

**BETTY WALES, B.  
A.**

*A STORY FOR GIRLS*

**BY MARGARET  
WARDE**

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**Betty Wales, B. A.**  
**A story for girls**



**“NOW COME AND LABEL HER DRESSES”**

## Introduction

WHEN I first knew Betty Wales she was a freshman at Harding College, with a sedate, comical roommate named Helen Chase Adams, and a host of good friends, who stood by her and one another all through the four years of their college course. Mary Brooks—afterward Mrs. Hinsdale—was a sophomore when Betty entered college, but the others, the three B's, Roberta Lewis, Eleanor Watson, Rachel Morrison, and Katherine Kittredge,—all belonged to the “finest class” of 19—. So did Madeline Ayres, though she was a year late in joining it and felt obliged to make up for lost time by being a particularly lively and loyal Hardingite during her abbreviated course there. Georgia Ames first appeared in 19—’s junior year, and joined “The Merry Hearts,” a society that Betty and her friends had organized. But Georgia the first, as Madeline used to call her, was only a figment of Madeline’s imagination; it was a delightful coincidence when, at the end of the year, a real Georgia Ames appeared to step into the place left vacant by her departed namesake, whose short but strenuous career at Harding had made them both famous.

All these things and many others may be found in the four books entitled respectively “Betty Wales, Freshman,” “Betty Wales, Sophomore,” “Betty Wales, Junior,” and “Betty Wales, Senior.” This story was written because some of Betty’s friends were not satisfied to leave her at the end of her senior year, but wished to hear what she did next. If any of them still want to know what happened to her after she came back from her trip abroad, why, perhaps some day they may.

MARGARET WARDE.

**Betty Wales, B. A.**

# **CHAPTER I**

## **AN IMPROMPTU WEDDING—AND OTHER IMPROMPTUS**

“WELL,” announced Betty Wales to the family breakfast table, a week after 19—’s commencement, “I’m beginning to feel quite at home again. I’ve got my room fixed——”

“So it looks as much like a Harding room as you can make it,” laughed Nan.

“And you spend most of your time describing the lost glories of Harding to anybody who will listen,” added Will.

“And the rest in writing long letters to the other ‘Merry Hearts,’” put in mother slyly.

“And she plans what I’ll do when I go to college,” declared the Smallest Sister, who had just had her first “teens birthday” and did not propose to be excluded from any family council.

“In short,” said Mr. Wales, appearing solemnly from behind the morning paper, “being ‘quite at home’ means wishing you were back at college. Is that about the size of it, Miss Betty Wales?”

“Never, daddy,” cried Betty, leaning across the corner of the table to give him a hug. “I’m just as glad as I can be to be really and truly at home again with my family. Of course I shall miss the girls dreadfully, but—oh, there the postman’s ring! I wonder if he’s got anything for me.” And Betty danced off to the door, answering Nan’s and Will’s chorused “I told you so!” with a laughing “I

don't care." As Will had once said, "The nicest thing about Betty is that she can't possibly be teased."

She was back in a minute with a handful of letters for the family and four for herself.

"All from late lamented Hardingites?" inquired Will, who never wrote letters and therefore seldom got any to read over his morning coffee.

Betty was tearing open the second envelope. "That one isn't. It's just congratulations on graduating, from Aunt Maria. But this is from Madeline Ayres—why, how funny! It's dated Monday, in New York, and she was going to sail last Saturday. Oh, dear, I don't understand at all! She says"—Betty frowned despairingly over Madeline's dainty, unreadable hieroglyphics—"she says, 'You have heard all about it by this time, I suppose, and isn't it just—just——' Oh, I wish Madeline could write plainly."

"Too bad about these college graduates who can neither read nor write," said Will loftily. "Try the next one. Perhaps they'll explain each other. Isn't that scrawly one in the blue envelope from Katherine Kittredge?"

Betty nodded absently and tore open the blue envelope. "Why how funny!" she cried. "K. begins just the very same way. 'Of course you've heard about it by this time, and isn't it the nicest ever? Are you and Roberta going to wear your commencement dresses too? Wasn't it exciting the way they caught Madeline on the wharf? By the way, both the straps of my telescope broke on the way home, and so I've bought a gorgeous leather bag to carry on this trip, without waiting for my first salary. Dick lent me the money—you know he's been working this winter, so that I could stay at Harding,



and they never told me a word about it. We're planning for his college course now, father and I, and I couldn't have gone a step to the wedding if dear old Mary hadn't sent the ticket.' Gracious!" interpolated Betty excitedly, "what is she talking about? Dick's her brother. That hasn't anything to do with the rest of the letter." She glanced at the last envelope. "Oh, this is from Mary Brooks. I hope it won't be puzzle number three."

It wasn't. Betty read it all through to herself—four closely written pages—while the Wales family, who had all become interested by this time, watched her cheeks growing pinker and her eyes brighter and bigger with excitement, as she read. At the end she gave a rapturous little sigh. "Oh, it's just perfectly lovely!" she declared.

"What?" demanded Will.

"Oh, everything," answered Betty vaguely. "Mary's going to be married a week from to-day, and we're all coming,—every single one of us. She caught Madeline before she went abroad, and Eleanor before she left for Denver, and she's sent tickets to K. and Rachel and Helen, instead of giving us all bridesmaids' presents. Oh, father dear, may I go?"

Mr. Wales smiled into his daughter's flushed, happy face. "Betty," he said, "your enthusiasm is delightful. We shall miss it while you are gone, but if Mary—whoever she may be—is going to be married and can't have it done properly without you, why we shall have to drift along for another week in our accustomed state of staid and placid calm."

And Betty was so excited and so busy explaining to her father which one of all the girls he met at Harding was Mary Brooks, and which one of the faculty was Dr. Hinsdale, that she never noticed

the letter from Babbie Hildreth, in her father's mail, or the dainty, scented note, also postmarked Pelham Manor, which her mother read and covertly passed to Nan and then to Mr. Wales. And after breakfast she flew straight up-stairs to answer her letters, never dreaming that the long talk father and mother and Nan were having on the piazza just underneath her windows was all about her—Betty Wales—and the reasons why she should or should not go on the most glorious summer trip that a girl ever took.

“Well, I’ll see,” father called back from the gate, as he hurried off to his office at last, and Betty smiled to herself and wondered whether Nan wanted a set of new books or the Smallest Sister a bicycle. “Father always says that when he thinks you’re getting pretty extravagant in your tastes, but still he’s going to let you have it all the same,” reflected Betty, and started for the third time to reread Mary’s letter.

“Dearest Betty,” it began, “I’ve left you till the last to write to because you aren’t going to the ends of the earth within the week, and you don’t take ages to make up your mind to things. In short, my child, I know that this impromptu wedding idea will appeal to you and that you will keep your promise to help Roberta do the bridesmaid act just as nicely as if I’d told you six weeks ahead instead of one, and then sent you a neatly engraved invitation at the proper hour and minute. We want to be married next Thursday at three, because—oh, dear, here comes George Garrison Hinsdale this minute, and I promised to be ready to take him to call on my minister. I’ll tell you why we changed our minds when I see you. You and Roberta and Laurie are to

stay with me, and the others are invited to Tilly Root's, just across the street. There's a dinner Wednesday night, before the rehearsal. Oh, about clothes,—just wear your graduating dress or anything else that you and Roberta agree upon. Let me know your train. Oh, and you won't draw a present, because I wanted all the girls to come, so I sent tickets to K. and Rachel and Helen. I hope they won't feel hurt, and that you won't mind not having diamond sunbursts to remember the occasion by. You see I couldn't give diamond sunbursts to some and railroad tickets to others. It would have spoiled the scheme of decoration.

“I wanted to tell you how I caught Madeline's coat-tails just as she was going on board her boat, but George Garrison Hinsdale refuses to wait another second. I foresee that I have drawn a tyrannical husband. And the moral of that is,—I'm too happy to care.

“Yours ever,  
“MARY.”

Before she wrote to Mary, Betty puzzled out most of Madeline's letter, which gave an amusing account of her sudden change of plans. “Eleanor came to see me off,” she wrote, “and Dick Blake was there with his arms full of flowers for me and his eyes fastened tight to Eleanor, and all the good Bohemians were saying fond farewells and sending messages to daddy and telling when they'd probably turn up in Sorrento, when up dashed Mary Brooks and her professor. And in five minutes Dick had sold my cabin to a

man he knew who had come down on the chance of getting one and that boat had sailed without me and my flowers and my steamer trunk and my 'carry-all-and-more-too'; and my weeping chaperon that I had not yet wasted time in hunting up is probably sending wireless messages of condolence to my family this minute. But Dr. Hinsdale cabled, and then Dick took the whole crowd to a roof-garden to cool off, and after that he and I went down the Bowery giving away that armful of roses to the smallest, raggedest children we could find. So it was a very nice party, and of course I can go to Italy any time.MAD.”

And this is how it happened that just two weeks after they had parted, bravely trying not to show that they cared, “The Merry Hearts,”—or at least the Chapin House division of them, with the B’s thrown in for full measure,—met, one sultry July afternoon, on Mary’s big, vine-shaded piazza and, chattering like magpies, drank inordinate quantities of lemonade and iced tea and heard from the bride-to-be all the whys and wherefores of her impromptu wedding.

“Haven’t I told any of you why we changed?” asked Mary. “No, Babe, it wasn’t because we hadn’t the strength of mind to wait till August. It was because my Uncle Marcellus gave us a desert island up on the Maine Coast for a wedding present. Roberta, pass the cookies to yourself, please.”

“Query,” propounded K. gaily. “When given a desert island for a wedding present is it obligatory to take possession instantly or forever after keep away?”

“Don’t be foolish,” said Mary severely. “It was this way, don’t you see. The island has a gorgeous camp on it, and of course we want to go there for our honeymoon, and why shouldn’t we start early

and stay all summer? If we had waited until the middle of August, as we planned, that desert island would have gone to waste for one whole month.”

“Which would ill become the desert island of a psychology professor,” declared Madeline. “Who says that the college girl doesn’t bring intellect to bear on the practical affairs of life?”

“Hear, hear!” cried Bob, waving her lemonade glass. “Here’s to the college bride, who lets no desert island waste its sweetness on the empty air! Here’s to the impromptu wedding! Here’s to the first ‘Merry Heart’ reunion! Here’s——”

“Hush, Bob,” Babbie protested. “You’re disgracing the bridal party in the eyes of the neighborhood. Take us up to see the trousseau, Mary, please.”

“I’ll bet there’s nothing very impromptu about that,” declared Babe.

“Oh, girls, I hope you’ll like it,” began Mary anxiously, leading the way indoors. “I’ve positively worn myself out trying to have it right—right for a Harding professor’s wife, I mean.”

“Picture Mary looking twenty in pink chiffon, being a patroness at the junior prom,” cried K., picking up the small bride and standing her in a piazza chair.

“Picture Mary behind an armful of violets, sitting on the stage at the big game, trying to remember that she’s Mrs. Professor Hinsdale and mustn’t shriek for the purple,” added Rachel.

“Picture Mary in a velvet suit and a picture hat, making her first calls on the faculty,” jeered Bob.

“When she’s fairly pining to go snow-shoeing with her little friends in the senior class,” added Babe convincingly.

“Stop teasing her,” commanded Betty, helping Mary down from her lofty perch. “She’ll be the nicest professor’s wife that ever was—see if she isn’t! Now come and label her dresses for the proper occasions.”

It was most absorbing—deciding what Mary should wear to faculty parties, to college lectures, to the president’s dinners—“Just to think of being invited to dinner at Prexie’s!” said little Helen Adams in awed tones—“to house plays, to senior dramatics, and to all the other important functions of the college year.” It took a long time, too, because of course such delicate questions couldn’t be decided without seeing Mary in each dress, and getting “the exact combination of youth, beauty, and dignity that resulted,” as K., who explained that she was practising “school-ma’am English,” put it.

And then there were so many digressions. It was only two weeks since they had separated at Harding, but in the meanwhile a great deal seemed to have happened. Helen had accepted a position to teach English in her home high school. Eleanor was to join her family after the wedding for a hastily planned trip through the Canadian Rockies. Most exciting of all, Bob had actually established her fresh-air colony.

“It’s great,” she declared. “When I asked father if I might have some slum children out for two weeks he thought I was joking, so he said yes, and when those six dirty little ragamuffins suddenly dawned upon his vision last Saturday night he was furious. But I coaxed a little, and I got him to give the boys a Fourth of July

oration, and when Jimmie Scheverin hopped up and solemnly thanked him for his unique and inspiring address, he gave in. He's staying at home now to look after things while I'm gone. He said he guessed Wall Street could get along without him."

"But if they're only going to stay two weeks, Bob," began Babe hastily, "I don't see why——" She stopped in sudden confusion.

"Why what?" demanded Katherine curiously.

"Oh, why I've talked such a lot about it, she means," explained Bob calmly. "When these leave there are others coming, Babe. There's an unlimited supply of fresh-air children,—millions of them. That's why we can't keep Jimmie Scheverin more than two weeks, in spite of his enthusiasm for father's oratory and father's enthusiasm for Jimmie. So it's no use trying to persuade me to go off on frivolous trips with you."

"Where are you going, Babe?" asked Betty idly.

"Oh, I don't know that I'm going anywhere," said Babe, with a conscious little giggle. "Where are you?"

Betty explained that they were going to have a cottage for a month or two at some seaside place near New York—it hadn't been decided when she left home, but father was going to write her. This information the B's and Madeline received with solicitous and solemn interest. Indeed they asked Betty so many questions, that Mary finally declared her wedding was being shamefully neglected.

"I don't know about the wedding," said Mrs. Brooks, appearing at that minute, "but the groom is on the piazza, and six presents have come——"

In the rush down-stairs that followed Babbie pulled Babe into a corner. "You'll let the cat out of the bag if you're not more careful," she declared reproachfully.

"I will be more careful," Babe promised. "But why doesn't her father hurry up and decide? I shall burst if I can't talk about it pretty soon."

"The loveliest old brass samovar," cried Eleanor.

"From Miss Ferris!" added Betty. "That makes it all the nicer."

"And a silver dish from Prexie and Mrs. Prexie."

"That's what you get for marrying a faculty."

"Isn't it distinguished?" said Babbie, rushing after the others. "I don't see how you can think of anything else, Babe."

"Well, I don't go abroad every summer the way you do," explained Babe breathlessly. "The most distinguished wedding that ever happened couldn't make me forget that I'm going to see Paris and London and all the rest of Europe."

"Not quite all, I hope," laughed Babbie, hurrying to shake hands with Dr. Hinsdale and Marion Lawrence, who was going to be Mary's maid of honor.

Everybody agreed that Mary's impromptu wedding was a decided improvement upon the usual cut-and-dried variety. There was certainly nothing cut and dried about it. When the sun had gone below the tops of the tall elm trees on the lawn and the shadows fell, long and cool, on the velvety grass, Mary appeared on the piazza, wearing a soft white dress—"that didn't look a bit like a wedding," as little Helen Adams announced with her customary



frankness. First she kissed her mother and patted her father's shoulder lovingly, just as she did every morning before breakfast, and then she shook hands with everybody else, as unconcernedly as if it was no day in particular and all her dearest friends had merely happened to drop in for afternoon tea. But all at once, before anybody except the people concerned had noticed it, there was a cleared space in one corner, with a screen of ferns and white sweet peas for a background. Laurie and Roberta and Betty were close behind Mary, her father and Dr. Hinsdale were beside her, the "near-bridesmaids" and "near-ushers," as K. had flippantly dubbed the rest of the bridal party, made a half circle around the others, and Mary Brooks, with one great white rose in her hand and a half-frightened, half-happy little smile on her lips, was being married to George Garrison Hinsdale.

When it was over, everybody went indoors and had all sorts of cooling things to eat and drink. Meanwhile the bridesmaids, and "near-brides" had slipped away to put on some Roumanian peasant costumes, and "the next number on the program"—according to Katherine—was some curious wedding dances that Roberta had learned and taught to the others. Some were graceful and some were amusing, and the music was so gay that it made everybody feel like dancing too. And that was what they did, by the soft light of Japanese lanterns, until it was time to fill one's hands with confetti and old slippers and speed the wedding-pair on their way to the desert island that would not be deserted any more that summer.

As the girls sat on the piazza talking it all over with Mrs. Brooks, who declared she simply couldn't realize that "little Mary" was old enough to be getting married, Dr. Brooks came out, bringing a letter for Betty.

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