

Christie had hoped that the feat of Heather's dynamite rush would clear the rock of its workers and of Gavin as well long enough for his men to surge over it and begin to draw the tamped charges from the holes; then to fight off the possible return attack of the blasters.

It would have been comparatively easy for part of his men, from the summit, to fend off the blasters from remounting the steep bank while the rest should render the drill holes worthless for future use.

Now the element of total surprise was gone. To achieve what they had set out to do it was necessary for Christie and his men to fight: to fight for all they had in them of strength and prowess. Unless they could hold the rock safely until the injunction could be served and until notice of its service should reach Gavin here, their morning's venture must go for less than nothing and the shale shelf's demolition must go on unchecked.

Wherefore, charging in the van of his fast-following men, Christie swarmed up the rock. But a half score of the blasters, under the bellowed commands of Gavin Cole and of Gerritt, already were climbing to their deserted post.

Goaded by the rage that comes of having run away from a nonexistent peril, they flung themselves back on the bank, avid to wipe out the disgrace and to wreak mighty punishment on the enemy who had seen their rout. Others of the fugitives had halted when lack of detonation proved the harmlessness of the dynamite. As rage-scourged as their fellows, they ran back to the fray, snatching up the hammers and drills and rocks and other weapons they had dropped.

If they had been dangerous opponents before, they were doubly reckless now in their hope of redeeming their panic run. In a scattered line they raced for the rock and up it from the side opposite that which Christie's solid-packed gang was scaling.

Jeff Christie was the first man to reach the top. Seeking foothold on the shale surface, still slippery from the night's dew, he leaped for Gavin Cole, who stood calmly awaiting his onslaught.

Gerritt had wheeled back to his superior as he saw the end of the retreat. Now, head down, he ran at Christie from one side.

THE foreman was small and apelike of build. He had not gained and held his ascendancy over his super-tough gang of blasters without a genius for rough-house fighting. This genius he now put into whirlwind practice.

He was a yard nearer Jeff than was Cole. Christie, with the tail of his eye, noted Gerritt's charge and instinctively wheeled to meet it. The two men came together with a breath-expelling shock.

They clinched, stamping the slippery footing for safer balance; tight-enlaced, heaving, panting, snarling.

Then it was that Heather took a hand in the game.

By the time Christie and Ham Gerritt had rushed to their clinch, the collie had flown to the man who thus assailed his adored master. He launched himself upon the writhing Gerritt in a savage spring whose impact knocked both men clean off their insecure balance.

Locked in a right unloving embrace, Christie and the foreman rolled over and over, Heather darting in and seizing any part of Gerritt's anatomy that chanced to whirl past his confused line of vision.

Over the precipitous edge of the rock the clinched combatants rolled down the bumpy side to the softer ground below. Their tangled and struggling bodies collided with the furiously danc-

ing and lunging Heather as they went over the edge, carrying the dog down the steep slope with them.

At the bottom Gerritt landed undermost, his bullet head striking heavily against a stone. The contact stunned him momentarily. As Christie staggered to his feet Heather plunged afresh at the unguarded throat of his master's foe. With a harshly panted word Jeff made him desist.

Then, the collie following excitedly at his heels, Christie began once more to climb the shale shelf, from whose top a babel of strife and blasphemy resounded.

GAVIN had not had time to follow the fortunes of his foreman's bout with the commander of the rival forces. Even as they clinched, the first of Jeff's followers reached the crest and instantly threw himself at Cole.

He was a lanky mountaineer, tall and wiry, but with the average mountaineer's very rudimentary knowledge of boxing and love for close-quarters fighting. Thus he came at Gavin wide open, his outspread arms clutching at the shorter man.

Cole had ample time to gauge the distance and to step in and out again. As he stepped in he hit. The stepping out was a mere formality, for the mountaineer's groping arms had flapped limply to their owner's sides.

The mountaineer himself was spinning backward over the summit's verge, a vacant stare on his lean face. Cole's left fist had caught him prettily in the

stringy throat, just below the chin and in the center of the protuberant Adam's apple. Like Lerner, a few days earlier, the victim had added greatly to the blow's momentum by running into it.

But now a swarm of Christie men were coming over the sides and finding foothold on the summit. Most of them carried wrenches or spanners or cranks or other metal tools which they had been able to snatch up in the brief interval between Christie's summoning them and the time their forced march for the shale shelf had started.

From the far side, in more ragged formation and by twos and threes, the blasters were appearing over the top. For an instant between the two conflicting parties stood Gavin Cole.

Three of Christie's men—the van-guard—rushed him.

Giving ground, Cole ducked under a flailing blow from the foremost and countered with a right to the heart at close range. The blow was delivered with frightful momentum and skill.

Without waiting to note its result, Gavin was out again and meeting the joint attack of the other two. Moving lightly and with bewildering speed and shiftiness, he dived between them, blocking the right swing wherewith the nearer of the pair sought to lay him low. Then, wisely avoiding a clinch, he sidestepped and dropped to his knees to dodge the second man's murderous sweep with a car crank.

The weapon was as awkward as it was lethal. Thus Cole's trained swift-

ness enabled him to miss its full force. It grazed his elbow, numbing his left arm for the instant. But before the crank could be whirled aloft once more Gavin had uppercut its wielder smartly under the point of the jaw, causing the man to rise abruptly on his toes and reel backward dizzily, spitting out broken teeth.

Two more men were at Cole from opposite sides. One of them, in mid-charge, crumpled gawily and collapsed, under a hammer tap on the skull from the nearest of the onrushing blasters.

Then the opposing forces clashed, and there was no longer any scope for science or forethought.

The knotted mass of fighters were close jammed together, with no order or plan of action. They smote and kicked and gouged, using their crude weapons and their heavy boot toes indiscriminately. When two foes were shoved together by surrounding pressure too tightly to get their arms into action, they butted and bit, with hideously defacing results.

IT WAS a free-for-all, with no scope for leadership or for anything else but indiscriminate mayhem. The long-nourished hatred of the rival forces, augmented tenfold by the morning's happenings, was venting itself in primal brute blood lust.

Gavin Cole, in the heart of the swirling and homicidal throng, kept his head, fighting coolly and effectively whenever he could get free use of his often cramped arms. Cannily he ducked and shifted and dodged the random smashes of wrench or bar or hammer that played all about him.

Back across the explosive-riddled top of the shale bank reeled the warriors as the initial charge of Christie's twenty-five men bore the fewer and less concentrated blasters along on its flood tide.

But, trained rough-house warriors as they were, they did not rush blindly into the central scrimmage. All of these late comers possessed too much generalship for that.

A single glance told them their comrades were being driven backward by a thick-jammed body of Christie men. There were far better ways of evening the score than by plunging to their fellows' side of the battle.

One after another they skirted the clumped fighters, gaining the rear of the slow-moving human mass, unnoted by the Christie clan, who were too busy with the adversaries directly in front of them to have eyes or thoughts for any possible flanking party.

These rapidly augmented reinforcements took an artistic joy in attacking from behind, bringing down their drills or hammers or rocks with skilled power upon the heads of their foes.

For a few seconds the Christie contingent were far too much absorbed with the swiftly retreating main body of blasters in front of them to realize that they were between two fires and that from behind their men were being stunned or maimed by deftly wielded stone and metal.

Jeff Christie had leaped into the center of the main fight the instant he had regained the summit after his rolling struggle with Gerritt.

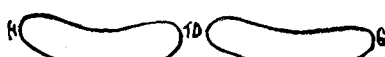
Now, he noted that the pressure of his own men behind him was lessening. He risked a backward glance to learn the cause. His sudden turn of the head served him well. For a rock hammer missed his skull by a hair's breadth, smiting his right shoulder obliquely and bringing him to his knees. As he shrank numbly to one side to avoid a possible second stroke he saw Heather bound ragily at his assailant's throat.

Then, as the hammer wielder aimed a smash at the (Continued on page 37)

## Make a Nameograph



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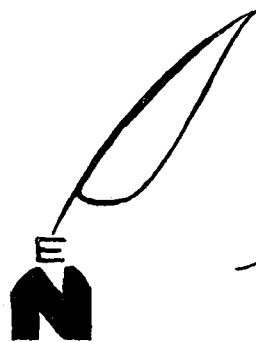


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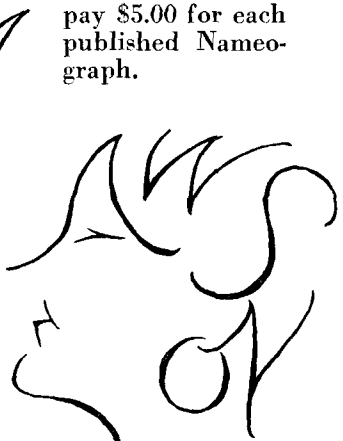


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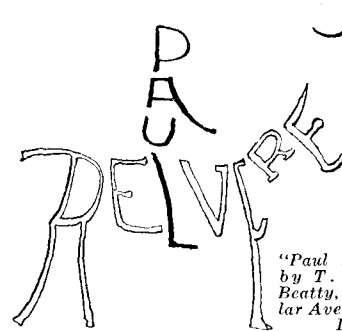
Take the name of a well-known person or object—or just an ordinary word—spell it out, making the letters into an outline that will depict the word. Then send the result to Collier's, The National Weekly, 250 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y. Collier's will pay \$5.00 for each published Nameograph.



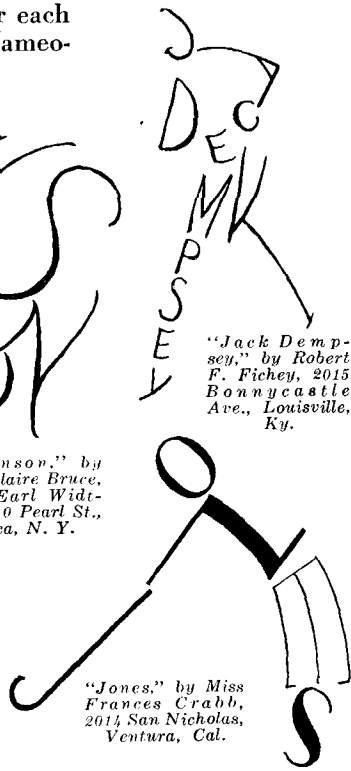
"Pen," by D. D. Roberts, Peru, Ind.



"Swanson," by Miss Claire Bruce, care Earl Wideman, 10 Pearl St., Utica, N. Y.



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# Welcome Home

By ALICE  
DUER  
MILLER

The Story Thus Far:

TOM BENTHAM, a young newspaper man, who has not entered his home for four years following his father's orders, returns from South America where he had been sent by his newspaper. His father and mother are both dead and the house belongs to him. He uses his old latchkey, walks up to his old room and finds a beautiful young lady in his bed.

She tells him the house has been sold, and orders him out. He goes but next day he hunts up his father's lawyer, Robinson, who tells him the house has not been sold. Together they hunt through it and find no one but the housekeeper. Half convinced Tom starts to the Adirondacks for a vacation after refusing to report a sensational divorce and perjury case for his paper, the Carson case.

Robinson sees him off, but on reading about the Carson case, Tom sees a picture of the girl whom he found in his house, Barbara Deane. He gets off the train, rushes back home and finds the girl.

She tells him that her sister has won a divorce because Barbara perjured herself. Now Ira Carson, the husband, is trying to bring a perjury case against Barbara, and Robinson, the sister's lawyer, has hidden her in Bentham's house. Bentham falls in love with Barbara but claims to be in love with Edna, fictitious.

Bentham pledges himself to recover the letter Ira has proving Barbara's guilt. He offers to report the case for his paper, calls on Carson, secures Barbara's picture and a copy of the letter.

A BROWNSTONE front with all the green shades down and no sign of life about it, except a curtain fluttering in the basement windows and a galvanized garbage barrel, neatly covered, standing in the area—who would have imagined it to be the perfect setting for romance better than a palace on the Bosphorus, an apartment on the Grand Canal, a villa at Capri or a castle in the Pyrenees.

It was—from Bentham's point of view at least—perfection. That agonizing uncertainty about the next meeting which curses the early stages of most love affairs was now entirely absent. As he walked down the street and mounted the steps, feeling for his latchkey, he had no need to ask himself whether she would be at home. He knew she would be—more securely than many a wife. There was not even any danger of interruption—there was no one who could come to the house, for Robinson, the day after seeing Bentham off, had gone down to the eastern end of Long Island for the week-end, in the course of which he intended to arrange with his elderly relative that she should take with her on her motor trip to Canada a lovely fugitive from justice.

Tom's only problems were, first, to be sufficiently true to Edna, and he wished now that he had made her something different from a dancer, something that necessitated long absences from town—the equivalent of a commercial traveler or a naval officer. And, second, not to take advantage of the situation to bore Miss Deane with his constant presence.

BUT here too he was fortunate, for, since he was her only contact with the outside world, it was inevitable that she should be glad to see him—as, in a lonely countryside, she would be glad to see the postman.

The second morning after that night of conversation both of them slept late, but Barbara was downstairs first.

"Well," said Barbara, "what do you think of Robinson's getting himself smashed up at such a minute as this?"

She tiptoed past the third floor, most considerably, and went down to the library to eat a leisurely breakfast. But when Delia came to take away her tray she inquired rather sharply if Mr. Bentham had had his breakfast and gone. Delia replied that as far as she knew there had not been a sound out of him.

After this Miss Deane glanced over the morning paper, and read the theatrical announcements with close attention. She deplored the custom of advertising female dancers under fanciful names—how could you tell who they were? After this she grew more impatient and less thoughtful, and finally, reflecting that it was absurd for a man who earned his living to sleep till eleven o'clock, she went upstairs, and this time, as she passed through the third floor

Of all the difficulties Tom never thought of the one that Barbara actually put in the way of his rescuing her

"No rhapsodies, if you please."

Mrs. Huggins came in with his breakfast, and he rose and took the tray from her, inquiring solicitously about her health as he did so.

Mrs. Huggins was well, but changes in the weather always affected a portion of her anatomy which she described as her "hinch-bone." It took a long time for explanations and sympathy, and then once more Tom returned to his theme.

"It's a curious thing about being in love," he resumed. "The fact is that other women do not become less interesting to you, as is usually stated. One can often judge them fairly and even flatteringly. The truth is that they cease to have any reality for you."

"I think that's very rude," said Miss Deane, "to say that I have no reality to you."

"It isn't rude," replied Tom, calmly pouring out his coffee. "I have no doubt the men who love you feel the same way. For instance, that inheri-

tor of great wealth, whose name I won't mention. I have no doubt as he sits on the deck of his yacht—"

"What are you talking about?" said Barbara sternly.

"Or that other nice young fellow who does something in the financial department of one of our greatest motor companies—"

"How do you know all these things?" "To them I have no doubt you are the only woman who has any reality, where-as to me—"

"I shan't gratify you by teasing to find out your source of information."

"To me only Edna is real."

"Have you got a photograph of her?"

"Of course I have."

"Let me see it."

AN IDEA came to him—he liked to be truthful when he could. He put his hand to his pocketbook and drew from it a small photograph.

"Isn't she pretty?" he said, giving it to her without looking at it himself.

She gave a tremendous and to Tom a most satisfactory sort of gasp. "How in the world," she exclaimed, "did you get hold of this?"

He rose and came and looked over her shoulder. "Oh, I see my mistake," he said. "Well, I got that, Miss Deane, from a gentleman who does not, I regret to say, think very highly of you."

"That unhappily does not identify him."

"I got it from your brother-in-law."

corridor, her heels rang sharply on the bare wood. The result was satisfactory. In a minute she heard the sound of a bath being drawn.

Bentham—to

view now the other

side of the picture—started wide-awake at the first tap of her feet. How could he sleep when such joy was awaiting him? He sprang out of bed . . . hurry, hurry: precious seconds were passing. His hands shook so that he could hardly tie his tie. . . . Goodness, she was probably downstairs in the library at this very moment. Now there was only his shoes . . . and a clean pocket handkerchief. . . . Now he was opening his door . . . now he was entering the library—and oh, supreme joy, there she was, sitting in the corner of the sofa, reading. She looked up at him a little vaguely, as if he were the last person she expected to see and yet as if on second thoughts she remembered him perfectly.

"Just awake?" she said.

There seemed to him something divinely friendly and intimate about this simple speech, nor was he in a position to detect anything disingenuous about it.

"I was a little short of sleep," he answered.

"How was Edna?"

"Edna," he returned, "Edna . . ." He stopped.