

WHITE BIRCH

N. A. BENSON

Beside a lake that mirrored deep
Its sister-heaven robed in sleep,
I saw the slim white birches stand
Like virgins in a lonely land,
Who wandered lovely, long ago,
Once when the forest stood in snow—
And when the spring returned, they were
White birches in the April air.

The lake was whispering to them still
Of days they danced each emerald hill,
When rapids sang in tossing foam
Before the temples of their home;
Where camp-fires winked with ruddy light
At silver stars that filled the night,
Where ancient words of love were said
As autumn turned the maples red.

Above the birches, strongly set,
The great dark pine trees guard them yet,
Like swarthy braves whose love remains
Through ruthless snows and stinging rains—
And though I play the poet's part,
I take the pine tree's truth to heart,
And stand on silent watch above
The white-birch-thought of thee, my love.