

Hennessey judged it best to change his tone.

'Look here, old chap,' he said. 'I give you my word of honor this is my house. Knock at the door and you'll find that it's so.'

The policeman consented to knock, and after he had knocked six or seven times there was the sound of the bolts and chains being unloosed, and Merridew opened the door.

'Here, Merridew, tell this fat-headed—I mean this active police officer that I am not a burglar.'

'Says he lives here,' said the policeman, grinning. 'Beg pardon for knocking you up, sir.'

'By Jove, have you caught the beggar?' said Merridew. 'Well done officer. Do you want any help to bring him to the station?'

'For God's sake don't play the fool,' said Hennessey. 'Inform him it's all right and make him let me go.'

'H'm,' said Merridew, 'that would be playing the fool, my friend. Take him away officer. This is the man I saw hanging about. I recognize his truculent aspect.'

At this Hennessey lost his head. He twisted round with the suddenness of a catharine wheel and in another moment he and the policeman were engaged in a catch as catch can wrestling match over the cherished front garden. For five minutes Merridew could not distinguish which was policeman and which was Hennessey. Sometimes they were twisting in the garden path together, sometimes they were trampling the flower beds and shrubs to ruin, sometimes they were doing their best to force each other through the wall of the house, but all the time they were devastating something. At length Hennessey upset the Law into a bush, and the policeman, with a shriek, let go. Hennes-

sey leapt the fence, and tore madly down the road. The policeman did not linger in the bush. He set off in pursuit like a spurred race horse, waking the echoes with agonized blasts on his whistle. Two other policemen appeared from nowhere, and joined in the chase, but Hennessey kept ahead round several turnings, and at last getting back to his house, rushed through the hall into the dining room, and fell on the carpet with a crash. He lay there panting without strength to remove the dictionary, which had taken him in the small of the back, and completed Merridew's triumph.

Merridew felt that the joke had gone far enough. He helped Hennessey, who was whimpering with rage and exhaustion, into an armchair, and went back to the door to wait for the policemen. In about ten minutes they appeared, and the first one, who was still prancing with agony, said that Hennessey should be caught and hanged if all Scotland Yard were loosed on him. Merridew gave them half a sovereign each and some more whisky, and they went back to their beats fairly content.

Hennessey was not so easily appeased. He said he would have fought Merridew there and then if he had not been so ill, and promised that Merridew should have a letter from his solicitor before next evening. Merridew managed to soothe him at last, and helped him to bed.

In the morning he had thought better of the legal proceedings, but it was several days before he would speak to Merridew. Then Merridew softened him with a barrel of oysters, and they had that game of chess.

Mrs. Hennessey returned from the seaside to find a model husband. Hennessey never comes down by the last train now. He spends his evenings renovating the front garden.