Mr. Overalls

By HOWARD FIELDING Copyright, 1905, by Charles W. Hooke

OHN WILDE is a man of great wealth and restless energy, and he owns a newspaper called the Citizen, which is an organ of the common people. A flery and erratic genius named Henry Bond was edttor of the Sunday Issue, and I was his assistant when the events here chronicled occurred.

Pardon me one moment while I introuten myself. I am a mild eyed, melancholy, lazy and generally incompetent fellow, having no appetite for a strenuous life and very little for any other sort. Upon the editorial staff of the hustling Citizen and assistant to Henry Bond I was as much misplaced as a Quaker in a swearing match. A spurious reputation for-well, I scarcely know what procured me the position, and I took it because I needed the money. Bond, whose geese were always swans, declared to Wilde that I was the greatest man in the two Amer-

One day an item of news drifted into the office to the effect that a horny handed son of toil had been refused admittance to the Museum of Art because he presented himself at its portal clad in his overalls. By the best of our information it was purely a question of dress. There was no claim that the man had been intoxicated or that his conduct had been open to objection.

"We've got to get hold of that man," said Bond, running his hand backward over his hair, which was so full of electricity that it always stood up straight and crackled every time it was touched. "There's a peach of a story in this case."

"Out of sight!" I responded, with enthusiasm.

"Take it right in hand," said Bond, making a movement as if he were passing the matter to me on a large platter. "It's our first page yarn for next Sunday."

I had no appreciation of the story nor any power of guessing what my chief desired, but I knew better than to ask questions. I sent for a reporter, and when he had come I laid the facts before him.

"Find this man and interview him." said I. "Get a photograph of him and of his wife and children, if he has any; also a view of the interior of his humble home, showing books on the table and some good pictures on the wall. He's a man, you understand, who appreciates arta Here's a card to a friend of mine who runs an art store. He'll ory that wonded know the news and lend you the pictures. You can get the tell it; that they are sharp to see a books anywhere. Telephone me when chance talearn a dollar: that Mr. Overt the man and I'll send ur a photographer."

It was early in the day when the re porter went upon this errand. About noon he telephoned that he was having a book till it was time to go to bed. frouble in his search, that all the papers in town were after the story and that some of them had as many as four or five men out on it. This was bad luck. We had supposed that our information was exclusive. I sent all the available reporters by way of re-enforcements and authorized the general of this little army to pay Mr. Overalls \$10 if he would agree not to give his story to anybody else.

Mr. Overalls was not found that day. The next morning's papers had the story, but not the man. There was not even a description of him that savored of authenticity. He remained nothing but a suit of overalls, to which some of the papers added a decoration of machine oil or of whitewash.

This mysterious individual became the subject of a newspaper rivalry so



YOU OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO DO THIS FOR

keen that if I were to tell the simple truth about it here I should not be be-Heved. Naturally I am not fully in-

Heved. Naturally I am not fully informed as to what the other papers did, but the Citizen employed three private detective agencies and at one time had more than fifty trained men at work on the case in addition to its own staff.

"It's as much as our jobs are worth to get beaten on this story," said Bond to me upon the third day while we were at dinner. "We've got to find this man, and we've got to find him before anybody else does. This thing is costing us at least \$500."

which lasted until the coffee was served. Then he absentmindedly lighted two cigarettes and, holding one in his extended right hand and the other in his mouth, he said earnestly:

"You ought to be able to do this job yourself. You've written more delective stories than there have been crimes committed since Cain killed Abel. You've been thinking about this sort of thing all your life, and you ought to know just what to do."

The man who writes a detective story has the great advantage of knowing who did the deed, but I would not make such an observation to Bond. A lack of confidence is the unpardonable sin in his eyes. I began to speak in an assured tone, with the air of an expert. This sort of thing is not lying with me. It is mere weakness and exhaustion.

Bond was impressed. He saw a great triumph.

"It's not my fault," said he, "that all these men have been put on to the case. I said that I could do it with my own staff, and here is where I prove it. You get right out on this fellow's trail. and if you catch him I'll add \$50 to your salary this week.'

As I rode uptown in a car I triedgto think of this man hunt as a soler fact



INTRODUCING WILLIAM WASHINGTON.

even tried to picture one of my mythical detectives engaged in the search for Mr. Overalls. In vain. I merely fell into that dreamland which is the limbo of such faculties of mine as might have been practical under better con-

With no clear idea of what I hoped o accomplish I left the car and went into the business office of a newspaper. where I arranged for the inscrtion of a small advertisement offering a reward of \$25 for the man who had been excluded from the Museum of Art. I had It put among the washerwemen in the two chissificant as "Help Wanted" and "Situations Vanted" on the vague the ills was probably out work and nie wife taking in washing.

Having decomplished this mesterly distrible strolle. I went theme and read

On the way down to the office the following afternoon I called for answers to my advertisement and was amazed to find that one had been received. It was a brief and somewhat illiterate production signed "Mrs. Mary Collins, 3 flure, back," and it contained the information that the writer had "suspishuned" for two days that her janitor's brother was the man in question. "He-denize it," added Mrs. Collins, taking considerable trouble with her z,

"but it's him." I called a messenger boy, to whom 1 gave \$5 and Mrs. Collins' address, with a brief statement of the facts in the case and a command to bring the juni-

"Suppose he won't come?" said the The same idea had occurred to me. 1

tor's brother to the office of the Citizen.

would have bet a week's pay that he would not come for my asking, but these messenger boys are smart. "Don't talk nonsense," said I. "Bring At the office I found Bond and Wilde

ogether in the latter's private room. Bond seemed to be considerably excited. Wilde was laughing in that slient and secret fashion which is peculiar to

"Have you got him?" asked Bond. "I've sent for him," I replied.
"Good!" said Wilde, "That will make

e round dozen." This statement was presently eluci-dated, and I perceived an extraordinary condition of affairs. It appeared that Wilde, seeing the offer of \$25 reward in the morning paper and supposing it to be the work of a rival, had offered \$100 in an afternoon addition. Eight men had responded. Every one of them de-clared that he was the original and only genuine Mr. Oversils. As the circum ances of the case had been fully detailed in the newspapers, there was no difficulty in telling a perfectly straight story. But there was a very great difficulty upon our side of the matter in determining who was telling the truth. In addition to the eight who had an-

swered the advertisement the three private detective agencies presented one candidate apiece, and, as Wilde had seed it, my man would make the

"We must have the fellow identified," sald Bond, "and the doorkeeper must come down here to do it."

rome down here to do it."

There were several objections to this proposition. It was not the regular doorkeeper who had been on duty when this crime against the liberties of the plain people had been capanitted, but an assistant capital William Washington. This can had been kept out of the

To this reporter Mr. Washington had declared that he could not remember Mr. Overalls; that he didn't even know whether he was white or black. Undoubtedly this was a falsehood, yet it was likely that he would stick to it. Certainly he hated all newspapers after the "roasting" to which he had been subjected, and a yoke of oxen couldn't frag him to the Citizen office for the burposes of this investigation. Nevertheless Bond said to me cheerfully:

"Go out and get this man Washington and have him here within two hours." I felt a faintness succeeded by an greeable desperation.

"Sure!" said I and stalked out of the

A desperate man can accomplish much. In exactly fifty-five minutes I re-entered that room and introduced Mr. William Washington to Wilde and Bond. He was a tall colored man with a very magnificent air and a shrewd, piercing eye; a man of very distinctive -I had almost said distinguished-appearance.

"I have come entirely as a matter of friendship for this gentleman," said he, waving his hand toward me. As a mat ter of fact I had given him \$10.

We began immediately to admit our candidates, who had been detained here and there in the building upon various pretexts, and with considerable difficulty, for some of them were getting scared. We tried first the men whom the detectives had discovered. Mr. Washington looked at each of them with close attention and courteous is declared that he had never had the pieus ure of seeing them before. They fied like men experienced in the art, but Mr. Washington was entirely un shaken.

Then we began upon the fellows who had answered the advertisement, and they filed through the room one by one. Some of them gave up the game when informed of the presence of the doorkeeper, while others protested even to the point of violence.

Toward the close of the examination Wilde took me aside.

"This man is throwing us," he said. 'In my opinion the first fellow we had in here was the real article, and Washington knew it."

I ventured to differ in a respectful manner, and just then the last of the lot was led through the room. When he had vanished in a smoke of suiphurous language, Jim, the office assistant, who had been busy with the formalities of admitting and sending away the candidates, whispered to me:

"There's another one with a messenger boy." "Send him in," said 1, and then to

Bond, "This is my man." Wilde overheard the remark and glanced uneasily at Washington. was his last chance to serve us. If he failed this time, we had no more to offer. Washington remained dignified and impassive as Mrs. Mary Collins' janitor's brother was led into the

He was a stold yet on honest ing fellow, which was more than could be said for the others.

"See here, gentlemen." said he, loo., no from one to the other of us



"YOU WA'N'T THERE!"

down here because this boy told me you wanted to see me, but I don't want no publicity in this case. I don't care ray about their old museum anyway. was just goin' in there to see a plumber who was at work inside, but they fired me out before I could say what I wanted."

William Washington shook his head. just as he had done eleven times be-

"This is not the man," sald he. "What the blankety blank blank do you know about It?" demanded the janftor's brother. "You wa'n't there!" "I was not there!" echoed Mr. Wash-

"No; you wa'n't within nine miles of the place, so far as I know," was the warm response. "I wa'n't put out by no coon. It was a white man that trun me out-a square built feller, shorter'n

"This is the real identification," said. "It is true that our friend here is not William Washington and that he was not present when the affair oc-curred, and because this fellow knows it he is the original and only genuine Mr. Overalis. I couldn't get Washington, and so I did a more conclusive

thing and hired the janitor of the building where I live to play his part."

I did not consider it necessary to say that my scheme had been pure imposture in the beginning and that I had had no item of the excellence of the trick until after it had worked. It cer-

tuinly looked as if I had foreseen all from the beginning.

Harry Hond threw his arm across my shoulder and declared that I was the ooly one of my hind ever born in

Trollope Disagreed.

Although Anthony Trollope never smoked, he liked being with those who did. It soothed his nerves, he said, and sent him to sleep. On one occasion, when he had just returned to London from South Africa, he was talking at the Cosmopolitan club to Lord Carnavon, Lord Perby, Froude, the historian, Lord Wolseley and one or two others equally famous on the future of that country. In the midst of the discussion Trollope fell asleep, and after a quarter of an hour's doze he awoke, shaking himself together like the faithful, growling Newfoundland dog he so much resembled. Dissentient even in his unconsciousness, he spluttered forth: "I utterly disagree with every one of you. What is it you said?"

Rain and Plants.

Many persons must have noticed that the most diligent sprinkling of lawns and flower beds fails to impart to the grass and plants a vital stimulus equal to that which comes from a good show er of rain. A correspondent reminds us of the reason for the difference. It is because rain, falling from a great height through the air, brings with it a considerable quantity of carbonic acid, of nitrogenous particles and of which it has washed out of the atmosphere. So a sprinkler used from the top of a tall building might be slightly more effective than when employed at the surface of the ground.

Hoped He Might Improve. Husband (vituneratively)-I was an

idiot when I married you, Mary. Wife (quietly)-Yes, Tom, I knew you were. But what could I do? You seemed my only chance, and I thought then that you might improve a little with time.-Washington Times.

His Jubilee.

Judge-Are you aware of any mitigating circumstances in your case? Criminal-Yes, your honor; this is the fiftieth time I have been arrested for vagrancy, and I thought that perhaps we might get up a little jubilee.

Brevity.

Irate Author-What did you do with that article of mine on the American forests?

Editor-Well, sir, to make a long story short, I cut it down.-Baltimore American.

The Chinese Cheng.

The Chinese have a singular instrument called cheng, or mouth organ. It. is a circular bundle of small reeds of different lengths pierced with finger holes at proper distances and communicating with a common air chamber beneath. The notes are produced by stopping the holes with the fingers.

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oe the agent of the applicant infreedrdag the metical examination is held in Sternaman versus Metropolitan Life Insurance company (N. Y. 57 L. R. A. \$18) to be prohibited by public policy.

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