

Morning View Kentucky  
8 August 1958

Hello Mr. McCarthy,

A bit more of St. Swithin-type weather and the treepatch would have become a rain forest. Fortunately, the terrific, crashing downpours, for the most part, missed our area where there is so little level land that a farmer must perforce defy the tenets of conservation and cultivate hillsides if he is to cultivate at all. We received not a drop of the appalling storm which flooded western Hamilton County, and one's imagination is staggered at the thought of 4 inches of rain slamming down upon this land of narrow, tangled ridges, and pinched, abrupt little valleys.

As it was, we experienced a raininess this section has not known since I lived here. Mushrooms, dormant through the years of my residence in the tree patch, glowed like scattered jewels upon its sodden floor, and I dined happily on several varieties which had hitherto given no hint of their presence here. Slipping and spattering about in perpetually wet shoes, I would not have been surprised to discover ghostly fingers of spanish moss dripping from the great oaks.

Now that things have dried somewhat, and the hum of tractors once more echoes across the ridge tops, a passing hay wagon focused my attention upon the great change these same tractors have wrought in the appearance of the countryside.

The hay wagon, its fragrant load piled neatly and geometrically in bales, trundled silently past on rubber tires, an easy burden for the tractor pulling it. I tried to remember, and could not do so, when I had last seen the hay wagon of yesterday -- a great shaggy mound, marking its trail with scattered wisps of hay as it clanked along on iron wheels behind a team of big horses.

It has been accompanied into oblivion by the vast, domed hay stack which formerly dominated a field and was the center of interest for all stock therein -- stock which, more often than not today, no longer includes horses or mules. Until this spring I have been aboe to watch, on a distant ridge, a lone white horse as he pulled various implements. He is still there, but this year he stood idly in pasture as a tractor did his work.

To the chinking thud of the hay baler has been added the ferocious clamor of the corn picker, and the corn shock has vanished from the landscape. There is something enimently satisfying in the sight of stout corn shoks marching in precise array across the shoulder of a hill. Last winter, looking to all horizons from the tree patch, I could find but one field where a few of them stood lonely vigil, and they toppled over with the first touch of winter storm.