

Hop Hornbeam

R. A. Christmas

In the Sacred Grove
near Palmyra, New York,
there's hardly a tree
old enough to have been
around when Joseph
Smith envisioned the
Father and the Son;

except for this 350-
year-old ironwood
somewhat off the path
by the west boundary—
dark and nearly leafless
under the canopy, with
limbs raised to the

square like some ghostly
authority—monstrous
branches that in 1820
might have been just
what a fourteen-year-old
prophet would swing on,
but now I can't reach.