

Also by Elizabeth Coatsworth

Stories about Sally

Away Goes Sally
Five Bushel Farm
The Fair American
The White Horse
The Wonderful Day

Historical Stories

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Sword of the Wilderness
You Shall Have a Carriage
Dancing Tom
Door to the North
The Last Fort
Jon the Unlucky
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Aunt Flora
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The Sod House
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Alice All by Herself
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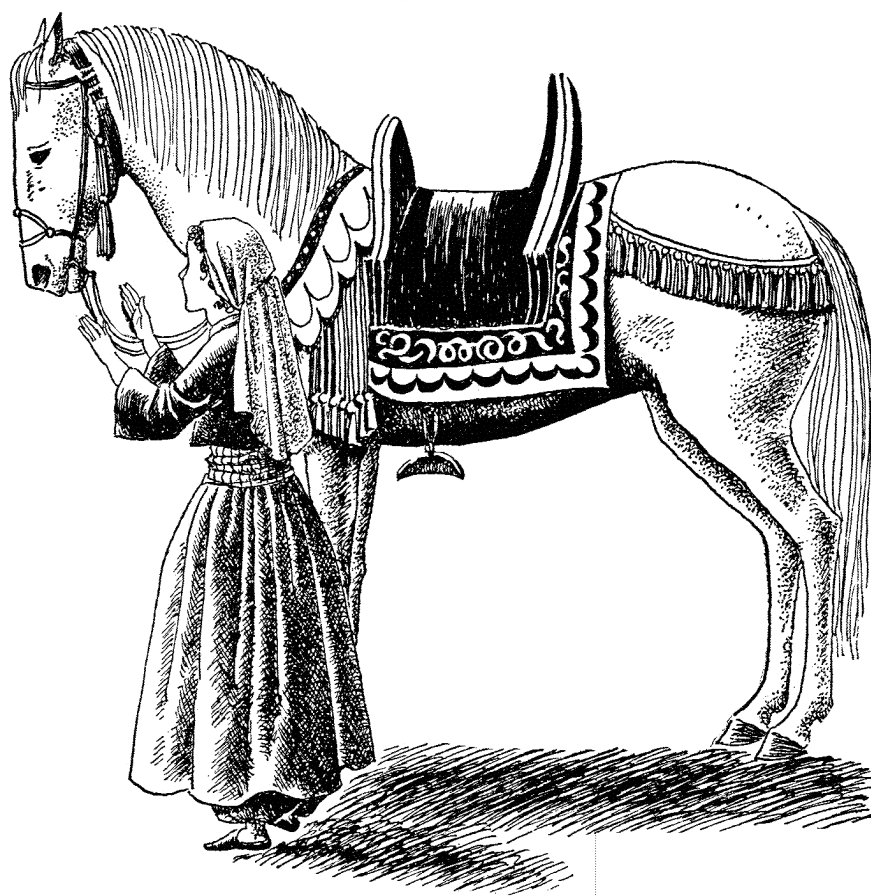
Poetry for Children

Night and the Cat
Mouse Chores
The Peaceable Kingdom and other Poems
The Children Come Running
The Sparrow Bush: Rhymes
Down Half the World

And many others



THE WHITE HORSE



One of the "noble" horses



THE WHITE HORSE

BY
ELIZABETH COATSWORTH

PICTURES BY
HELEN SEWELL

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To Louise Seaman Bechtel

I dedicate the lion,
I dedicate the dove
To you, in your green garden
With many years of love.

In library or meadow,
In early days or late,
To you I bring my friendship,
This book I dedicate.

— | | —

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Spring Memories of Africa

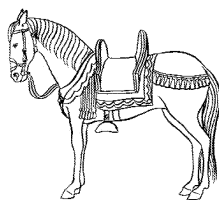
Whereas
Our crocuses arise
Under cold winds
And silver skies,
In Africa,
As I know well,
Bloom miles of lofty
Asphodel.

In gardens walled
From any breeze
Birds sing from green
Banana trees,
While here one robin
Bleak and cold
Scratches among
Dead leaves and mold.

The wary buds
Notch the thin boughs;
The field mouse peers
From his small house,
But in far Africa,
Like psalms,
The rainbows stand
Between high palms!



THE WHITE HORSE



1. *Keep Steady*

SOMETHING WAS wrong. Perhaps the weather was too beautiful, the sky too blue, the waves too gay, the dolphins too frolicsome as they played about the bow of the *Fair American*, sailing eastward into the Mediterranean.

Andrew, standing with Sally at the rail of the vessel, was filled with the grave happiness which was characteristic of him. He leaned forward, his eyes quietly fixed on the continual shining crinkle of the waves, his hair blown back from his forehead by the warm wind. But Sally, leaning beside him, felt subdued. She eyed the sky and the few clouds drifting merrily across its deeps. Was the danger to come from the sky? Or would the wind shift, and rush upon them out of Africa, forcing them back perhaps into the mid-Atlantic? An African wind. The words had a strange hot sound filled with the roaring of lions

and the beat of Negro drums. She was glad that they were bound for Genoa, not Africa. Italy was such a wonderful place that even Aunt Nannie wanted her to see it; even Uncle Joseph had nodded his head when Uncle Patterson had suggested that she might come along with Andrew for a second voyage on the *Fair American*.

"Debby, of course, can't leave the baby, and I think ship-board is no place for a young man of six weeks," Uncle Patterson had said on the evening of his arrival at Five Bushel Farm to visit his wife and the baby and pick up his son Andrew for the summer. His vessel lay at Winter Port, some miles below on the Penobscot, taking aboard stores and some cargo. "No, Debby and little John had best stay with you. But I'm taking Andrew. And I should be glad to have Sally too, if you can spare her. It should only be for a few months. We're not at war and, though feeling is growing, we're unlikely to get into war as long as General Washington is President."

Aunt Nannie had bustled about in silence for a little while, her eyes sharp and black with thought.

"It's very educational," she said, sitting down at last and taking up her knitting. "It is an opportunity not many girls would have. And, of course, I have the greatest reliance in your judgment, Brother Patterson. Now that

Sally's Aunt Deborah is your wife, Andrew and Sally are as good as cousins. She wouldn't be away from her family. But I don't know."

Sally had sat still on Uncle Joseph's lap, trying to say nothing, just squeezing his big hand with eagerness and suspense. She loved the *Fair American* and everyone on board. All winter she had looked back to the voyage to France which they had had the summer before. But Italy! Italy was more exciting still. She saw Vesuvius, spouting smoke above a blue bay while ladies in wonderful dresses danced to the sound of tambourines; she saw oranges, and ruins, and fishing boats with small bright sails, and heaps of shells.

"Captain Patterson would take the very best care of her," murmured Aunt Debby gently from where she sat by the fire beside little John's cradle, as she gave her husband a glance of pride.

"Let her go! let her go!" boomed fat Uncle Eben suddenly. "The little lass runs round so fast my eyes get dizzy following her. Let her go, so Dinah and I can have some peace."

And he winked at Sally.

As though her name had wakened her, Dinah, the big black cat, got up from the hearth rug, stretched, and

walked over to Uncle Joseph's chair. Sally leaned down and scooped her up into her arms.

"Now we're all in layers," she whispered to Uncle Joseph. "Oh, I *hope* I may go."

It was Aunt Eliza, the newest aunt, not yet a year old as an aunt, who said something about danger.

"Going into Hingham one day—before Eben brought me here—I met such a pathetic old woman on the road. She was begging money for her son, who was a captive with the Algerines. The things she told made me shudder."

Captain Patterson broke in with his brisk authoritative voice, "She probably never had a son at all. The country is full of lying beggars who get money by their stories of Moslem pirates, and, if she did have, he'll be back soon. The government has sent over an envoy authorized to ransom prisoners and arrange treaties of peace with the various sultans and beys and deys. They ought to be hanged, not bribed, of course, but with so little in the treasury it's cheaper to pay in powder, presents, and cannon than to go to war. You may rest assured, Sister Nannie, that there'll be no trouble from the Barbary States at this time."

"Of course you know best, Brother Patterson," agreed

KEEP STEADY



"Now we're all in layers."

Mrs. Eliza, who never argued about anything.

"Probably you're right and he's wrong, Eliza," declared Uncle Eben, her husband, who always loved to stir up an argument. "My experience is that you're always right, my love, though you're much too modest to lay claims to it."

Andrew was standing by his father's chair, one hand on its back. It was easy for Andrew to stand quietly, but his eyes never left Aunt Nannie's face. There were six grownups in the room, Sally's uncles, Uncle Joseph and Uncle Eben, and her aunts, Aunt Nannie and Aunt Debby, and then there were the new Aunt Eliza and his own father, the Captain, who had married Aunt Debby. But, though there were six grownups discussing what should be done with Sally, only Aunt Nannie would decide, as everyone knew.

And Aunt Nannie was busy knitting.

The clock struck nine.

"It's time you children were in bed," she said calmly. "Make your bows and go."

"But, Aunt Nannie," pleaded Sally, "I shan't sleep a wink."

"Nonsense, child," answered her aunt. "I shall have to pray for guidance. Tomorrow I shall know what's best."

Well, next morning Aunt Nannie had said "Yes," shak-

ing her head and looking at Sally a little anxiously, and the voyage had been a quick and pleasant one, and here they were on a summer sea with everything about them like a picture except that it sparkled so. Peacefully the figurehead of the *Fair American* dipped to the motion of the ship, and a land smell came out over the sea to meet them, and Genoa was only three or four days away if the winds held. Here they were—and yet something was wrong, Sally knew. It wasn't with the *Fair American*, surely; it couldn't be with the weather, after all, for there were no signs that they were getting the vessel ready for a storm. In fact, Sally didn't know where the trouble *did* lie exactly.

"Andrew," she said, touching his arm.

He looked round at her.

"What?"

"Have you noticed anything?"

"I've noticed lots of things, silly."

"I'm not trying to be funny. There's something wrong. Your father's worried."

"He's often quiet that way."

"No, it's different. And Abel Bliss is singing hymns again. That always means trouble."

"Maybe someone's sick."