

"Am I the only guest?" I soon inquired, seeing no one else about except 3 well-behaved children to whom I was duly introduced.

"Why, I guess you are." Mrs. Muller laughed. The children laughed politely and exchanged intelligent remarks. That must be all her doing, I thought, bringing up the children. He'd have no time for it. And what a beautiful job she's done of it. A perfect wife! Having children makes a difference in a woman, I thought. Take Dr. Bachand. Cold and scientific, no sense of humour. Take that unprovoked outburst of this afternoon.

"Dr. Bachand's not coming then?"

"Dr. Bachand? Why no, I believe she's over at the spittoon," Mrs. Muller smiled.

Spittoon — I laughed uproariously. "You mean she works in the evenings too?"

"Oh, she never stops working, on Hans." She laughed again. I didn't get the joke but laughed anyway. Everything seemed so congenial.

I must have sat there for 2 hours talking and joking with Mrs. Muller and the children. Dinner was still not served, and Muller had not appeared.

"Where is Dr. Muller, so late in the evening?" I ventured.

"How am I to know?" She laughed.

"Still at the spittoon?" I queried, reintroducing her pun.

"Probably."

"Perhaps we should start dinner then," I said. "The children must be hungry."

"But we ate ages ago," Mrs. Muller said.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," I stammered. "I must have made a mistake about the date. I thought Dr. Muller invited me to dinner tonight, to celebrate Christmas."

"Why, Dr. Muller doesn't live here any more," she said. "Didn't you know?" and she laughed.

Sympathetic remarks were clearly out of the question. I didn't know what to say so I laughed too, said goodbye to the 3 polite children, laughed again, shook hands with Mrs. Muller and left.

On Boxing Day I saw Muller at the lab; I talked to him about spit.

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## Home Remedies

### I'se the b'y . . .

In the 1950s I was working on the out islands of Newfoundland as a field engineer for a mining company. I lived with a fisherman's family. When the fishermen went to sea in small open boats to go cod jigging they invariably got very wet, and their rubber boots chafed against the gunwales. The skin would break down and get infected. Once they were back home, Mother would have a mouldy bread poultice handy to apply to the injury.

It was not until years later when I was in medical school that it dawned on me that they were treating the injury with penicillin. — *Dr. Adrian Ten Cate, Brockville, Ont.*