

## White Birches

by Grace Hazard Conkling

*The clear wind swings a fairy flail  
Till all the tiptoe birches quail.  
The west is dreaming of the Grail.*

God knows I have no heart to sing!  
I wish I had forgotten how,  
For what do poems matter now,  
Music or love or anything?  
Yet I must shape my patient rhymes  
For terror of a grievous place,  
And blind my eyes with words sometimes,  
For fear of hunger on his face,  
Or pain when I can give no aid,  
Or silence where I may not come:  
As though a song could save me from  
The thought of all my world unmade!

*The birches hold their laces frail  
Against the sunlight up the Trail  
And show me heaven through a veil.*