

## The Confidences of Arsene Lupin V. THE MARRIAGE OF LUPIN

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It was obvious that the enemy was getting ready to strike and would endeavor to oppose the marriage by one of his characteristic moves.

Nevertheless, nothing happened; nothing two days before the ceremony, nothing on the day before, nothing on the morning itself. The marriage took place in the mayor's office, followed by the religious celebration in church; and the thing was done.

Then, and not till then, the duke breathed freely. Notwithstanding his daughter's sadness, notwithstanding the embarrassed silence of his son-in-law, who found the situation a little trying, he rubbed his hands with a pleased air, as if he had achieved a brilliant victory.

"Tell them to lower the drawbridge," he said to Hyacinthe, "and to admit everybody. We have nothing more to fear from that scoundrel."

After the wedding breakfast, he had wine served out to the peasants and clinked glasses with them. They danced and sang.

At three o'clock, he returned to the ground-floor rooms. It was the hour for his afternoon nap. He walked to the guard-room at the end of the suite. But he had no sooner placed his foot on the threshold than he stopped suddenly and exclaimed:

"What are you doing here, d'Emboise? Is this a joke?"

D'Emboise was standing before him, dressed as a Breton fisherman, in a dirty, torn, patched jacket and breeches, many sizes too large for him.

The duke seemed dumbfounded. He stared with eyes of amazement at the well-known face, which seemed to awaken distant memories. Then, he strode abruptly to one of the windows overlooking the castle-terrace and called:

"Angélique!"

"What is it, father?" she asked, coming forward.

"Where's your husband?"

"Over there, father," she replied, pointing to d'Emboise, who, some distance away, was smoking a cigaret and reading.

The duke stumbled and fell into a chair, with a great shudder of fright:

"Oh, I shall go mad!"

But the man in the fisherman's garb knelt down before him and said:

"Look at me, uncle. You know me, don't you? I'm your nephew, the one who used to play here in the old days, the one whom you called Jacquot. . . Just think a minute. . . Here, look at this scar. . ."

"Yes, yes," stammered the duke; "I recognize you. . . It's Jacques. . . But the other one. . ."

He put his hands to his head:

"And yet, no; it can't be. . . Make yourself clear. . . I don't understand. . . I don't want to understand. . ."

There was a pause, during which the newcomer shut the window and closed the door leading to the next room. Then, he came up to the old duke, touched him gently on the shoulder, to wake him from his torpor, and, without further preface, as if he wished to cut short any explanation that was not absolutely necessary, he spoke as follows:

"Four years ago, that is to say, in the eleventh year of my voluntary exile, when I settled in the extreme south of Algeria, I made the acquaintance, in the course of a hunting expedition arranged by a prominent Arab chief, of a man whose geniality, whose charm of manner, whose unspeakable prowess, whose indomitable pluck, whose combined humor and depth of mind fascinated me in the highest degree. The Comte d'Andrésy spent six weeks as my guest. After he left, we kept up a correspondence at regular intervals; and I often saw his name in the newspapers, in the society and sporting columns.

"He was to come back, and I was preparing to receive him, three months ago, when, one evening, as I was out riding, the two Arab servants with me flung themselves upon me, bound me, blindfolded me and took me, traveling day and

night, for a week, along deserted roads, to a bay on the coast, where five men awaited them. I was at once carried on board a small steam yacht, that weighed anchor without delay. There was nothing to tell me who the men were, nor what their object was in kidnapping me. They had locked me within a narrow cabin, lighted by a porthole protected by two iron cross-bars, and secured by a massive door. Every morning, a hand was inserted through a hatch between the next cabin and my own. It placed on my bunk two or three pounds of bread, a good helping of food and a flagon of wine, and removed the remains of yesterday's meals that I put there for the purpose. From time to time, at night, the yacht stopped, and I heard the sound of the boat rowing to some harbor and then returning, doubtless laden with provisions. At last, we set out definitely, without hurrying, as if on a cruise of people of our class, who travel for pleasure and are not pressed for time.

"Sometimes, standing on a chair, I would see the coast line through my porthole, too indistinctly, however, to identify it. And this lasted for weeks. One morning, in the ninth week, I perceived that the hatch had been left unfastened. I pushed it open. The next cabin was empty at the time. At imminent risk of discovery, I abstracted a nail file from a dressing table. Two weeks after that, by dint of perseverance, I had succeeded in filing through the bars of my porthole; and I could have escaped that way, only, though I am a good swimmer, I soon grow tired. I had, therefore, to choose a moment when the yacht was not too far from the land. It was not until the day before yesterday that, perched on my chair, I caught sight of the coast; and, in the evening, at sunset, I recognized, to my astonishment, the outlines of the Chateau de Sarzeau, with its pointed turrets and its square keep. I wondered if this was the goal of my mysterious voyage. All night long, we cruised in the offing; and it was the same all day yesterday. At last, this morning, we put in to a point that I considered to be within a favorable distance from the land; and we were steaming among rocks, behind which I could swim unobserved.

"But, just as I was about to make my escape, I noticed that the shutter of the hatch, which they thought they had closed, had once more opened of itself and was flapping against the partition. I again pushed it ajar. Within arm's length was a little cupboard which I managed to open and in which my hand, groping at random, laid hold of a bundle of papers. They were letters—letters containing instructions addressed to the pirates who held me prisoner. An hour later, when I wriggled through the porthole and slipped into the sea, I knew all; the reasons for my abduction, the means employed, the object in view and the infamous scheme plotted during the last three months against the Duc de Sarzeau-Vendôme and his daughter. Unfortunately, it was too late. I was obliged, in order not to be seen from the yacht, to crouch in the cleft of a rock, and I did not reach land until midday. By the time it took me to go to a fisherman's cabin to exchange my clothes for his and to come here, it was three o'clock. On my arrival, I learned that Angélique's marriage had been celebrated this very morning."

The old duke had not spoken a word. With his eyes riveted on the speaker's, he was listening with ever-increasing dismay. At times, the thought of the warning given him by the prefect of police returned to his mind:

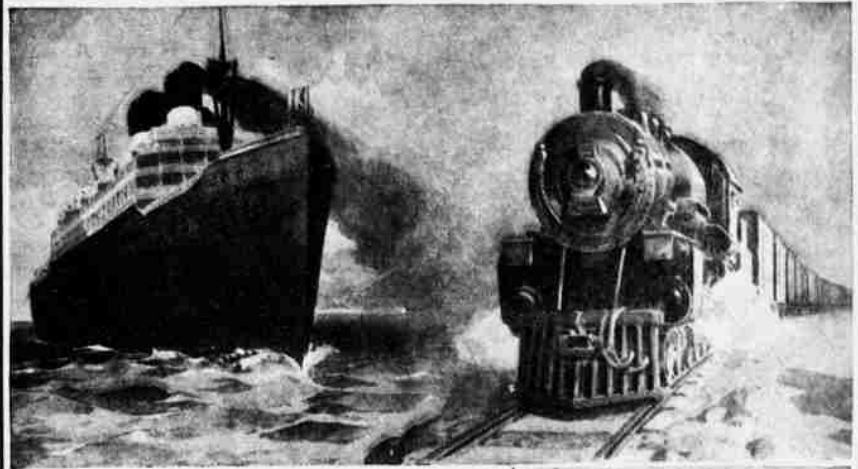
"They're nursing you, *monsieur le duc*; they are nursing you."

He said, in a hollow voice:

"Speak on. . . finish your story. . . All this is ghastly. . . I don't understand it yet. . . and I feel nervous. . ."

The man resumed:

"I am sorry to say, the story is easily pieced together and can be summed up in a few sentences. It is like this: the Comte d'Andrésy remembered several things from his stay with me and from



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