

## Coffee and Careers

**M**R. THOMAS BARNARD had been told that he was to go to the club for dinner inasmuch as three of his wife's old friends whom she had not seen for "years and years" were going to gather around the new dining-room mahogany that evening.

"Glad you warned me, Frances," was her husband's parting comment, after a hasty peck at her right cheek; "if there's anything that makes me tired it's a crowd of women talking about old times. I suppose you'll have pink candle-shades and smilax and nothing fit to eat."

But in spite of masculine scorn of salads and pink shades, the four women had managed to make the dinner a two-hours of hilarity, for it was fifteen years since the heavy gates of the Northway Ladies' College had clanged behind them, and no conversation is quite so interesting to the initiated as a series of "Do you remember," and "Will you ever forget?"

"This is a trifle better than the old grate fires at the college," said Alice Macdonald, as she surveyed the gas logs and shivered daintily at the sound of the wind outside. "Just to think, Frances, that we're having coffee in your drawing-room and you always said that you were going to have a career."

"I'm having it," said Mrs. Barnard confidently. "I manage to keep Tom in good humour and have had this servant for two years. Besides, I am decorating china. Those cups are my very own. Tom says they are hideous but I've noticed that he tells about his wife's fondness for art."

"Managing a husband, painting coffee cups and jollyng a maid! What a career for a woman who used to talk about the over-soul and the isolation of the spirit!" sighed Mrs. Willie Leslie, who had been away in the West for ten long years.

"You're just as bad," retorted the hostess. "You spent nearly half an hour telling about your little Howard's bright remarks and I remember the time when you used to declare that you were going on the stage and would be satisfied with nothing less than the part of Lady Macbeth."

"What a goose I was!" laughed Mrs. Willie. "I went home from Northway, fully determined to startle both the home circle and the public. Dad and the boys simply chuckled when I announced my intentions but I kept up my studies in voice culture and that sort of thing for six months. Then I went away to visit Aunt Grace and met Willie Leslie who sympathised with my Lady Macbeth aspirations and read poetry to me every evening. Dear me! You can't get him to read anything but stocks and politics now. Finally Willie persuaded me that Juliet was my proper role and, behold, my greatest pride is that I know food values and make the best omelette east of the Rockies, if I do have to say it for myself."

"Perhaps your bright boy Howard will take to the stage."

"It doesn't look like it," said Mrs. Willie gloomily. "He won't recite Eugene Field's lovely little poems but says he wants to own a revolver and drive four horses along the Cariboo Road. But what about the other careers? Mary, do you keep up your music?"

A demure little lady in brown hesi-

tated for a moment and then admitted: "Every once in a while I make a resolution to practice two hours a day but the resolution goes the way of other paving material. You see, George can't stand Bach, says it makes his head ache, and I simply have to drag him to a concert. You remember our old teacher, Professor Maxwell. He would have a fit if he could hear me playing 'The Good Old Summertime' and 'Dearie.' But it's the only kind of thing that George likes and so I have descended to rag-time."

The only unmarried member of the quartette laughed long and merrily. "It's all very well for you to make fun of us, Alice Macdonald," said the little lady in brown severely. "But let me tell you that matrimony is the most exacting career in the world. Here we all set out with the most extravagant ideas of what we were going to do and of how the world was going to stand still to listen to us. Frances was going to write fiction with a moral philosophy fastened in somewhere, Mabel intended to make Ellen Terry clutch her laurels in alarm, and I was absolutely devoted to Chopin and hoped some day to go to Leipsic. Now we're all comfortably settled in life with no aspirations beyond having three meals a day served in a style that won't arouse a husband's profanity. My own trouble is the carving-knife. It's never sharp enough for George. We've all ended in the domestic round except you, Alice, and you were the only one of the crowd at Northway's who had a bona fide engagement ring."

"It was a pretty ring, too," said the former owner regretfully: "I hated to send it back. You see I quarrelled with Hugh Morrison because he said I would have to give up skating and dancing when I became a minister's wife. I wouldn't have him using 'must' in that high-and-mighty fashion. Well, he married that Katherine Grant, perhaps you remember her—red hair and a perfectly dreadful temper. She quarrels with the congregation wherever they go and he daren't call his soul or his sermons his own."

"I believe you're glad," said Mrs. Willie Leslie reproachfully.

"Well, I'm not sorry," chuckled Miss Macdonald. "Hugh needed to be taken down and she snubs him beautifully."

"This is a queer old world," was Mrs. Barnard's original remark. "You think you know all about people, how they are going to turn out and whom they are going to marry. And they upset all your calculations and pop out of the pigeon-holes in which they've been placed. Now you remember Flossie Manners, don't you?"

"The girl who lisped and who had a loose cloud of fair hair?" said Mrs. Willie.

"Yes. She seemed so dreadfully empty-headed and at one time I was so afraid that my brother Henry had taken a fancy to her. Well, Flossie is a medical missionary out in China, wears blue spectacles and has hardly any hair left."

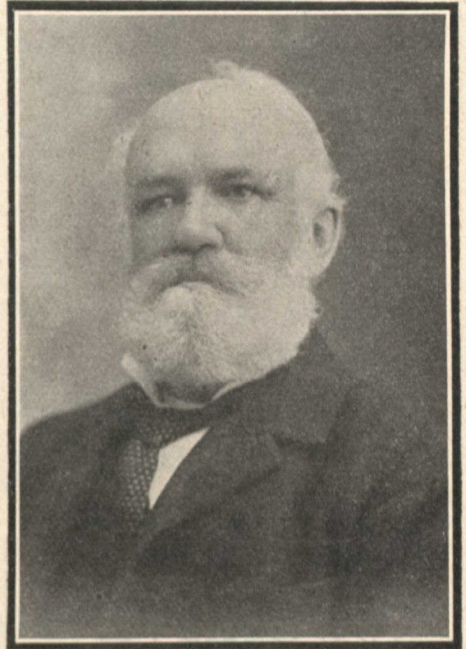
"I wonder what Trixie Blake has done," said Mrs. Willie. "she was the jolliest little creature that ever set a school upside down. I can see her yet with her dark hair in a tangle and her eyes glowing! And don't you remember the scarlet tam-o'-shanter

that was always perched above her left ear. I lost track of her when we went out West ten years ago. But I always intended to hunt her up."

"Haven't you heard?" said Mrs. Barnard softly. Her friend looked up and asked nothing further. Then Alice Macdonald took a photograph from the cabinet and looked lovingly at the picture of a bride's bright face.

"This is dear old Trix. She was married to Ted Matthews. Don't you remember the boy who used to throw notes over the high back fence and who was caught by the lady principal? Trix and Teddie were drowned—together—two years ago in a Channel accident."

The four friends looked tenderly for a moment at the pretty piquant face and the gown of silk and lace, and when they turned again to the fire there was a mist between them and the glow.



**The Late Mr. Blair**

**B**USY with a reorganisation of the telephone companies of New Brunswick, the Hon. Mr. Blair visited Fredericton a few days ago and stayed at the residence of his sisters-in-law, the Misses Thompson. He was suffering from a cold, but otherwise seemed in good health. Lying on a sofa, chatting with one of the ladies, he suddenly gasped and passed away. It seemed strange that his great career should be ended in the city of his birth, because his home has been elsewhere for some years.

Mr. Blair was, up to 1896, a New Brunswick politician of considerable experience and success. He was then premier of that province, but was called to Ottawa to take the portfolio of Minister of Railways in Sir Wilfrid Laurier's new cabinet. His subsequent career, his revolt over the new Transcontinental railway, and his resignation are recent matters.

Mr. Blair was married on Oct. 31, 1866, to Miss Thompson, daughter of Mr. Geo. Thompson, Fredericton, and he is survived by his wife and five daughters and two sons. The daughters are Mrs. R. F. Randolph, Fredericton; Mrs. Walter C. Clarke, Halifax; Mrs. Brewin, England, and Mrs. McCarthy, Ottawa, and Miss Marjorie, Ottawa. The sons are A. G. Blair and Donald Blair, Ottawa.