The late Elizabeth Coatsworth was a member of a Maine literary family that included her late husband, Henry Beston, and also includes her daughter, Kate Barnes, a former state poet laureate who lives in Appleton. In this week’s poem, Coatsworth describes the tentative beginning of a Maine spring.

Night Wind in Spring

by Elizabeth Coatsworth

Two yellow dandelion shields do not make spring, nor do the wild duck swimming by the shore, so self-possessed, so white of side and breast, nor, I suppose, the change in the land-birds’ calls, softened and sweetened to a courting note, nor the new colors twigs are taking on, not even the sun which rises early now and lingers almost until dinner time.

We, too, are valid instruments; we, too, can say if this be spring or only waning winter.

Tonight the wind is loud about our chimney. There is no new moon in the sky, nothing but stars: the Dipper upright on its shining handle, Sirius bright above a neighbor’s house, and this wind roaming, not enough to scrape a branch along the roof, or try the shutters for one to bang. No, just enough to cry and cry and cry against the stalwart chimney, as though it were a wanderer who had come down half the world to find one only door and that door locked and nothing answering.

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