

THE SPENDERS

A TALE OF THE THIRD GENERATION

By HARRY LEON WILSON

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SYNOPSIS.

THE SPENDERS.

CHAPTER 1.—Story opens with death of Daniel J. Bines, millionaire mine owner and railroad man, at Kalso Junction. Secretary wires friends and hunt for Bines' aged father is begun, to acquaint him with news.

CHAPTER 2.—Peter Bines is found. Mourns son's death.

CHAPTER 3.—Bines' family wants to live in the east, but Peter urges that they stay in west. Decide on trip through Bines' properties.

She halted and looked back.

"No; I'm afraid we won't lose them; come on; you can't turn back now. And you don't want to hear anything about mines; it wouldn't be at all good for you, I'm sure. Quick, down this way, or you'll hear Pangburn telling some one what a stope is, and think what a thing that would be to carry in your head."

"Really, a stope sounds like something that would get you in the night! I'm afraid!"

Half in his spirit she fled with him down a dimly lighted incline where men were working at the rocky wall with sledge and drill. There was that in his manner which compelled her quite as literally as when at their first meeting he had picked her up in his arms.

As they walked single file through the narrowing of a drift, she wondered about him. He was western, plainly.

An employee in the mine, probably a manager or director or whatever it was they called those in authority in mines. Plainly, too, he was a man of action and a man who engaged all her instinctive liking. Something in him at once coerced her friendliest confidence. These were the admissions she made to herself. She divined him, moreover, to be a blend of boldness and timidity. He was bold to the point of telling her things unconventionally, of beguiling her into remote under-



"WHY, MR.—"

ground passages away from the party; yet she understood; she knew at once that he was a determined but unspoiled gentleman; that under no provocation could he make a mistake. In any situation of loneliness she would have felt safe with him—"as with a brother"—she thought. Then, feeling her cheeks burn, she turned back and said:

"I must tell you he was my brother—that man—that night."

He was sorry and glad all at once. The sorrow being the lesser and more conventional emotion, he started upon an awkward expression of it, which she interrupted.

"Never mind saying that, thank you. Tell me something about yourself, now. I really would like to know you. What do you see and hear and do in this strange life?"

"There's not much variety," he answered, with a convincing droop of depression. "For six months I've been seeing you and hearing you—seeing you and hearing you; not much variety in that—nothing worth telling you about."

Despite her natural caution, intensified by training, she felt herself thrill to the very evident sincerity of his tones, so that she had to affect mirth to seem at ease.

"You stubborn person. Really, I know all about myself. I asked you to tell me about yourself."

"And I began at once to tell you everything about myself—everything of interest—which is yourself."

"I see your sense of values is gone, poor man. I shall question you. Now you are a miner, and I like men of action, men who do things; I've often wondered about you, and seriously, I'm glad to find you here doing something. I remembered you kindly, with real gratitude, indeed. You didn't seem like a New York man either, and I decided you weren't. Honestly, I am glad to find you here at your work in your miner's clothes. You mustn't think we forget how to value men that work."

The point of saying thoughtlessly: "But I'm not working here—I own the mine," he checked himself. Instead he began a defense of the man

hein' strangely something or other. You ain't such a humble walker now, are you, son? But say, that yellow-haired woman, she ain't a bit diffident is she? She's a very hearty lady, I must say!"

"But did you see Miss Milbrey?" "Oh, that's her name, is it, the one that her mother was so worried about and you? Yes, I saw her. Peart and cunnin', but a heap too wise for you, son; take my steer on that. Say, she'd have your pelt nailed to the barn while you was wonderin' which way you'd jump."

"Oh, I know I'm only a tender, teething infant," the young man answered, with masterly satire.

At the surface a pleasant shock was in store for him. There stood the formidable Mrs. Milbrey beaming upon him. Behind her was Mr. Milbrey, the pleasing model of all a city's refinements, awaiting the boon of a hand-clasp. Behind these were the uncomfortable little man, the chatty blonde and the two solemn young men who had lately exhibited more manner than manners. Percival felt they were all regarding him now with affectionate concern. They pressed forward eagerly.

"So good of you, Mr. Bines, to take an interest in us—my daughter has been so anxious to see one of these fascinating mines." "Awfully obliged Mr. Bines." "Charmed, old man; denced partly of you to stay by us down in that hole, you know?" "So clever of you to know where to find the g—!"

He lost track of the speakers. Their speeches became one concerted effusion of affability that was music to his ears.

Miss Milbrey was apart from the group. Having doffed the waterproofs, she was now pluming herself with those lassily-looking but mysteriously potent little pats which restore the attire and mind of women to their normal perfection and serenity. Upon her face was still the amused look Percival had noted below.

"And, Mr. Bines, do come in with that quaint old grandfather of yours and lunch with us," urged Mrs. Milbrey, who had, as it were, spiked her longron. "Here's Mr. Shepler to second the invitation—and then we shall chat about this very interesting west."

Miss Milbrey nodded encouragement, seeming to chuckle inwardly.

In the spacious dining compartment of the Shepler car the party was presently at lunch.

"You seem so little like a western man," Mrs. Milbrey confided graciously to Percival on her right.

"We'll callate hell fetch out all straight, though, in a year or so," put in Uncle Peter, from over his chop with guileless intent to defend his grandson from what he believed to be an attack. "Of course a young man's bound to get some foolishness into him in an eastern college like this boy went to."

Percival had flushed at the compliment to himself; also at the old man's failure to identify it as such.

"Your grandfather is so dear and quaint," said Mrs. Milbrey; "you must certainly bring him to New York with you, for of course a young man of your capacity and graces will never be satisfied out of New York."

"Young men like yourself are assuredly needed there," remarked Mr. Milbrey, warmly.

"Surely they are," agreed Miss Milbrey, and yet with a manner that seemed almost to annoy both parents. They were sparing no opportunity to make the young man conscious of his real oneness with those about him, and yet subtly to intimate that people of just the Milbrey's perception were required to divine it at present.

"These westerners fancy you one of themselves, I dare say," Mrs. Milbrey had said, and the young man purred under the strokings. His fever for the east was back upon him. His weeks with Uncle Peter going over the fields where his father had prevailed had made him convalescent, but these New Yorkers—the very manner and atmosphere of them—undid the work. He envied them their easier speech, their matter-of-fact air of omniscience, the elaborate and cultivated simplicity of their dress, their sureness and sufficiency in all that they thought and said and did. He was homesick again for the life he had glimpsed. The west was rude, desolate and depressing.

Even Uncle Peter, whom he had come warmly to admire, jarred upon him with his crudity and his western as-

sertiveness.

CHAPTER V.
UP SKYLAP CANYON

The meal was ending in smoke, the women, excepting Miss Milbrey, having lighted cigarettes with the men. The talk had grown less truculently sectional. The Angstead twins told of their late fishing trip to Lake St. John or salmon, of projected tours to British Columbia for mountain sheep and Manitoba for elk and moose.

Mr. Milbrey described with minute and loving particularity the preparation of *œufs de Faisan*, à la champagne.

Mrs. Milbrey related an anecdote of New York society, not much in itself, but which permitted the disclosure that she habitually addressed by the first names three of the foremost society leaders, and that each of these personages adopted a like familiarity toward her.

He found Uncle Peter in the cross-cut, studying a bit of ore through a glass, and they went back to ascend.

"Them folks," said the old man, "must be the kind that newspaper meant, that had done something in practical achievement. I bet that girl's mother will achieve something practical with you fur cuttin' the girl out of the bunch; she was awful torment ed; talked two or three times about the people in the humbler walks of life

American tact and gentility. Shepler was amused until he became sleepy, whereupon he extended the freedom of his castle to his guests and retired to his stateroom.

Uncle Peter took a final shot at Oldaker. He was observed to be laughing, and inquiry brought this:

"I jest couldn't help snickerin' over his idea of God's own country. He thinks God's own country is a little strip of an island with a row of well-fed folks up and down the middle, and a lot of hungry folks on each side. Mebbe he's right. I'll be bound, it needs the love of God. But if it is His own country, it don't make Him any connoisseur of countries with me. I'll tell you that."

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