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HOW AND WHERE I SPENT THE DAY BEFORE MY WEDDING.

It was in the autumn, when grouse shooting was in full swing, and partridge shooting had already begun more than three weeks, that my wife and I went to stay with my old chum, Walter Dyas; I for sport, and she for variety and change of air.

One day, in the shade of the orchard, where Dyas and I were sitting after dinner, banished from the ladies' company, on account of the obnoxious odor of our cigars, he suddenly clapped me on the shoulder, saying, “Why, Cliffe, isn't to-morrow Michaelmas Day, the first anniversary of your wedding? We must have some jollification then, think, what would you, or rather your wife, like us to do?”

“So it is,” I replied, unheeding the latter part of his statement; “and that reminds me of what happened this day a year ago, and how nearly I was never married.”

“I remember there was something queer about your wedding,” said Dyas. “But I was away from England, as you know, and never heard the cause. Tell me what was it?”

“You never heard of what, at the time it occurred, was a nine days' wonder among all my friends?” I cried, in astonishment.

“No, indeed not,” he replied.

“Then I must tell you,” I said, “for it is too good a joke—now it is passed, of course, I mean—for I need hardly inform you I by no means held it so then.”

“I suppose not,” he said. “I have been often curious on the subject, but diffident of inquiring, not knowing in the least what the matter was.”

I drew a long puff at my cigar, watched the thin blue smoke wreath away in the hot autumn air, flung away the stump, and began to relate my story.

“My wife is, as you perhaps know, a native of the manufacturing town of Steepleton. A week before my wedding I came down to stay there till I should leave it a married man; and the last few days before the ceremony, finding that I could enjoy little of Emma's society, as she was so taken up either with milliners, dressmakers, and similar feminine nuisances, or else by her relations, who claimed her for these last few hours, at which I could not reasonably demur, I