

Morning View Kentucky
24 April 1957

Hello, Mr. McCarthy,

Spring went that-a-way, I think. The elusive lady arrived and departed all in a breath, too quickly for even the most ardent observer to catch more than a fleeting echo of her hastening footsteps as she passed.

A much-travelled friend once told me that, while our American autumn is the best on earth, Europe does much better when it comes to springtime, that the continental spring arrives with much delicacy and gentleness and slow enchantment. Perhaps it is true.

Friday and Saturday and Sunday were wonderful days - for June. On those three days spring stormed through the tree patch area with all the soft sweetness of a Patton tank. Nature's gentle awakening, as extolled by poets, was a frenzied explosion. Buds swelled and unfurled and things rushed up out of the ground with such rapidity that it was like watching a Disney film.

Thursday the redbuds were bare, obscure twigs. Sunday, in full bloom, they lay splashed like spilled wine on the hillsides. In those three days the black oaks clad themselves in the million silken tassels of their catkin bloom. Pear trees gleamed misty white in the moonlight, scattered their petals in clouds on the warm, wet air, and donned summer green, all within that same brief period of furious activity.

I enjoy most the great terminal buds of the shagbark hickories. Under ordinary circumstances they gradually grow to astounding proportions, as perfectly tapered as though fashioned in a vast pencil sharpener, and clad in a glistening, deep ivory bract as delicate to the touch as the finest silk velvet. In due time these bracts curl downward and assume a rosy hue, while from their center arise the sage green infant leaves. This year the whole wonderful process was crowded into those same three days. Hourly a difference could be seen in the huge buds.

The flowerbeds behaved as never before. I am particularly fond of daffodils and jonquils, selecting them for a long procession of bloom from the earliest through the very latest. The early ones had just gone and the medium blooms were opening when the warmth touched them. The result was fantastic. Everything bloomed. Species stood side by side which are ordinarily never seen together. Thalia rubbed elbows with Aerolite. Kestervan and Wellband and Actea and Golden Scepter stood in a confused jumble. It was lovely to see, though they faded rapidly due to the high temperatures.

Birds arrived from the South faster than I could keep track of them. Hardly had I welcomed a Wood Thrush when I heard the clear call of a Baltimore oriole and found him, all black and gold, singing to himself as he caught little bugs amid the black oak blooms. Catbirds suddenly whined in the maple saplings and from atop the oaks came Brown Thrasher songs.