A WOODLAND HILLSIDE—HALF AN HOUR’S RIDE FROM NEW YORK: BY JAMES B. CARRINGTON.

The hillside I know is within half an hour’s ride by steam from the heart of New York City, in a part of Westchester County that is becoming rapidly the dwelling place of the suburbanite. At its foot runs the public highway, while its upper edge leads off into broad stretches of green pasture lands. Thus far it has escaped, by sheer force of rugged and general inhospitality, any attempts at cultivation. The trees that cover it afford a deep shade for its abundant and lush undergrowth and many of them are worthy the respect due to ripe and vigorous old age. Their young offspring crowding about are growing in a most unmannerly way, all trying to force themselves into the sunlight above, which they need for their well-being.

In the spring and early summer is the time when the hillside offers the most allurement to the curious. Then the heavy black earth is soggy with moisture and clings to your shoes as you pull them up for another step ahead. Walking is much like plugging through a newly ploughed field, only at every step you are conscious that you may be crushing out the life of some delicate forest growth.

The sound of running water comes to the ears, occasionally, with almost startling distinctness, again with a muffled cadence that suggests that it is trying to steal away without being caught. This is a steep hillside and climbing up its short height is good, vigorous work, all the harder because of the soft and uncertain footing.

The smell of the damp ground gets into the nostrils with a peculiar pungency. There is a certain rankness about it that is at first almost offensive. Down near the road the queer uncanny skunk cabbages have poked their mottled heads and coarse leaves above the slimy ooze, sure harbingers of the new season.

Overhead the sky is covered with a film of grey clouds, and the air has a penetrating rawness unpleasantly accented by the surrounding dampness. Young leaves unfolding from their cramped winter encasements with the most wonderful flutings and crimpings, show a tenderness and variety of greens, pinks and reds, in the first flush of youth, that are soon lost in their full summer luxuriance.
SOME OF THE EARLIEST BLOSSOMS ON THE WOODLAND HILLSIDE
"EVERY STEP MAY BRING A NEW SURPRISE AND APPEAL TO THE EYE"
A WOODLAND HILLSIDE

Two-thirds of the way up the hill, at the foot of a ledge of bold rocks that overhang in irregular layers the turf below, are shining bunches of the little white saxifrage, with rosettes of bright green leaves, while in the crevices here and there nod at the slightest wind's will, the coral tinted petals and delicate spray-like stems and leaves of the beautiful columbine. Coarser in fibre, hardier and more assertive in their native vigor, stand many of the striped Jack-in-the-pulpits, supported by their three big leaves. Spring beauties grow in profusion everywhere. A watchful eye may catch an occasional sight of the tiny purple blossoms and hairy stems of the hepatica, and, by stirring up the dirt a little, discover its queer brown three-lobed leaves. Along the edge of the miniature brook that is almost completely hidden by a thick bordering of ferns, may be always found the spotted dark green leaves of the dog-tooth violet and the drooping yellow heads of the blossoms.

There are some things on this hillside, though, that have always made me feel that I have wanted it to remain an unknown quantity. I have had a jealous feeling that I deserve, by right of discovery, to keep its treasures to myself, or at least by right of frequent visitation and appreciation. I am fearful of the average visitor, for a tendency to pull things seems innate in most people, and pulling up year after year has made our native wild flowers almost as scarce as the proverbial snakes in Ireland. The great prize of my first visit to this hillside was the discovery of an extensive bed of the not very common blood-root. It grows here in profusion, and I have brought many of the blossoms home by way of my camera, in a variety of groupings. Another odd little plant is the wild ginger, with its big leaves, its slender stems, and tiny little flower growing out of the base of the stalk.

Every bright day makes me think of what new surprise may be preparing on the hillside, and at each visit I find something new. It is not altogether the mere hunter's instinct, however, or the interest in growing things for themselves, that makes this particular hillside fascinating. The flowers and the foliage, and the color are but pleasant and alluring incidents of the pleasure to be found in all vigorous exercise in the open and the suggestion of a certain primitiveness in the unrestrained growth and the bare, forbidding ledges of frost-broken rocks.