

THE SPENDERS

A TALE OF THE THIRD GENERATION

By HARRY LEON WILSON

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Then he hurriedly dressed, took the note and the cablegram, and sought Mrs. Drelmer.

He found that capable lady gowned for the opera. She received his bits of news with the aplomb of a resourceful commander.

"Now, don't go seedy all at once—you've a chance."

"Hang it all, Mrs. Drelmer, I've not. Life isn't worth living—"

"Tut, tut! Death isn't, either!"

"But we'd have been so nicely set up, even without the title, and now Bines, the clumsy ass, has come this infernal cropper, and knocked everything on the head. I say, you know, it's beastly!"

"Hush, and let me think!"

He paced the floor while his matrimonial adviser tapped a white kidded foot on the floor, and appeared to read plans of new battle in a mother-of-pearl paper-knife which she held between the tips of her fingers.

"I have it—and we'll do it quickly!—Mrs. Wybert!"

Mauburn's eyes opened widely.

"That absurd old Peter Bines has spoken to me of her three times lately. She's made a lot more money than she had in this same copper deal, and she's a lot to begin with. I wondered why he spoke so enthusiastically of her, and I don't see now, but—"

"Well?"

"She'll take you, and you'll be as well set up as you were before. Listen. I met her last week at the Critchleys. She spoke of having seen you. I could see she was dead set to make a good marriage. You know she wanted to marry Fred Milbrey, but Horace and his mother wouldn't hear of it after Advice became engaged to Rulon Shepler. I'm in the Critchleys' box to-night and I understand she's to be there. Leave it to me. Now it's after nine, so run along."

"But, Mrs. Drelmer, there's that poor girl—she cares for me, and I like her immensely, you know—truly I do—and she's a trump—see where she says here she couldn't possibly leave her people now they've come down—even if matters were not otherwise impossible."

"Well, you see they're not only otherwise impossible, but every wise impossible. What could you do? Go to Montana with them and learn to be an Indian? Don't, for heaven's sake, sentimentalize! Go home and sleep like a rational creature. Come in by 11 to-morrow. Even without the title you'll be a splendid match for Mrs. Wybert, and she must have a tidy lot of millions after this deal."

Sorely distressed, he walked back to his lodgings in Thirty-second street.

Wild, quixotic notions of sacrifice flooded his mood of dejection. If the worst came, he could go west with the family and learn how to do something. And yet—Mrs. Wybert. Of course it must be that. The other idea was absurd—too wild for serious consideration. He was 30 years old, and there was only one way for an English gentleman live—even if it must break the heart of a poor girl who had loved him devotedly, and for whom he had felt a steady and genuine affection. He passed a troubled night.

Down at the hotel of Peter Bines was an intimation from Mrs. Wybert herself, bearing upon this same fortuity. When Uncle Peter reached there at two a. m., he found in his box a small scented envelope which he opened with wonder.

Two inclosures fell out. One was a clipping from an evening paper, announcing the birth of twin sons to Lord Casselthorpe. The other was the card he had left with Mrs. Wybert on the day of his call; his name on one side, announcing him; on the other the words he had written:

"Sell Consolidated Copper all you can until it goes down to 65. Do this up to the limit of your capital, and I will make good anything you lose."

"PETER BINES."

He read the note:

"Abingham Hotel—7-20.

"Mr. Peter Bines.

"Dear Sir: You funny old man, you. I don't pretend to understand your game, but you may rely on my secrecy. I am more grateful to you than words can utter—and I will always be glad to do anything for you. Yours very truly,

"BLANCHE CATHERTON WYBERT.

"P. S.—About that other matter—him you know—you will see from this notice I cut from the paper that the party won't get any title at all now, so a dead weight New York man is in every way more eligible. In fact the other party is not to be thought of for one moment, so I am positive you would agree with me."

He tore the note and the card to fine bits.

"It does beat all," he complained later to Billy Brue. "Put a beggar on horseback and they begin right away to fuss around because the horse ain't set with diamonds—give 'em a little, and they want the whole ball of wax!"

"That's right," said Billy Brue, with the quick sympathy of the experienced. "That guy that doped me, he wa'n't satisfied with my good \$30 wad. Not by no means! He had to go take my breastpin nugget from the Early Bird."

At 11 o'clock the next morning Mauburn waited in Mrs. Drelmer's drawing-room for the news she might have.

When that competent person sailed in, he saw temporary defeat written on her brow. His heart sank to its low level of the night before.

"Well, I saw the creature," she be-

gan, "and it re...ed no time at all to reach a very definite understanding with her. I had feared it might be rather a delicate matter, talking to her at once, you know—and we needed to hurry—but she's a woman one can talk to. She's made heaps of money, and the poor thing is society-mad—so afraid the modish world won't take her at her true value—but she talked very frankly about marriage—really she's cool-headed for all the fire she seems to have—and the short of it is that she's determined to marry some one of the smart men here in New York. The creature's fascinated by the very idea."

"Did you mention me?"

"You may be sure I did, but she'd read the papers, and like so many of these people, she has no use at all for an Englishman without a title. Of course I couldn't be too definite with her, but she understood perfectly, and she let me see she wouldn't hear of it at all. So she's off the list. But don't give up. Now, there's—"

But Mauburn was determinedly downcast.

"It's uncommon handsome of you, Mrs. Drelmer, really, but we'll have to leave off that, you know. If a chap isn't heir to a peerage or a city fortune there's no getting on that way."

"Why, the man is actually discouraged. Now you need some American pluck, old chap. An American of your age wouldn't give up."

"But, hang it all! an American knows how to do things, you know, and like as not he'd nothing to begin with, by Jove! Now I'd a lot to begin with, and here's it's all taken away."

"Look at young Bines. He's had a lot taken away, but I'll wager he makes it all back again and more, too, before he's 40."

"He might in this country; he'd never do it at home, you know."

"This country is for you as much as for him. Now, there's Augusta Hartong—those mixed-pickle millionaires, you know. I was chatting with Augusta's mother only the other day, and if I'd only suspected this—"

"Awfully kind of you, Mrs. Drelmer, but it's no use. I'm fairly played out. I shall go to see Miss Bines, and have a chat with her people, you know."

"Now, for heaven's sake, don't make a silly of yourself, whatever you do! Mind, the girl released you of her own accord!"

"Awfully obliged. I'll think about it jolly well, first. See you soon. Good-by!" And Mauburn was off.

He was reproaching himself. "That poor girl has been eating her heart out for a word of love from me. I'm a brute!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GOD IN THE MACHINE.

Uncle Peter next morning was up to a late breakfast with the stricken family. Percival found him a trifle less bitter, but not less convinced in his despair. The young man himself had recovered his spirits wonderfully. The utter collapse of the old man, always so reliant before, had served to fire all his latent energy. He was now voluble with plans for the future; not only determined to reassure Uncle Peter that the family would be provided for, but not a little anxious to justify the old man's earlier praise, and refute his calumnies of the night before.

Mrs. Bines, so complacent overnight, was the most disconsolate one of the group. With her low tastes she was now regarding the loss of the fortune as a calamity to the worthy infants of her own chosen field.

"And there, I had promised to give \$5,000 to the new home for crippled children, and \$5,000 to St. John's Guild for the floating hospitals this summer—just yesterday—and I do de la re I just couldn't stay in New York without money, and see those poor babies suffer."

"You couldn't stay in New York without money, Mrs. Good-thing," said her son—"not even if you couldn't see a thing; but don't you weish on any of your plays—we'll make that ten thousand good if I have to get a sandwich, and lay out a few of these lads around here some dark night."

"But anyway you can't do much to relieve them. I don't know but what it's honestest to be poor while the authorities allow such goings on."

"You have the makings of a very dangerous anarchist in you, ma. I've seen that for some time. But we're an honest family all right now, with the exception of a few properties that I'll have to sit up with nights—sit right by their sick beds and wake them up to take their measly every half hour—"

"Now, my son, don't you get to going without your sleep," began his mother. "And wasn't it lucky about my sending that note to George," said Psyche. "Here in this morning's paper we find he isn't going to be Lord Casselthorpe, after all. What could I have done if we hadn't lost the money?" From which it might be inferred that certain people who had declared Miss Bines to be very hard-headed were not so far wrong as the notorious "casual observer" is very apt to be.

"Never you mind, sis," said her brother, cheerfully, "we'll be all right yet. You wait a little, and hear Uncle Peter take back what he's said about me. Uncle Peter, I'll have you taking off that hat of yours every time you

get sight of me, in about a year."

He went again over the plans. The income from the One Girl was to be used in developing the other properties; the stock ranch up on the Blitter Root, the other mines that had been worked but little and with crude appliances; the irrigation and land improvement enterprises, and the big timber tracts.

"I got something of an idea of it when Uncle Peter took me around summer before last, and I learned a lot more getting the stuff together with Copen. Now, I'm ready to buckle down to it." He looked at Uncle Peter, hungry for a word of encouragement to soothe the hurts the old man had put upon him.

But all Uncle Peter would say was: "That sounds very well," compelling the inference that he regarded sound and substance as phenomena not necessarily related.

"But give me a chance, Uncle Peter. Just don't jump on me too hard for a year!"

"Well, I know that country. There's big chances for a young man with brains—understand?—that has got all the high-living nonsense blasted out of his upper levels—but it takes work. You may do something—there are white blackbirds—but you're on a nasty piece of roadbed—curves all down on the outside—wheels flattened under every truck, and you've had her down in the corner so long I doubt if you can even slow up, say nothin' of reversin'. And think of me gettin' fooled that way at my time of life," he continued, as if in confidence to himself. "But then, I always was a terrible poor judge of human nature."

"Well, have your own way; but I'll fool you again, while you're coppering me. You watch, that's all I ask. Just sit around and talk wise with me all you want to, but watch. Now, I must go down and get to work with Fouts. Thank the Lord, we didn't have to Welsh either, any more than Mrs. Give-up there did."

"You won't touch any more stock; you won't get that money from Shepler?"

"I won't; I won't go near Shepler. I promise you. Now you'll believe me in one thing. I know you will, Uncle Peter." He went over to the old man.

"I want to thank you for pulling me up on that play as you did last night. You saved me, and I'm more grateful to you than I can say. But for you I'd have gone in and dug the hole deeper." He made the old man shake hands with him—though Uncle Peter's hand remained limp and cheerless. "You can shake on that, at least. You saved me, and I thank you for it."

"Well, I'm glad you got some sense," answered the old man, grudgingly don't do anything but consume—includin' men. If the west stopped producing men for you, you'd be as bad off as if it stopped producing fool. You can't grow a big man on this island any more than you can grow wheat out there on Broadway. You're all right. You folks have your uses. I ain't like one of these crazy fools that thinks you're rascals and all like that, but my point is that you don't get the fun out of life. You don't get the big feelin's. Out in the west they're the flesh and blood and bone; and you people here, meanin' no disrespect—you're the dimples and wrinkles and—the warts. You spend and gamble back and forth with that money we raise and dig out of the ground, and you think you're gettin' the best end of it, but you ain't. I found that out 32 years ago this spring. I had a crazy fool notion then to go back there even when I hadn't gone broke—and I done well to go. And that's why I wanted that boy back there. And that's why I'm mighty proud of him. To see his s' so hot to go and take hold, like I know he would be."

"That's excellent. Now, Mr. Bines, I like him and I dare say you've done the best thing for him, unusual as it was. But don't grind him. Might it not be well to ease up a little after he's out there? You might let it be understood that I am willing to finance any of those propositions there liberally—"

"No, no—that ain't the way to handle him. Say, I don't expect to quit cussin' him for another 30 days yet. I want him to think he ain't got a friend on earth but himself. Why, I'd have made this play just as I have done, Mr. Shepler, if there hadn't been a chance to get back a cent of it—if we'd had to go plumb broke—back to the west in an emigrant car, with bologna and crackers to eat, that's what I'd have done. No, sir, no help for him!"

"Aren't you a little hard on him?"

"Not a bit! don't I know the stock, and know just what he needs? Most men you couldn't treat as I'm treatin' him; but with him, the harder you bear down on him the more you'll get out of him. That was the way with his pa—he was a different man after things got to comin' too easy for him. This fellow, the way I'm treatin' him, will keep his head even after he gets things comin' easy again, or I miss my guess. He thinks I despise him now if you told him I was proud of him, I almost believe you could get a hot out of him, sick as he is of gamblin'."

"Has he suspected anything?"

"Sure not! Why, he just thanked me about an hour ago fur savin' him—made me shake hands with him—and I could see the tears back in his eyes." The old man chuckled.

"It was like Len Carey's Nigger Jim. Len had Jim set apart on the plantation for his own nigger. They fished and went huntin' and swimmin' together. One day they'd been swimmin' and was lyin' up on the bank. Len got thinkin' he'd never seen anyone drown. He knew Jim couldn't swim a lick, so he thought he'd have Jim go drown. He says to him: 'Jim,

go jump off that rock there! That was where the deep hole was. Jim was scart, but he had to go. After he'd gone down once, Len says to him: 'Drown now, you damn nigger!' and Jim come up and went down twice more. Then Len begun to think Jim was worth a good bit of money, and mebbe he'd be almighty walloped if the truth come out, so he dives in after Jim and gets him ashore, and after while he brought him to. Anyway, he said, Jim had already sure-enough drowned as fur as there was any fun in it. Well, Len Carey is an old man now, and Jim is an old white-headed nigger still hangin' around the old place, and when Len goes back there to visit his relatives, old Nigger Jim hunts him up with tears in his eyes, and thanks Mister Leonard fur savin' his life that time. Say, I felt this mornin' like Len Carey must feel them times when Jim's thankin' him."

Shepler laughed.

"You're a rare man, Mr. Bines. I'll hope to have your cheerful, easy views of life if I ever lose my hold here in the street. I hope I'll have the old Bines philosophy and the young Bines spirit. That reminds me," he continued, as Uncle Peter rose to go, "we've been pretty confidential, Mr. Bines, and I don't mind telling you I was a bit afraid of that young man until yesterday. Oh, not on the stock proposition. On another matter. You may have noticed that night at the Oldaker's—well, women, Mr. Bines, are uncertain. I know something about markets and the ways of a dollar, but all I know about women is that they're good to have. You can't know any more about them, because they don't

know any more themselves. Just between us, now, I never felt any too sure of a certain young woman's state of mind until copper reached 51 and Union Cordage had been blown up from inside."

They parted with warm expressions of good-will, and Uncle Peter, in high spirits at the success of his machinations, had himself driven up-town.

The only point where his plans had failed was in Mrs. Wybert's refusal to consider Mauburn after the birth of the Casselthorpe twins. Yet he felt that matters, in spite of this happening, must go as he wished them to. The Englishman—Uncle Peter cherished the strong anti-British sentiment peculiar to his generation—would surely never marry a girl who was all but penniless, and the consideration of an alliance with Mrs. Wybert, when the fortune should be lost, had, after all, been an incident—a means of showing the girl, if she should prove to be too deeply infatuated with Mauburn for her own peace of mind—how unworthy and mercenary he was; for he had meant, in that event, to disillusion her by disclosing something of Mrs. Wybert's history—the woman Mauburn should prefer to her. He still counted confidently on the loss of the fortune sufficing to break the match.

When he reached the Hightower that night for dinner, he found Percival downstairs in great glee over what he conceived to be a funny situation.

"Don't ask me, Uncle Peter. I wouldn't get it straight; but as near as I could make out, Mauburn came up here afraid the blow of losing him was going to kill sis with a broken heart, and sis was afraid the blow was going to kill Mauburn, because she wouldn't have married him anyway, rich or poor, after he'd lost the title. They found each other some way, and then Mauburn accused her of being heartless, of caring only for his title, and she accused him of caring only for her money, and he insisted she ought to marry him anyway, but she wouldn't marry him because of the twins—"

Uncle Peter rubbed his big brown hands with the first signs of cheerfulness he had permitted Percival to detect in him.

"Good fur Pish—that's the way to take down them conceited Brits—"

"But then they went at matters again from a new standpoint, and the result is they've made it up."

"What? Has them precious twin Casselthorpes perished?"

"Not at all, both doing finely—haven't even had colic—growing fast—probably learned to say 'fancy, now,' by this time. But Mauburn's going west with us if we'll take him."

"Get out!"

"Fact! Say, it must have been an awful blow to him when he found sis wouldn't think of him at all without his title, even if she was broke. They had a stormy time of it from all I can hear. He said he was strong enough to work and all that, and since he'd cared for her, and not for her money, it was low down of her to throw him over; then she said she wouldn't leave

her mother and us, now that we might need her, not for him or any other man—and he said that only made him love her all the more, and then he got chesty, and said he was just as good as any American, even if he never would have a title; so pretty soon they got kind of interested in each other again, and by the time I came home it was all over. They ratified the preliminary agreement for a merger."

"Well, I snum!"

"That's right, go ahead and snum. I'd snum myself if I knew how—it knocked me. Better come upstairs and congratulate the happy couple."

"Shoo, now! I certainly am mighty disappointed in that fellow. Still, he is well spotted, and them freckles mean iron in the blood. Maybe we can develop him along with the other properties."

They found Psyche already radiant, though showing about her eyes traces of the storm's devastations. Mauburn was looking happy; also defiant and stubborn.

"Mr. Bines," he said to Uncle Peter, "I hope you'll side with me. I know something about horses, and I've nearly a thousand pounds that I'll be glad to put in with you out there if you can make a place for me."

The old man looked him over quizzically. Psyche put her arm through Mauburn's.

"I'd have to marry some one, you know, Uncle Peter!"

"Don't apologize, Pish. There's room for men that can work out there, Mr. Mauburn, but there ain't any vintages or trouserings to speak of, and the hours is long."

"Try me, Mr. Bines!"

"Well, come on. If you can't skin yourself you can hold a leg while somebody else skins. But you ain't met my expectations, I'll say that!" And he shook hands cordially with the Englishman.

"I say, you know," said Mauburn later to Psyche, "why should I skin myself? Why should I be skinned at all, you know?"

"You shouldn't," she reassured him. "That's only Uncle Peter's way of saying you can help the others, even if you can't do much yourself at first. And won't Mrs. Drelmer be delighted to know it's all settled?"

"Well," said Uncle Peter to Percival later in the evening, "Pish has done better than you have here. It's a pity you didn't pick out some good, sensible girl, and marry her in the midst of your other doings."

"I couldn't find one that liked cats. I saw a lot that suited every other way, but I always said to myself: 'Remember Uncle Peter's warning!' so I'd go to an animal store and get a basket of kittens and take them around, and not one of the dozen stood your test. Of course I'd never disregard your advice."

"Hum," remarked Uncle Peter, in a tone to be noticed for its extreme dryness. "Too bad, though—you certainly need a wife to take the conceit out of you."

"I lost that in the street, along with the rest."

"Well, son, I ain't no ways alarmed but what you'll soon be on your feet again in that respect—say by next Tuesday or Wednesday. I wish the money was comin' back as easy."

"Well, there are girls in Montana City."

"You could do worse. That reminds me—I happened to meet Shepler today and he got kind of confidential—talkin' over matters. He said he'd never really felt sure about the affections of a certain young woman, especially after that night at the Oldaker's—he'd never felt dead sure of her until you went broke. He said you never could know anything about a woman—not really."

"He knows something about that one, all right, if he knows she wouldn't have any use for me now. Shepler's coming on with the ladies. I feel quite hopeful about him."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DEPARTURE OF UNCLE PETER. The Bineses, with the exception of Psyche, were at breakfast a week later. Miss Bines had been missing since the day that Mr. and Mrs. Cecil G. H. Mauburn had left for Montana City to put the Bines home in order.

Uncle Peter and Mrs. Bines had now determined to go, leaving Percival to follow when he had closed his business affairs.

"It's like starting west again to make our fortune," said Uncle Peter. He had suffered himself to regain something of his old cheerfulness of manner.

"I wish you two would wait until they can get the car here, and go back with me," said Percival. "We can go back in style even if we didn't have much more than a get-away stake."

But his persuasions were unavailing. "I can't stand it another day," said Mrs. Bines, "and those letters keep coming in from poor suffering people that haven't heard the news."

"I'm too restless to stay," declared Uncle Peter. "I declare, with spring all greenin' up this way I'd be found campin' up in Central park some night and took off to the calabosse. I just got to get out again where you can feel the wind blow and see a hundred miles and don't have to dodge horseless horse cars every minute. It's a wonder one of 'em ain't got me in this town. You come on in the car, and do the style fur the family. One of them common Pullmans is good enough fur Marthy and me. And besides, I got to get Billy Brue back. He's goin' plumb daff lookin' night and day fur that man that got his \$30 and his breastpin. He says there'll be an ambulance backed up at the spot where he needs him—makes no difference if it's right on Fifth avenue. Billy's kind of near-sighted at that, so I'm mortal afraid he'll make a mistake one of these

nights and take some honest man's money and trinkets away from him."

Percival saw them to the train.

"Take care of yourself," said Uncle Peter at parting. "You know I ain't any good any more, and you got a whole family, includin' an Englishman, dependin' on you—you'll throw him on the town, though, if he don't take out his first papers the minute I get there."

His last shot from the rear platform was:

"Change your name back to 'Pete,' son, when you get west of Chicago. Tain't anything fancy, but it's a crack-in good business name fur a hustler!"

"All right, Uncle Peter—and I hope I'll have a grandson that thinks as much of it as I do of yours."

When they had gone, he went back to the work of final adjustment. He



"YOU ARE MISS SPRING?"

had the help of Copen, whom they had sent for. With him he was busy for a week. By lucky sales of some of the securities that had been hypothermated they managed to save a little; but, on the whole, it was what Percival described it, "a lovely autops-y."

At last the vexatious work was finished, and he was free again. At the end of the final day's work he left the office of Fouts in Wall street, and walked up Broadway. He went slowly, enjoying the freedom from care. It was the afternoon of a day when the first summer heat had been felt, and as he loitered before shop windows or walked slowly through that street where all move quickly and most very hurriedly, a welcome little breeze came up from the bay to fan him and encourage his spirit of leisure.

At Union square, when he would have taken a car to go the remainder of the distance, he saw Shepler, accompanied by Mrs. Van Geist and Miss Milbrey, alight from a victoria and enter a jeweler's.

He would have passed on, but Miss Milbrey had seen him and stood waiting in the doorway, while Shepler and Mrs. Van Geist went on into the store.

"Mr. Bines—I'm so glad!"

She stood, flushed with pleasure, radiant in stuff of filmy pink, with little flecks at her throat and waist of the first tender green of new leaves. She was unaffectedly delighted to see him.

"You are Miss Spring?" he said when she had given him her hand—"and you've come into all your mother had that was worth inheritin', haven't you?"

"Mr. Bines, shall we not see you now? I wanted so much to talk with you when I heard everything. Would it be impertinent to say I sympathized with you?"

He looked over her shoulder in where Shepler and Mrs. Van Geist were inspecting a tray of jewels.

"Of course not impertinent—very kind—only I'm really not in need of any sympathy at all. You won't understand it; but we don't care so much for money in the west—for the loss of it—not so much as you New Yorkers would. Besides, we can always make a plenty more."

The situation was, emphatically, not as he had so often dreamed it when she should marvel, perhaps regretfully, over his superiority to her husband as a money-maker. His only relief was to belittle the importance of his loss.

"Of course, we've lost everything, almost—but I've not been a bit downcast about it. There's more where it came from, and no end of fun going after it. I'm looking forward to the adventures. I can tell you. And eve y one will be glad to see me there; they won't think the loss of me, I assure you, because I've made a fluke heat!"

"Surely, Mr. Bines, no one here could think less of you. Indeed, I think more of you. I think it's fine and big to go back with such courage. Do you know, I wish I was a man—I'd show them!"

"Really, Miss Milbrey—"

He looked over her shoulder again, and saw that Shepler was waiting for her.

"I think your friends are impatient," "they can wait. Mr. Bines, I wonder if you have quite a correct idea of all New York people."

"Probably not; I've met so few, you know."

"Well, of course—but of those you've met?"

"You can't know what my ideas are," "I wish we might have talked more—I'm sure—when are you leaving?"

"I shall leave to-morrow."

"And we're leaving for the country ourselves. Papa and mamma go to-morrow—and Mr. Bines, I should have liked another talk with you—I wish we were dining at the Oldaker's again."