

The Dayless Diamonds

By Arthur Somers Roche

The Gray Ghost is the Most Daring and Accomplished Big Scale Thief of the Time. He Has So Far Outwitted Pelham and Tryon, Detectives. Every Big Crime Is Attributed Automatically by the Public to the Gray Ghost.

Pelham slipped his key into the lock, but before he could turn it the door was opened from within. Slim Dickenson stared at his master. "This is one deuce of a time to come home, Mr. Pelham," said the ex-guide severely. "You may picture yourself a gay young buck, but you look 85."

Pelham surrendered his hat and coat and walked into the living room of his apartment. He surveyed the bubbling percolator upon a table and rubbed his hands together in delightful anticipation. He spoke over his shoulder. "Slim, you're a jewel." He sat down before the laden table and reached for a napkin.

Slim crossed the little living room almost in a stride. Then he reappeared, bearing a bowl of oatmeal. "I went to bed at 11 last night, but I didn't go to sleep. And at 3 I got up, and I've been up ever since," he said acidly.

Pelham rose with a suddenness of movement that bespoke nervous energy allied to trained muscles. His arm went around the ex-guide's shoulder. "Some day I'm going to forget what a puny specimen you are," smiled Pelham. "And I'm going to show you what a right cross is like."

The dour look left Dickenson's eyes; his mouth parted in a grin. "How many times have you filled that percolator since 3 o'clock?" demanded Pelham.

"Plenty," replied Slim. "Then you're due to drink some of it."

A light of mischief appeared in Dickenson's light blue eyes. "I guess I know my place."

"Your place will be standing on your ear in a corner in about a second."

Dickenson's grin grew broader. "Oh, well, if that's the way you feel." But he sighed hungrily as he pulled up a chair to the table.

Pelham was often famished, and so was Slim. As often together in the Maine woods, ravenous from a day's fishing, they had eaten in silence, so they ate now. But finally Pelham lighted a cigaret. Now for a bath and 10 hours' sleep," he announced.

"It seems to me that before you pound your ear, you ought to be makin' some comment on a remark of mine," suggested Slim.

Pelham's gray eyes twinkled. "Quite true," he agreed. "I've been talking, arguing, pleading, cajoling, bribing, and promising, all night long, with the sweetest collection of rasicals ever gathered together in one room."

"The Gray Ghost's gang?" asked Slim.

"Those of them whom, on various occasions, we've managed to capture. There isn't one of them who doesn't face at least fifteen years in prison, and yet not a single word did I get that would lead me one inch nearer to the Gray Ghost than I am at this minute. They won't betray him." The district attorney rounded them all up, and I kept after them all night."

"Didn't you get anything?" asked Slim.

"Well," conceded Pelham reluctantly, "maybe the barest possible clue—but I don't think so. And now, I'm going to bed."

But on the threshold of his bedroom he paused. "Sorry, Slim, that I didn't think to telephone you where I was."

"That's all right, Mr. Pelham," replied Slim gruffly. He was busy a few minutes clearing away the breakfast dishes. Then silence descended upon the little apartment.

It was five in the afternoon when insistent knocking on the front door broke the slumbers of master and man. Slim opened the door, disclosing the aggressive face of Jerry Tryon, the ex-lieutenant of police, who now headed the detective agency in which Pelham was consulting partner. In

his hand he bore a copy of a Sunday newspaper.

"Mr. Pelham isn't up yet," said Slim.

"Yes, I am too," called Pelham from his bedroom.

The two men met in the living room.

"Haven't read the papers, eh?" demanded Tryon. He unfolded the

Pelham laughed at him. "I don't see anything to become excited about Jerry," he said. "You're afraid that the Gray Ghost will rob Dayless and that we will be laughed at again," said Pelham.

Jerry shrugged his thick shoulders. "I don't care how much we're laughed at," he said. "But, you know, we did hope that the Gray Ghost would attempt a raid on Dayless' home. Now read this."

He handed Pelham a letter. The younger man opened it. It read:

My Dear Mr. Tryon:

I have read this morning's Sphere. In order to relieve your mind, let me tell you that plans already made by me to

ham defended. "Of course I look tired. Who wouldn't?"

"You shouldn't," replied Jerry. "You see, I've been a cop all my days, and I ain't got a 'nerve' in my system. I ain't a genius; I'm a man. But you are different. You are made of steel wire and wire snaps. Do you know what you are going to do?"

From the pocket of his dressing gown Jimmy Pelham produced a silver case; from it he took a cigaret which he lighted and puffed before replying. Then he said: "All right, Mr. Bones, I'll bite. What am I going to do?"

Into Tryon's blue eyes crept a gleam of satisfaction. From his waistcoat pocket he drew an en-

bring your golf clubs to the train." Jerry was quite masterful.

"Into Pelham's eyes flashed a light of excitement. He looked away from his friend and partner when he spoke.

"It's early yet, Jerry," he said. "I'll have to write some letters after I'm dressed. Suppose we meet at 7."

They dined in a quiet little restaurant. Jerry accompanied his friend to the train. He sighed with relief as the car disappeared in the direction of the tube to Jersey. Jimmy Pelham was not merely the greatest detective in the world to Tryon's thinking, but he was also the finest man alive. Jerry had been worrying for weeks about his partner. And when in Saturday's papers he read that Pelham had qualified for the first 16 in the play for the Lake Worth cup, Tryon was overjoyed.

A well-trained servant, deft, suave, yet whose deference, suggested to the caller his thoroughly British contempt for his vulgar American surroundings, ushered the visitor into the presence of the Hon. George Dayless.

"Mr. Reginald Minturn," he said, stepping aside to permit Mr. Minturn's entrance into the Dayless library.

Dayless looked up from behind the onyx table at which he sat. He was a gross-seeming person, very bristly of mustache and red of neck. Yet his face was kindly.

He pushed back his chair and heavily gained his feet. He thrust out a fat hand.

"Glad to see you, Minturn," he said.

Then he sat down and rubbed his hands together. "I've been an ambitious man all my life, but I never hoped to have a duke's nephew working for me. It certainly would make my father laugh!"

Minturn smiled. He was a well-set-up man of about 35, immaculately dressed. He looked around the library.

"I say, there isn't much order to it all now is there, what?"

Dayless chuckled. "That's what you're here for, young feller, me lad. You've catalogued and appraised 60 or 70 museums—"

Minturn raised a protesting hand. "Two, or perhaps three, Mr. Dayless."

"Well, you got the gaudiest references I ever saw. Go to it, kid and let me know just what I have in this place, and how it all should be arranged."

Minturn smiled pleasantly; he had a charming, ingenious air. "Thank you; I'll look around a bit first, what?"

"Nice boy," said Dayless to his wife that night. They had dined en famille, and the new secretary had charmed his employer's wife.

At 11 that night a knock sounded upon the door of Dayless' library. He was seated again behind the onyx table, a medieval piece of furniture rendered bizarre by the filing cases on one end.

He looked up, calling. "Come in."

The door opened, and Minturn entered the room.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir," said the young Englishman, "but there was something I wished to ask you."

"Not disturbing me at all," said Dayless. His small eyes twinkled approvingly at his visitor. "I wish to goodness that I could get a valet who knew how to fasten a dress tie. You English certainly have the knack."

Minturn smiled. "Let me show you."

Dayless sat up straight, his head tilted back. Minturn stepped behind him. His hand flashed into the pocket of his dinner jacket, to reappear holding a handkerchief. There was the faint tinkle of broken glass, and then the chloroform-saturated bit of linen was thrust against the nose and mouth of Dayless. Beyond one convulsive struggle, Dayless offered no resistance. But his watchful assailant, slipping his hands under his employer's arms, eased his fall so that no sound could be heard in the hall beyond the closed door of the library.

For a moment Minturn stared



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Sphere as he spoke, and showed an illustrated double-page article in the magazine section. Pelham glanced at it carelessly, then looked at Jerry.

"What does it say?" he asked. "This man Dayless," cried Jerry, "has described for the benefit of the world—and the Gray Ghost—every safeguard that he has used to protect his house. He has described in detail every painting, every jewel, in his collection. And when the reporter—I'll say for that lad that he has a lot more sense than Dayless—asked him if he wished the details published, Dayless replied—"

He snatched the paper from Pelham's hand and read the offensive sentences. "Certainly," replied the former governor, "I'm not afraid of burglars. In fact, I'll be glad to have them warned of the uselessness of attempting to rob my home. And if these electrical alarms, and the presence of ten armed watchmen, are not sufficient to warn criminals away from my house, perhaps the fact that the Tryon Detective agency is under contract to keep operatives here day and night will be an added deterrent." Jerry hurled the paper into a corner, and almost danced in his rage.

relieve your client, Governor Dayless, of certain articles which he is too vulgar to appreciate, have been abandoned by me. I feel that it would be unfair for me to permit you to indulge in useless worry. Faithfully yours,

Peter Ballantyne.

Pelham whistled. "Thoughtful of him," he commented. "Becoming a sportsman in his later years."

"All right, laugh if you can," grumbled Jerry. "But it would be just like him to doublecross us."

"Oh, forget him," counseled Pelham. "He's on our minds too much."

"On yours," corrected Jerry. "And that's another reason I came over here today." He looked appraisingly at the young-old man whom circumstances had changed from a sport-loving millionaire into the keenest detective of his day, the one person who had been able to cope, with comparative success, with the Gray Ghost, whose return, after years of silence, to predatory activity, had rendered panic-stricken the bankers and jewelers of New York.

"You look like the devil," said Jerry severely.

"Up all night giving the third degree to some of our friends," Pel-

velope. He handed it to Pelham, who opened it and examined its contents. Upon the face of the younger man appeared an expression of pleasure.

"A drawing room to Palm Beach, eh?" His eyes clouded suddenly. "Hang it, Jerry, this is no time—"

"The train leaves at 8 tonight. This is Sunday. You'll arrive Tuesday in time for 18 holes in the afternoon. Then you'll have dinner and you'll go to bed. Dr. Tryon speaking, if you don't mind. On Wednesday you stay in bed until 11, then you go for a swim. In the afternoon you do 27 holes and go to bed early. Same thing on Thursday. On Friday you play 36 holes. By Saturday you ought to be able to lick your weight in wildcats. So you stay up until 9 o'clock." He raised his hand warningly. "Wait a minute; I'm not through yet. On Sunday you go over to the Beach club, taking with you \$1,000 of Tryon Agency money and invest it according to your own judgment. I myself have a fancy for the red, but I leave it to you."

"Get thee behind me, Satan," said Pelham.

"Never mind the pet names; get dressed and we'll go out to dinner. Dickenson will pack your bags and