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THE YELLOW DOMINO.

BY CAPTAIN MARBYAT.

(CONCLUDED.)

"Slaves of the ring, you have done my bidding at all events, this time," thought I, and I looked at the ring more attentively. It was a splendid solitaire diamond, worth many hundred crowns. "Will you ever find your way back to your lawful owner?" was the question in my mind when Albert made his appearance in his violet-coloured domino.

"It was imprudent of you to send me the paper by the black domino," said he hastily. "Did I not tell you that I would be here in an hour? We have not a moment to spare. Follow me quickly, and be silent."

I followed—the paper which Albert referred to, needed no explanation; it was indeed, the only part of the whole affair which I comprehended. He led the way to about three hundred yards of the path through the wood. "There," said he, "in that narrow avenue you will find my faithful negro with his charge. He will not deliver it up without you show him this ring," and Albert put a ring upon my finger.

"But Albert?—my mind misgave me—Albert never had a faithful negro to my knowledge. It must be some other person, who had mistaken me for his friend." "I am afraid—"

"Afraid—let me not hear you say that. You never yet knew fear," said he interrupting me. "What have you to fear between this and Pisa?—Your own horses will take you there in three hours. But here's the packet, which you must deliver yourself. Now that you know where the negro is, return to the palazzo, deliver it into his own hands, requesting his immediate perusal. After that, do not wait a moment, but hasten here to your charge. While the grand duke is reading it, I will escape with Viola."

"I really cannot understand all this," said I taking the packet.

"All will be explained when we meet at Pisa. Away now to the grand duke. I will go to the negro and prepare him for your coming."

"But allow me—"

"Not a word if you love me," replied the violet-coloured domino, who, I was now convinced, was not Albert; it was not his voice—there was a mystery and a mistake; but I was so implicated that I felt I could not retreat without sacrificing the parties, whoever they might be. "Well," said I, as I turned back to the palazzo, "I must go on now, as if I were a gentleman of honour, I cannot refuse. I will give the packet to the grand duke, and I will also convey his treasury to Pisa—confound this yellow domino." As I returned to the palazzo, I was accosted by the black domino.

"Milano," replied I.

"Is all right, Filippo?" said he in a whisper.

"All is right, signor," was my answer.

"Where is he?"

I pointed with my finger to a clump of orange-trees.

"And the paper and packet?"

I nodded my head.

"Then you had better away—I will see you tomorrow."

"At the old place, signor?"

"Yes," replied the black domino, cutting into a cross path, and disappearing.

I arrived at the Palazzo, mounted the steps, and perceived the grand duke in an inner saloon, the lady who had accosted me leaning on his arm. It then occurred to me that the grand duke had an only daughter, whose name was Viola. I entered the saloon, which was not crowded, and walked boldly up to the grand duke, presented the packet, requesting that his highness would give it his immediate attention. I then bowed, and hastened away, once more passing through the thronged hall, and gained the marble steps of the Palazzo.

"Have you given it?" said a low voice, close to me.

"I have," replied I; "but signor—"

"Not a word, Carlo, hasten to the wood, if you love me," and the violet-coloured domino forced his way into the crowd that filled the hall.

"Now for my journey to Pisa," said I. "Here I am implicated in high treason, in consequence of my putting on a yellow domino. Well, there's no help for it." In a few minutes I had gained the narrow avenue, and having pursued it about fifty yards, perceived the glaring eyes of the crouching negro. By the starlight I could just distinguish that he had a basket, or something like one, before him.

"What do you come for, signor?" said the negro, rising on his feet.

"For what has been placed under your charge; here is the ring of your master."

The negro put his fingers to the ring and felt it, that he might recognize it by its size and shape.

"Here it is, signor," said he, lifting up the basket gently, and putting it into my arms. It was not heavy, although somewhat cumbersome from its size.

"Hark, signor, there is confusion in the Palazzo. You must be quick, and I must not be seen with you; and away darted the negro like lightning through the bushes.

I also hastened away with the basket, (contents unknown,) for it appeared to me that affairs were coming to a crisis. I heard people running different ways, and voices approaching mine. When I emerged from the narrow avenue, I perceived several figures coming down the dark walk at a rapid pace, and seized with a sort of panic, I took to my heels. I soon found that they were in pursuit, and I increased my speed. In the gloom of the night, I unfortunately tripped over a stone, and fell with the basket to the ground; and then the screams from within informed me that the treasure intrusted to my safe keeping was a child. Fearing that it was hurt, and forgetting, for the time, the danger of being captured, I opened the lid and examined its limbs, while I tried to pacify it; and while I was sitting down on my yellow domino, thus occupied in hushing a baby, I was seized by both shoulders, and found myself a prisoner.

"What is the meaning of this rudeness, signors?" said I, hardly knowing what to say.

"You are arrested by order of the Grand Duke," was the reply.

"I am arrested—why—I am an Englishman."

"That makes no difference; the orders are to arrest all found in the garden in yellow dominoes."

"Confound the yellow domino," thought me that the twentieth time at least. "Well, signor, I will attend you; but first let me try to pacify this poor frightened infant."

"Strange that he should be found running away with a child at the same time that the Lady Viola has disappeared, observed one of my captors.

"You are right, signors," replied I; "it is very strange; and what is more strange is, that I can no more explain it than you can. I am now ready to accompany you. Oblige me by one of you carrying the basket, while I take care of the infant."

In a few minutes we had arrived at the Palazzo. I had retained my mask, and I was conducted through the crowd into the saloon into which I had previously entered when I delivered the packet to the grand duke.

"There he is! there he is!" was buzzed through the crowd in the hall. "Holy Virgin! he has a child in his arms! *Bambino bellissimo!*" Such were the exclamations of wonder and surprise as they made a lane for my passage, and I was in the presence of the grand duke, who appeared to be in a state of great excitement.

"It is the same person!" exclaimed the duke.—"Confess, are you not the party who put a packet into my hands about a quarter of an hour since?"

"I am the person, your highness," replied I, as I patted and soothed the frightened child.

"Who gave it to you?"

"May it please your highness, I do not know."

"What child is that?"

"May it please your highness, I do not know."

"Where did you get it?"

"Out of that basket, your highness."

"Who gave you the basket?"

"May it please your highness, I do not know."

"You are trifling with me. Let him be searched."

"May it please your highness, I will save them that trouble if one of the ladies will take the infant. I have received a great many presents this evening, all of which will have the honour of displaying before your highness."

One of the ladies held out her arms to the infant, who immediately bent from mine toward her, naturally clinging to the other sex as his friend in distress.

"In the first place, your highness, I have this evening received this ring," taking off my finger the one given by the party in a violet coloured domino, and presenting it to him.

"And from whom?" said his highness, instantly recognising the ring.

"May it please your highness, I do not know.—I have also received another ring, your highness," continued I, taking off the ring given me by the black domino.

"And who gave you this?" interrogated the duke, again evidently recognising it.

"May it please your highness, I do not know.—Also, this stiletto, but from whom, I must again repeat, I do not know. Also, this packet, with directions to put it into a dead man's bosom."

"And you are, I presume, equally ignorant of the party who gave it to you?"

"Equally so," your highness; as ignorant as I am of the party who desired me to present you with the other packet which I delivered." Here is also a paper I was desired to put upon a man's clothes, after I had assassinated him."

"Indeed! and to this, also, you plead total ignorance?"

"I have but one answer to give to all, your highness, which is, I do not know."

"Perhaps, sir, you do not know your own name or profession," observed his highness, with a sneer.

"Yes, your highness," replied I, taking off my mask, "that I do know. I am an Englishman—and, I trust, a gentleman, and man of honour. My name is Herbert; and I have more than once had the honour to be a guest at your highness' entertainments."

"Signor, I recognise you," replied the grand duke. Let the room be cleared. I must speak with this gentleman alone.

When the company had quitted the saloon, I entered into a minute detail of the events of the evening, to which his highness paid the greatest attention; and when I had finished, the whole mystery was unravelled to me by him—and with which I will now satisfy the curiosity of my readers.

The grand duke had one daughter, by name Viola, whom he had wished to marry to Rodolph, Count of Istria; but Viola had met with Albert, marquis of Salerno, and a mutual attachment had ensued. Although the grand duke would not force his daughter's wishes, and oblige her to marry Count Rodolph, at the same time, he would not consent to her espousals with the Marquis Albert. Count Rodolph had discovered the intimacy between Viola and the marquis of Salerno, and had made more than one unsuccessful attempt to get rid of his rival by assassination. After some time, a private marriage with the marquis had been consented to by Viola—and a year afterwards, the Lady Viola retired to the country, and without the knowledge, or even suspicions of her father, had given birth to a male child, which had been passed off as the offspring of one of the ladies of the court who was married, and to whom the secret had been confided.

At this period, the secret societies, especially

the Carbonari, had become formidable in Italy, and all the crowned heads and reigning princes were using every exertion to suppress them. Count Rodolph was at the head of these societies, having joined them to increase his power, and to have at his disposal the means of getting rid of his rival. Of this the marquis of Salerno had received intimation, and for some time had been trying to obtain proof against the count; for he knew that if once it was proved, Count Rodolph would never be again permitted to appear in the state of Lucca. On the other hand, Count Rodolph had been making every arrangement to get rid of his rival, and had determined that it should be effected at this masquerade.

The marquis of Salerno had notice given him of this intention, and also had on that morning obtained the proof against Count Rodolph, which he was now determined to forward to the duke; but aware that his assassination by the Carbonari was to be attempted, and also that the wrath of the grand duke would be excessive when he was informed of their private marriage, he resolved to fly with his wife to Pisa, trusting that the proofs of Count Rodolph being connected with the Carbonari, and a little time, would soften down the grand duke's anger. The marquis had arranged that he should escape from the duke's dominions on the night of the masquerade, as it would be much easier for his wife to accompany him than from the grand duke's palace, which was well guarded. But it was necessary that they should travel on horseback, and they could not take their child with them. Viola would not consent that it should be left behind, and on this emergency he had written to his friend, the Count D'Ossore, to come to their assistance at the masquerade, and that they might recognize him, to wear a yellow domino, a colour but seldom put on.

The Count D'Ossore had that morning left his town mansion on a hunting excursion, and did not receive the letter, of which the marquis and Viola were ignorant. Such was the state of affairs at the time that I put on the yellow domino to go to the masquerade.

My first meeting with the marquis in his violet-coloured domino is easily understood. Being in a yellow domino, I was mistaken for the Count D'Ossore. I was myself led into it by the marquis Albert having the same Christian name as my English friend. The second meeting with the Count Rodolph, in the black domino, was accidental.—The next walk had been appointed as the place of meeting with the Carbonari Filippo and his companions but Count Rodolph perceiving me examining my stiletto by the light of the lamp, presumed I was Filippo, and that I had mistaken the one path for the other which had been agreed upon. The papers given to me by Count Rodolph were Carbonari papers, which were to be hid in the marquis' bosom after he had been assassinated, to make it appear that he had belonged to that society; and by the paper affixed to his clothes, that he had been murdered by the agents of the society, for having betrayed them. The papers which the marquis had requested me to give to the grand duke, were the proofs of Count Rodolph's belonging to the secret society; and with these papers was enclosed a letter to the grand duke, in which they acknowledged their secret union. And now, I believe, the reader will comprehend the whole of this mysterious affair.

After all had been explained, I ventured to ask his highness if he would permit me to fulfil my promise of taking the child to its mother, as I considered it a point of honour that I should keep my engagement, the more so, as the delay would occasion the greatest distress to his daughter; and I ventured to add, that I trusted his highness would pardon what could not be remedied, and that I should have the satisfaction of being the bearer of such pleasing intelligence to his daughter and the marquis.

The grand duke paced the room for a minute, and then replied—"Signor Herbert, I feel so disgusted with the treachery and baseness of Count Rodolph, that I hardly need observe if my daughter were free, he never

ask his highness if he would permit me to fulfil my promise of taking the child to its mother, as I considered it a point of honour that I should keep my engagement, the more so, as the delay would occasion the greatest distress to his daughter; and I ventured to add, that I trusted his highness would pardon what could not be remedied, and that I should have the satisfaction of being the bearer of such pleasing intelligence to his daughter and the marquis.