

THE THIEF

BY EDRIS GRIFFIN.

GEORGE Andrews was a clerk in the firm of Messrs. Robinson and Co., the large cloth merchants in the little town of Bunbury. He was a man very fond of out-door life and had to spend his days in a stuffy office when he would have preferred roaming the fields. His parents had the idea that office work would bring him the most money and had educated him for that walk in life.

When he was about twenty-four he married a girl named Ellen Gregory. She had been trained as nurse and was very fond of children. Being domesticated she made George an excellent wife.

When the great war began George offered his services but was rejected owing to some defect in his sight, so had to stay behind while his chums went to fight. This was a source of grief to him, but I am obliged to say that Ellen did not share it.

With a view to helping the food supply the Town Council got up a scheme for allotments and George was one of the first to take advantage of it. The growing of vegetables appealed to him and he made a good thing of the ground allotted to him, the out-door exercise after office hours also did him a lot of good. The allotment also appealed to Ellen as they had two children and she had decided views as to the way in which children should be fed. A good supply of fresh vegetables, she considered, was an absolute necessity.

A year later, in the Spring, the Mayor put a notice in the local papers that a flower and vegetable show would be held in the Autumn, and that a special prize would be awarded to the man or woman who had used the allotment in the best way.

George of course wished to compete and bought all kinds of special seeds and soon the allotment was a sight to rejoice the heart of any green grocer. When the vegetables were getting ripe and just ready for eating George was very annoyed by repeated thefts; his best specimens disappeared as soon as they were ready. He complained bitterly about it to his friends. Ellen sympathised but said it was a shame to keep so many good vegetables in the garden when she needed them for the children. George and some of his friends decided to keep watch and find out who the thief was; George suspected several of his friends, whose efforts had not been rewarded with the same success as his own, consequently there arose a coolness between George and several other men.

One night in August, George and two of his chums hid themselves in a part of the allotment where they could watch George's plot without being seen themselves. It was a dark night with no moon and very favourable to thieves. After a time they heard a noise and listened while the thief filled a basket with vegetables. George wanted to get up at once and stop

him before he had done too much mischief, but his friends advised him to wait and catch the thief with a full basket, so he sat quietly a while longer. At last George's patience gave out and the three of them rushed to the spot and caught the thief just as he was picking the last of George's best peas. To their great surprise the thief was a woman and George's wife Ellen. George was furious and demanded to know why she was doing this and making him a laughing stock in the eyes of his friends. Ellen said that she wanted fresh vegetables for the children and was not going to buy them at fancy prices when there were plenty in the garden. She added that she did not see the good of saving them up for a show or letting them rot in the garden. George now understood where all the delicious peas and beans etc., had come from which he had been enjoying for so long. His friends laughed and George and Ellen went home, George carrying the basket, and the friends told the story all over the town.

In due course the Flower Show came off and in spite of Ellen's visits George sent in a fine exhibit and gained several first prizes.

When distributing the prizes the Mayor told the story of Ellen's nocturnal visits to her husband's plot and said he was glad that her 'Mother' instinct had come before ambition, and he awarded her the special prize.

TROPICAL DISEASES

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Depression—

This complaint is very common in the Tropics. It may arise from various causes—indigestion, overwork (although this is not the usual one), teaching, singing to the natives, amateur attempts at goat farming or gardening, or even house building. It is of a highly infectious nature, and affects the eyes, spoils the power of vision, interferes with focussing and perspective, is often accompanied by intellectual doubt, (in male patients) a tendency towards whiskers and carpet slippers, and (in female patients) droopy skirts and a sagging waist line. It is best treated by vigorous exercise in the open air, the study of history and large doses of *Punch*.

Irritability—

A complaint very trying to those not infected. The causes are various such as a native feast, late hours, excessive tea or coffee drinking, or home truths from a colleague. The manifestations are a tendency to contradict accepted opinions on everything, to 'take wrong' everything that is said or done, or in some cases the assumption of an early-Christian-martyr air. This complaint is non-professionally called "cantankerousness," or euphemistically "nerves." Treatment, as advised by an eminent C.M.S. doctor, is