between the tiles are filled with a dense grouting of pure cement. A tile floor is very easy to keep clean, and washing it supplies no nourishment to micro-organisms for the two excellent reasons that these micro-organisms cannot work their way into the tile, and even if they were there not the slightest amount of moisture could reach them.

—C. J. Fox, in *St. Paul Medical Journal*.