

FAIRY BELLS

Disporum trachycarpum S. Wats.

LILY FAMILY

Here is no plant of the open prairie. The thin, soft tissue of its leaves and of its creamy-white flowers could not stand exposure to high wind, beating rain, or strong sunshine, hence it is in deep woods, especially on the sheltered sides of ravines, that this graceful and dainty beauty of early Spring is to be found. How well it chooses its home is shown by the fact that this photograph of perfect specimens was taken in the morning, after a late snowstorm, followed by frost, had bedraggled or blighted the hardier plants up in the open.

As the developing foliage of the trees shuts out more sunlight, the *Disporum* broadens out with the ample, horizontal leaves characteristic of woodland undergrowth. Still later in the season, each branch, now widely divergent, bears one or two bright berries where once hung the delicate bells. These globose, three-lobed fruits are about one-half inch in diameter, and in process of ripening change from green to orange and then to dazzling scarlet. Their skin is minutely roughened, giving it the richness of velvet. Within is a small quantity of juicy pulp and numerous ivory-white seeds. The berries, although not likely to be used for human food, seem harmless enough. These are ripe before the leaves assume their autumn tints, so, unless carried away promptly by the birds, they have first a rich green and later a bright yellow background.