

WITHIN THEIR GATES

By Norman Bruce

"I'M BRINGING the Turkey with me," wrote Aunt Serene in her prim, quaint old-fashioned script. "It's no more than fitting he should be spelled with a capital T—he's that kind of a turkey, thirty pounds without a stitch on! You'll have to invite all your neighbors in to help eat him, my dear. Tell John Henry the drumsticks were raised a-purpose for him."

Mrs. John Henry looked across the coffee percolator at her husband, dismay in her violet eyes.

"John! I've promised Martha the day off. We are invited to the Manners' house party! I—I don't suppose we could write and ask her to come a week later."

Her husband shook his head. "Can't be done! We've been begging her to make us a visit ever since we were married. I wouldn't hurt her feelings for a dozen house parties!"

"But this one, John! It's so very important," she reminded him. "It's the chance of a lifetime to meet some of the best people in the city. The Bruces are to be there. Mrs. Bruce is president of the Cosmos Club and her husband's the youngest partner in Bruce and Barrett. If they were interested in us, it might mean so much!"

John Henry Rivers looked at the anxious face opposite with the tolerance of malekind toward its woman-kind's social ambitions. "You trot along to your party and I'll stay and eat Aunt Serene's turkey and mince pie," he suggested. "That fixes everything. She'll understand about your having to go. Aunt Serene's specialty is understanding things. I bet she has half the people in the house coming to her with their troubles inside a week!"

Helena smiled tolerantly. "Apartment-house people aren't like Shady Valley ones, John," she said. "There isn't a soul in the Bellevue we know, except the janitor, and I'm positive he hasn't a soul. I'm afraid Aunt Serene is going to find the city lonely, but we'll take her sight-seeing and give her as good a time as we know how."

John Henry's eyes had a reminiscent twinkle as he stood waiting for the elevator a little later. Aunt Serene lonely? Not if he knew Aunt Serene! He glanced at the other men, standing stiffly silent awaiting the same elevator.

"Queer way we live!" he thought with a sudden sense of surprise. "Fifty families packed together under one roof, never speaking, not knowing each other's names even. Doesn't seem very human, somehow, when you stop to think of it."

Even in the Christmas crowds surging through the gates of the great terminal a few days later it was easy to pick Aunt Serene. The pink, gently withered old face framed in gray crimps, beamed out so impartially on the whole world that many eyes, catching sight of it, had a momentary glimpse of a sunny kitchen, fragrant with old-fashioned dinner smells.

"I know now, dearie," Aunt Serene told John Henry's wife, giving a little pat to her arm after the first greetings were over, "why John Henry came to the city instead of setting up practice in Centreville. It was so's he could find you. You're just what he wrote you were and that's saying considerable. But it's true, every word!"

"You should have had a porter to carry these bags for you," John Henry declared. "The fool regulations wouldn't let me through the gates."

"A man wanted to," Aunt Serene said cheerfully, "but there's a jar of peach pickles in the extension bag that has to be carried just so. The conductor took them off for me. He was a nice man, the conductor. He has five little children, all boys but the youngest one."

Helena gazed down at her in bewilderment. "How did you ever find that out?"

"I asked him," Aunt Serene explained comfortably. "When he'd done taking tickets he came back and sat with me and we had a pleasant talk. He showed me their pictures in the back of his watch—as smart-looking a set as you ever saw. I sent a Northern Spy, rubbed nice and shiny, to the littlest one."

The car they boarded passed tall buildings, splendid churches and immense apartment houses but the Rivers found it difficult to point out the sights to their visitor. Aunt Serene had discovered a baby and was beaming at it till the soiled, fretful little face crinkled into a smile. Before the Bellevue was reached she had found out that the baby's name was Evelyn Maude, that she was six months old, had three teeth and was going to her grandfather's in Yonkers to spend Christmas. The bored passengers were smiling at the baby and glancing friendly-wise at each other by the time John Henry piloted his party from the car.

In the elevator Aunt Serene sank

down on the seat with a plump chuckle.

"It seems queer living so far off the ground you have to ride to the top of the house!" She laughed infectious-ly. "Still now I'm getting too heavy on my feet, one of these contraptions would come in handy when I want to get at the chests in the attic at home in a hurry."

A giggle brought Helena's eyes to the face of the elevator boy. It was the first time she had ever noticed that he was young and freckled and had a thatch of carrot hair surmounting a wide grin. Except for a perfunctory "Good-morning" she had never spoken to him.

Aunt Serene was nodding to him now. "I suppose," she queried, "you have a good time riding up and down, don't you? Seems to me I would if I were a boy!"

The elevator boy's smile widened friendly. "It ain't so bad!" he acknowledged. "It gets lonesome not having anybody to talk to sometimes."

"I'll bring my knitting and go riding with you, one of these days," Aunt Serene promised.

Within the next twenty-four hours Aunt Serene had exchanged cake recipes with Martha, the cook, discovered the ice man's name and was on neighborly terms with the janitor's family.

"We must run down and see his wife," she told Helena placidly. "She's been ailing these two weeks now, he tells me, and she has a little mite of a baby, too."

Helena's city-bred soul shuddered. It had never occurred to her to wonder whether janitors had wives and little mites of babies though she remembered dimly now that she had sometimes passed a slender calico fig-

very like disapproval lurked in the gentle old eyes.

Again without knowing just why, John Henry's wife felt oddly ashamed. She thought it was because she was neglecting her duties as hostess and hurried Aunt Serene into her bonnet and coat for a sight-seeing trip.

"Of course," she told her as they waited in the hall for the elevator a little later, "we can't see much to-day. After Christmas we'll start in and make a business of it but there's time for the Parliament Buildings this morning anyway."

Aunt Serene interrupted. She was listening anxiously to a thin wailing sound that drifted down to them from the floor above.

"That's a sick baby crying. Teething, most likely, poor dear!" she cried, pity touching her sweet old face to tender lines. "I wonder if its mother knows about rubbing its little gums with sweet oil and brewing up a nice dose of catnip tea. He's crying dreadful, isn't he?" She turned to Helena, gently determined. "The Parliament Buildings will keep, won't they, dearie? I believe, if you don't mind, I'll just run up and see whether I can't do something for that poor little baby. Folks always said I was a master hand at coaxing babies' teeth through."

Helena looked helplessly after the little gray figure disappearing up the stairs.

"The mother will probably shut the door in her face and hurt her feelings terribly!" she mourned. "She doesn't realize how different people are here from those she knew at home."

The morning passed and Aunt Serene did not return. It was luncheon time before she came in, beaming above an armful of holey little stockings and gingham rompers.

"I thought they'd be something to do, evenings," she explained happily. "That poor woman has her hands full—four children besides the baby and

of the brown parcel at their knees were all going home to eat Christmas dinner with home people.

Helena Rivers picked up her suitcase and hurried breathlessly down the car aisle just in time to alight at the next stop. Her eyes glowed like stars.

"I'm going back!" she cried aloud. I'll send a telegram to the Manners. I'm going home to have Christmas dinner with John and Aunt Serene."

She clapped her hands gleefully. "I'll stay at the Prince George over night and then to-morrow just when they're sitting down to dinner, I'll give them a surprise!"

It was she who was the surprised one! She stood in the dining-room doorway, next day, gazing at the holiday scene and wondering dazedly whether she could be in the right apartment. From the wall the Mona Lisa smiled down familiarly and her own wedding-present silver stood on the buffet.

The table had been extended to its full length. About it sat a strange company of men, women and little children, laughing and talking as though they had known each other all their lives. The faces were vaguely familiar. The smiling elderly man and the gray lady were the silent, solemn next-door people. The red-faced Irishman with the shiny celluloid collar, beside the thin little woman, was the belligerent janitor. The freckle-faced youngster opposite was the elevator boy. There was no mistaking those freckles!

Mrs. John Henry made a queer sound that brought everyone's eyes to the doorway. Carving knife in one hand, drumstick in the other, her husband sprang from his place and hurried to her, hugging her openly before them all while Aunt Serene beamed delightedly across the turnip and cranberry jelly.

"You're just in time for the party!" boomed John Henry. "Aunt Serene and I had stage fright when we looked at that turkey so we called in the neighbors to help us out."

In John Henry's honest eyes, apprehension dawned. What would Helena say to the guests he and Aunt Serene had invited to dinner? In the pause before she answered, a small voice piped up shrilly.

"I've 'et turkey 'n' stuffin' 'n' smashed potato 'n' cranberry!" the oldest of the Upstairs Family related ecstatically. "'N' I'm going to 'et mince pie 'n' pudding with raisins in!"

With a laugh that was not unlike a sob, Helena Rivers stooped, lifted the small wiggling body into her arms and buried her face in the tousled curls.

"That's what I came back for—a piece of Aunt Serene's mince pie!" she cried tremulously. "And to eat Christmas dinner with my friends!"

Late that afternoon when Aunt Serene and Helena turned back from saying goodbye to the last of their guests, fingers still tingling from friendly handclaps, hearts tingling with friendly words, they found John Henry sitting on the davenport in the living-room, a queer look on his face.

"Helena! Aunt Serene!" he cried, his big voice shaky with suppressed excitement. "Who do you suppose the next-door man is?"

"Their name is Barrett," Aunt Serene peered over her knitting in surprise. "That isn't such a strange name, John Henry. The storekeeper back home is a Barrett. Maybe they're related. I wouldn't be surprised."

Helena was staring at her husband with incredulous eyes.

"John, not the Barrett, of Burke and Barrett? It couldn't be he, living here in this house, right next door to us a whole year!"

"It is, all the same!" John Henry went to the window abruptly and stood staring out into the soft winter dusk, making a brave show of unconcern. "He said—of course it might not mean anything—but he asked me to drop into his office and see him next week."

He turned back into the room, meeting his wife's dazed glance.

"After all, Helena," John Henry laughed, "perhaps truffles and pate de fois gras aren't such valuable assets for a struggling young lawyer as old-fashioned turkey and mince pie!"

Helena ran across the room to Aunt Serene's chair and kissed the soft cheek.

"Perhaps," she corrected him, "perhaps a silly, scheming snob of a wife isn't such a valuable asset to a struggling young lawyer as a dear, blessed Aunt Serene!"

Aunt Serene only shook her head placidly over her knitting.

"Folks are just the same wherever you find them," she smiled. "I expect King George would be neighborly, once you got to know him. He always looked to me like a pleasant-spoken man!"

The homes of a nation are its strongest forts.

Infants and children require one calory of protein per pound of body weight. This would be about half an ounce of protein for a child weighing fifty pounds. This amount of protein is supplied by one-half pint of milk and one-sixth pound of bread.

Christmas Carol

Hark! what mean those holy voices
Sweetly sounding through the skies?
Lo! the angelic host rejoices,
Heavenly alleluias rise.

Listen to the wondrous story
Which they chant in hymns of joy—
'Glory in the highest, glory!
Glory be to God on high!

'Peace on earth, goodwill from heaven,
Reaching to earth's utmost bound;
Man redeemed, his sins forgiven,
Loud our golden harps shall sound.

'Christ, is born; the great Anointed!
Heaven and earth His praises sing!
O receive whom God appointed
For your Prophet, Priest, and King!

Hasten, mortals, to adore Him;
Learn His Name to magnify,
Till in heaven ye sing before Him
Glory be to God on high!

Let us learn the wondrous story
Of our great Redeemer's birth;
Spread the brightness of His glory
Till it cover all the earth.

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT.

Louise Moulton ate her Christmas breakfast slowly. How she dreaded them—these Christmas times! She was ashamed of herself through and through—she had so many things to be grateful for! She liked her work, and had succeeded in it, and Professor Spenser's gift of his own book, "The most patient secretary a writer ever had," was something she valued greatly. So was Mrs. Spenser's beautiful fountain pen, with the note of appreciation. Surely a girl with gifts like these—real gifts—ought to bring plenty of Christmas joy.

And there were the girls, too. Her class was the most loyal class that ever was graduated. Had not Jocelyn Reynolds invited her to her big Christmas party, although she never had had time to come and see her? And Betty Newell, in all the excitement of her brand-new engagement, remembered Louise's favorite colors in the dainty bag she sent her. And up in her room now other packages were waiting. Louise pushed back her coffee cup. She might as well open them and get it over.

They were a varied assortment. One or two Louise put aside, with close-shut lips. One, a cheap handkerchief from a notion-counter salesgirl for whom she had done one or two little things, she touched lovingly.

There remained one package, addressed in Mollie French's handwriting. Louise opened it slowly. She did so wish Mollie had not!—when it took every penny to make ends meet. It was not any kindness; why it seemed almost like giving down—as if Mollie were sorry for her! She could not bear it, to have Mollie do a thing like that!

The box was open now. On top lay a note sealed with a Christmas seal; beneath that a doorkey, decorated with a bow of Christmas ribbon. Louise turned it over curiously, but was driven to the note for explanation.

"Dear old Louise," it ran. "You know how things are with us—that we are so rich that we have nothing except ourselves to give. This that we are sending with Christmas love is the freedom of our hearts and home. It opens the door any hour of the day or night—because we love you and want you. In proof whereof we sign our names." And below followed the signatures—Mollie's and Kent's, and a big, carefully printed "PIPPA," and a scrawl for "Boy, his mark."

For five minutes—ten—Louise sat still with her heart beating high. Did Mollie really mean it? Was there anyone in all the city who would really let her "run in" as everyone used to do at home? Doubting and half-afraid, Louise threw on her wraps and hurried to the car. Twenty minutes later she had opened the door and stood in Mollie's little hall. Somewhere upstairs she heard splashing and laughter.

"Mollie," she called, "the door opened!"

From above came an exclamation of pleasure. "Come and find us, dear," Mollie called out to her; "the baby's having his bath!"

Swiftly Louise ran up the stairs. It was true—and Christmas had come!

Christmas at Bethlehem.

Veiling vapors rent asunder;
Clear the vast blue vault afar;
Over Bethlehem a wonder,
Over Bethlehem a star!

Silence in the desert places
Where the purple shadows throng,
But down the night's ethereal spaces
Over Bethlehem a song!

Still as in those ages hoary,
When the shining hosts looked down,
Over Bethlehem a glory,
Over Bethlehem a crown!



Carving knife in one hand, drumstick in the other, Helena's husband hugged her before them all.

ure, with wispy hair, down on sodden knees in a pool of soapsuds in the hall.

As John Henry had prophesied, Aunt Serene understood the Hartly-Manners' house party perfectly.

"Don't you worry about me and John," she told Helena cheerfully. "It won't be the first Christmas dinner I've cooked for him. Run along to your party."

"Don't you think you'd better let John take you to some nice hotel for dinner?" Helena urged. "Somewhere where there is music and you can watch the people and not have to think of anything but enjoying yourself?"

Aunt Serene looked at her pityingly. "There may be unfortunate folks that have to eat their Christmas dinner in hotels but those with homes don't have to. That's one of the things they've got to be specially thankful for!"

John Henry's wife gasped. In the code of apartment dwellers, home is where one stays when one has no other place to go. Suddenly, for no reason that she could name, a shame-wave swept to the soft line of her hair.

"I wish I weren't going! If it weren't so important for John's sake as well as mine—" she spoke incoherently. "Young people are nobodies and get nowhere unless they know the best people."

Aunt Serene was puzzled. "I should think there were enough people right here in the house. I've seen some pleasant-looking neighbors in the hall. The little gray lady and man—what is their name?"

"I don't know," Helena confessed. "You see, Aunt Serene, there aren't any neighbors in apartment houses. It isn't like living in a little town. Why, we might meet anyone that way!"

"They're all folks, aren't they?" asked Aunt Serene quietly. Something

him fretting to be held every moment. I helped clear things up a little while I was visiting. She's a nice little thing."

"Then, this afternoon—" began her hostess weakly, but Aunt Serene shook her head.

"I met the next-door lady in the elevator just now," she explained apologetically. "She had crocheting in her hand and before I remembered about the Parliament Buildings I offered to run in this afternoon and show her the lazy wives' stitch. Her husband is a lawyer downtown, she says, and she gets lonesome for some one to talk to. When you get back from your visit, dearie, I should love to see the Buildings and everything."

The next morning, Helena Rivers, with troubled eyes, watched the city dwindle from the suburban car windows.

With the mental jolt of stepping off a discovery she had not known was there, she wondered whether a home Christmas with a great brown turkey and cranberry jelly might be almost as pleasant as a ten-course hotel-dinner with Hawaiian music, or even a feast of French cookery at the Hartly-Manners' lace-draped mahogany, glittering with silver and glass.

"It's my duty to know the best people for the sake of John's career," she argued stubbornly. "It isn't enough for him to be clever and hard-working if he wants to make a position for himself. He must be socially prominent too."

The car was crowded. Suddenly Mrs. John Henry Rivers sat forward on the edge of her seat and glanced at her fellow passengers. A dear old grandma lady with a flavor of pink and white peppermints about her, a riotous family of little children with long straight legs and Dutch-cut hair, a middle-aged couple with a hobby-horse's red painted nose sticking out