

Girls of Highland Hall

Carroll Watson Rankin

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A twin baby carriage containing weary infants, propelled by a perspiring young person, was coming in the gate

CARROLL W. RANKIN

The Adopting of Rosa Marie
The Castaways of Pete's Patch
The Cinder Pond
The Girls of Gardenville
Dandelion Cottage
Girls of Highland Hall

GIRLS OF HIGHLAND HALL

Further Adventures of the Dandelion Cottagers

BY CARROLL WATSON RANKIN

Author of "Dandelion Cottage," "The Girls of
Gardenville," "The Cinder Pond," Etc.

New York

Henry Holt and Company

1921

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HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

First printing, August, 1921

Second printing, May, 1922

Third printing, September, 1925

TO
MRS. CELIA K. NORTHROP

To whom I am indebted for
much friendly encouragement.

THE PERSONS OF THE STORY

Bettie Tucker Jean Mapes Marjory Vale Mabel Bennett	Once of Dandelion Cottage, now of Highland Hall.
Henrietta Bedford	Their Best Friend.
Peter Black	Bettie's Best Friend.
The Rhodes Family	Of Highland Hall.
Miss Woodruff	A Stern Teacher.
Maude Wilder	Her Most Incurable Pupil.
Miss Blossom	A Timely Flower.
Madame Bolande	Who Bathed in Perfume.
Gladys de Milligan	The Daughter of a Foolish Mother.
Abbie	A Sad Example to All Boarding School Orphans.
Sallie Dickinson	A Boarding School Orphan.
Elisabeth Wilson Eleanor Pratt Beatrice Holmes	The Lofty Seniors.
Victoria Webster	A Brave Maiden.
Isabelle Carew	Who Is Sentimental.
Augusta Lemon	A Timid Girl.
Cora Doyle	A Growing Girl.
Various Teachers, Girls and Fathers—Especially Fathers.	

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A twin baby carriage containing weary infants, propelled by a perspiring young person, was coming in the gate

"My beads!" shrieked Hazel, pouncing on the necklace

It looked very much as if all the mysteries were solved

"For goodness' sake keep still," growled Mabel

GIRLS OF HIGHLAND HALL

CHAPTER I—ON THE WAY

The time was almost noon of a warm September day. The place was State Street, Chicago. The persons were six, and four of them were seeing Chicago for the first time. They walked two by two in a little procession. There were other persons in State Street too, probably somewhere between a thousand and a million; but we don't need to worry a great deal about those others, though of course if they hadn't been there there would have been more room for our friends.

This small procession was headed by a well-dressed, moderately stout, smooth-shaven gentleman with touches of white in his black hair and a kindly, benevolent expression in his dark eyes and about his fine mouth. A handsome man and a good man, as any one could see.

His companion was a little girl of perhaps thirteen years of age. She, too, had big dark eyes with long lashes; and a nicely shaped mouth. Her complexion was just exactly right and her short hair curled crisply about the unusually pleasing countenance. Her name was Bettie and it seemed to be a very good fit.

The second couple followed close at the heels of the first, presenting a curious contrast. One of them, whose name was Jean, was instantly attractive because of the serene loveliness of her expression. One knew at a glance that she was a person to be trusted. The girl beside her, all of two years younger, was very much smaller; a little sprite of a girl, with bright, gray eyes and quantities of fluffy golden hair. She, also, was a pretty child. Her small features were shapely and she looked, as indeed she was, an unusually bright child. She was quick and graceful in her movements and nothing in the shop windows escaped the eager, birdlike glance of little Marjory Vale.

The third couple was erratic in its movements. Sometimes it damaged the heels of Jean and Marjory by crowding too close. Sometimes it lagged so far behind—the windows were *most* attractive—that it had to run to catch up. One of this couple, Mabel Bennett, was not built for running. Mabel was the youngest and the broadest of the sextette; but her undeniable plumpness did not detract from her looks. One couldn't help liking her honest blue eyes, the wholesome red and white of her fine complexion, her sturdy, childlike figure, her dependable legs and the rich bronze of her abundant hair. It was braided this morning in a thick, uneven braid; from

which numerous tendrils that curled in large, loose, rather becoming rings escaped untidily. One guessed that inexperienced Mabel had been her own decidedly unskilful hairdresser that morning. Mabel's partner in the procession was a girl of about fifteen, so unusual in appearance that strangers turned to look at her. Dark as a gipsy, with glowing crimson cheeks, bright black eyes with curling lashes, soft black hair that grew naturally in pleasing curls neatly tied back with a broad black ribbon; a shapely, graceful figure possessing to an unusual degree an atmosphere of style. The girls were all well dressed, mostly in blue serge, but this fifth young person, Henrietta Bedford, wore *her* clothes with a different air. One realized that the serge in her smartly cut frock was a degree finer than that in Mabel's rumpled middy or in Marjory's very brief skirt. Also Henrietta's scarlet silken tie was broader, more brilliant and of a heavier texture than those of the other girls. One could easily see that there were wealth and generations of cultivation back of Henrietta—and adventures ahead of her.

One of the adventures was about to begin, but the kindly man who led the procession was far from suspecting it. It was Mabel who started this one.

"If I see another window just bursting with candy I'll *die*," said Mabel. "I never *saw* such windows. I wish I hadn't left my money in my suitcase."

"Mr. Black has mine," said Henrietta. "All but a dime that happened to be loose in my pocket. But I tell you what. We'll dart into the next candy place and spend that—we can easily catch up. Here, come on in here."

The clerk, not realizing that the two girls were in a hurry, finished leisurely with another customer before attending to Henrietta who was impatiently tapping the counter with her dime.

"What's all the rush," drawled the young man, carefully weighing the pink and white buttercups that Henrietta had chosen. "Catching a train?"

"Yes," snapped Henrietta. "Don't bother to tie it up. Come on, Mabel, we must run, now, to catch up. That horrid clerk was dreadfully slow."

They ran. They caught up with and passed a large number of persons but not with Jean, nor Marjory of the yellow hair, nor Bettie with the bobbing curls nor Mr. Black, who had innocently imagined himself perfectly capable of introducing Chicago to five small maidens from the wilds of Northern Michigan.

He had now lost two of them. He had missed them almost immediately and had turned back to look for them, expecting to find them with their noses against some fascinating window. And now they were well ahead of

him, screened from his view by hundreds of busy shoppers and running with might and main.

CHAPTER II—PREPARATIONS

And now, of course, you will want to know why a round half dozen of Lakeville's most precious inhabitants should be discovered parading the streets of Chicago and incidentally losing themselves and each other by the wayside.

It was this way. The Lakeville schoolhouse had burned down, nobody could decide where to build a new one and the places used as temporary substitutes were unsatisfactory to many of the parents. Moreover, Mabel's father, the village doctor, had long wanted to go to Germany in order to study certain branches of surgery—this was before the war, of course. His wife wanted to go with him but she didn't wish to take Mabel.

Miss Jane Higgins, otherwise Aunty Jane, had been intrusted with money to be devoted to the education of her orphaned niece, little Marjory Vale. Aunty Jane possessed a conscience that would not rest until that money was spent for that particular purpose. Then there were accomplishments that Mrs. Mapes desired for her daughter Jean and that Mrs. Slater wanted for her granddaughter Henrietta that were not, at that time, procurable in Lakeville. The solution to all these problems was boarding school, since the girls were much too young for college.

Of course Bettie Tucker, their inseparable companion, wished to go too. But her father, a clergyman with a large family and a small salary, could see no way to afford what seemed to him an unnecessary outlay; until Mr. Black, an elderly widower with a young heart and a warm affection for all children and especially for Bettie, offered generously to pay all expenses connected with Bettie's education.

Of course the selecting of a proper school had proved a matter of much importance and thought. The mothers and Aunty Jane had sent for and received vast numbers of catalogues, each more fascinating than the last. Aunty Jane was in favor of something near Boston. Mrs. Bennett preferred Philadelphia, while Mrs. Mapes showed a partiality for Ohio.

"I think," said Mrs. Tucker, "that we'd better be guided by Mrs. Slater. She has traveled a great deal and I'm sure she must have a great many friends whose daughters have been to boarding school. Let's talk to Mrs. Slater about it."

"I agree with you," said all the other parents and Aunty Jane.

Mrs. Slater had, indeed, a great many friends who had had boarding school daughters. Also, she too had a tall stack of catalogues. Also she had, in her own mind, already selected a school for Henrietta.

“In the first place,” said she, when her guests were seated in her handsome house, “we don’t want our little girls too far away from us, so I am in favor of something near Chicago. In the second place I am greatly inclined toward the school founded by my old friend Doctor Rhodes in Hiltonburg. A very fine old gentleman, my dears, with high ideals and beautiful manners. Highland Hall is perhaps rather an old fashioned school; but the catalogue states that there is a new gymnasium and new, up-to-date dormitories. The most charming young woman of my acquaintance attended that school—Ruth Belding, her name was. Dr. Rhodes, I assure you, is a wonderful man, splendidly educated, highly cultured and charming in every way. His teachers are chosen with the greatest care and only really nice girls are admitted to his school. There are more expensive schools and some cheaper ones—I had been thinking of consulting you about this very matter.”

“It sounds all right to me,” said Mrs. Bennett.

“I *had* thought of that Painesville place,” said Mrs. Mapes, “but Hiltonburg is certainly nearer home—though any place is far enough from Northern Michigan.”

“Of course there’s no place like Boston,” said Aunty Jane, who had been born in the East, “but Marjory *could* get home from this Hiltonburg place for her Christmas vacation.”

“I haven’t any particular choice,” said Mrs. Tucker. “Anything that meets with Mr. Black’s approval will be all right for Bettie.”

“Then,” said Mrs. Slater, “we’d better write at once to Doctor Rhodes. He may not have room.”

Doctor Rhodes replied very promptly. There *was* room and he would be very glad indeed to enroll five new pupils from Lakeville. The mothers and Aunty Jane were glad to have the matter settled. It did not occur to any of them, least of all to Mrs. Slater, that charming Ruth Belding was no longer a very young woman and that considerable time had elapsed since she had been graduated from Hiltonburg.

The five girls had spent a wonderful summer camping in the woods with Mr. Black and his good old sister, Mrs. Crane. On their return, all the dressmakers in the village had been kept busy for a bewildering fortnight

outfitting the lively youngsters with suitable garments for school. From a mountain of catalogues, the busy parents selected and studied long lists of articles needed by prospective pupils at various schools. Then they bought trunks and filled them. Jean, Mabel, Marjory and Henrietta began to prattle of clothes.

“My silk stockings have come,” said Henrietta. “Two pairs for very best and Grandmother has sent to New York for my hat.”

“I have my first silk petticoat,” said Jean. “Mother ordered it from Chicago.”

“I have two new middy blouses from Detroit,” confided Mabel. “The Chicago ones were not big enough.”

“Aunty Jane sent to Boston for my coat,” said Marjory. “It’s all lined with satin.”

Bettie said never a word.

“Say, Bettie,” demanded Mabel, “how’s *your* trunk coming?”

“It isn’t,” returned Bettie, soberly. “The baby has been sick and Mother hasn’t been able to do a thing. I’ve darned two pairs of stockings and taken the hem out of an old petticoat—and that’s all. I’m—I’m getting worried.”

Suddenly Bettie’s lip quivered and Jean noticed it. Now, Jean was thoughtful beyond her years and she knew that the Tuckers had very little money to spend for clothes. When she reached home, still wondering where Bettie’s wardrobe was to come from, she found her mother entertaining Mr. Black’s stout middle-aged sister, Mrs. Crane.

“Well, Jeanie girl,” said Mrs. Crane, “I’ve been admiring your new silk petticoat. I suppose you are all just about ready for school.”

“Bettie isn’t,” returned Jean, soberly. “I’ve been thinking about it all the way home. Mrs. Tucker never was very smart about Bettie’s clothes, you know, and of course they haven’t any money. The things that come out of missionary boxes never do seem to be just right. I don’t see where Bettie’s outfit is coming from.”

“Bless my soul!” cried Mrs. Crane, “I’m just an old idiot. And so is Peter. Here is this blessed old goose of a brother of mine sending Bettie off to school for a year and neither of us thinking that she’d need clothes. What ought she to have, Mrs. Mapes? You make out the list and I’ll get the things. Why! I’d just *love* to do it.”

Left to herself, it is to be feared that Mrs. Crane would have done fearful things. Her mind ran to gay plaids with red predominating; and at first she talked much of materials for pinafores—a species of garment in vogue in her own remote youth; but with much sound advice from Mrs. Mapes it was not long before Bettie's wardrobe compared very well with Jean's.

Mrs. Crane, however, indulged in a few wild purchases that satisfied her love for color and greatly amused Henrietta. There was a gay plaid dress with brass buttons, a pair of bright blue stockings, some red mittens, a wonderful knitted scarf of many hues, a purple workbag and at least four strings of gaudy beads. Fortunately, there were plenty of garments without these and Bettie declared that Mrs. Crane's queer purchases made the dark depths of her big trunk quite bright and cheerful.

“As for my trunk,” laughed happy Bettie, “it's big enough to live in and it's all mine forever and ever.”

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