



# *The Loss of Jacob Hurd*

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North American

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Jacob Hurd, stern witch-harrier of Ipswich, can abide nothing out of the ordinary course of things, whether it be flight on a broomstick or the wrong adding of figures; so his son gives him trouble, for he is an imaginative boy, who walks alone, talking to the birds, making rhymes, picking flowers, and dreaming. That he will never be a farmer, mechanic, or tradesman is as good as certain, and one day when the child runs in with a story of a golden horse, with tail and mane of silver, on which he has ridden over land and sea, climbing mountains and swimming rivers, he turns pale with fright lest the boy be bewitched; then, as the awfulness of the invention becomes manifest, he cries, "Thou knowest thou art lying," and strikes the little fellow.

The boy staggers into his mother's arms, and that night falls into a fever, in which he raves of his horse and the places he will see, while Jacob sits by his side, too sore in heart for words, and he never leaves the cot for food or sleep till the fever is burned out. Just before he closes his eyes the child looks about him and says that he hears the horse pawing in the road, and, either for dust or cloud or sun gleam, it seems for an instant as if the horse were there. The boy gives a cry of joy, then sinks upon his pillow, lifeless.

Some time after this Jacob sets off one morning, while the stars are out, to see three witches hanged, but at evening his horse comes flying up the road, splashed with blood and foam, and the neighbors know from that of Jacob's death, for he is lying by the wayside with an Indian arrow in his heart and an axemark on his head. The wife runs to the door, and, though she shakes with fear at its approach, she sees that in the sunset glow the horse's sides have a shine like gold, and its mane and tail are silver white. Now the animal is before the house,

but the woman does not faint or cry at the blood splash on the saddle, for—is it the dust-cloud that takes that shape?—she sees on its back a boy with a shining face, who throws a kiss at her,—her Paul. He, little poet, lives in spirit, and has found happiness.

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