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First Touch of Autumn

The Governor's Family Finds Privacy Pages 16 and 17



The world is his cup of tea, but it must be sassafras. Royal Dixon, famed Houston author and naturalist, looks on life with a long perspective of mixed complacency and doubt.

Royal Dixon Traveled Round the World to Find

erties with the creatures whose "personalities" once earned for him a fortune in books.

Inside his Spring Creek studio, Royal served me a cup of sassafras tea flavored with wild mint and honey, together with a bit of diced cactus.

"I noticed a reference to your 'Human Side of Plants' in a recent issue of Collier's," I said.

"Some day all my books will come back," he answered. "They'll be revised and rejuvenated. Listen, that's a fox barking!"

Born near Huntsville, Royal Dixon was early orphaned. "I had no home but the woods," he said," for the various people who were kind enough to give me food and shelter were strangers to me and my rocks and fossils."

His first success as a writer came when he was 9 years of age. His school essay entitled, "Sam Houston, the Great Patriot," was sent to Mrs. Annie Pennybacker, who wrote him a congratulatory note which he values more than the praise he later received from Eas'ern literary critics.

From Huntsville, Royal Dixon after the turn of the century, took to all the roads of the world, stopping in St. Louis, Chicago and New York to play dramatic roles in stock companies and to give programs feautring Hoosier poets. He showed me a dozen scrapbooks filled with clippings from those days. In 1910 he returned to Houston for a brief stay and became a regular contributor to The Houston Chronicle. He also syndicated articles through the New York Sun.

In 1914, Frederick E. Stokes brought out Royal's first book, "Human Side of Plants." The book, published in 12 languages, was followed by "Signs Is Signs," "Americanization," "Wildwood Friends," "Personality of Plants," and 23 others. He has contributed to most of the leading magazines, including the American, Good Housekeeping and Readers Digest.

Now he lives at 1310 Truxillo Ave-



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Royal Dixon Traveled Round the World to Find

A Home With Nature

"The world is a cage, and its people —the complacent people—are the bars that fence a soul from heaven," said Royal Dixon as he pulled off his shoes to wade in the waters of Spring Creek.

Picking up a handful of agates, he tested their transparency by holding them up to the sun, laid them in a neat pile and said, "For your grandchildren —a present from Royal Dixon who's been on the trail of beauty from Spring Creek around the world; now back to Spring Creek again."

Royal Dixon, world traveler, lecturer and author of 28 successful books, is as much in love with Spring Creek as Peter Pan was in love with the Never Never Land. He woos the wilderness with the fervor of childhood passion and the tenderness of prodigal nostalgia.

BY JEWEL GIBSON

While he was wading the creek a great mass of dead fish floated by and Royal deserted the water to spend his wrath on the dynamiters. "Just one fish in Spring Creek is worth half a dozen such despoilers," he fumed.

Walking through the woods toward his country study, Royal became enraptured with the green haunts of the Spring Creek varmints. "The lobelia cardanalis," he pointed out. "The color of the red in a cardinal's robe. And look at these huckleberries. When they're ripe I'll make you a pie. I have a special recipe. Did you ever see such a variety of trees—black walnut, white Spanish mulberries, white ash, cypress, elms, pines, sycamore, chinquepins, maple, catalpas, magnolias—?"

An armadillo stirred at the foot of a tree. "A cousin to the great dynasaur," he commented, pausing to watch the hard-shelled creature dig for roots. "God created mammoth creatures, too, but he seems to have no partiality toward them. A chameleon lying on a brown log began to twitter its head. "Don't move," Royal soothed. "We're your friends." But the little one leisurely put out its toes to desert the intruders. Royal followed it until it perched on a green catalpa leaf. "Watch her," he said, as she blushed to the greenness of the leaf. "A color for every mood."

Thus the man who for four years was an assistant botanist at the Field Museum in Chicago took intimate library backer, who wrote him a congratulatory note which he values more than the praise he later received from Eas'ern literary critics.

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Now he lives at 1310 Truxillo Avenue, where he and Chester Snowden, a local artist, share a studio. The establishment was originally a barn at which O. Henry is said to have stabled his horses.

This biographical review brought me back to my original point.

"I'd like to write a book about you, Royal," I said, "but right now I'm interested in writing an article about you. However, I'm puzzled."

He puckered his eyebrows. "Puzzled?" he asked.

"You're not the same Royal Dixon here as you are elsewhere. In your Houston studio, for instance, you're a sort of eccentric genius who spouts a constant stream of wisdom to would-be writers. In New York you're a sort of spoiled celebrity, but out here—"

"In New York," Royal interrupted, "a man battles with brick and stone and concrete. But out here—" He set down his cup of sassafras tea. He put his hand to his throat. "Out here at Spring Creek, well, I'm me—Royal Dixon, barefooted, and at peace with all God's other creatures."



His books on nature have made his famous. Here he works on a revised manuscript which will be published with illustrations by his good friend, Chester Snowden.



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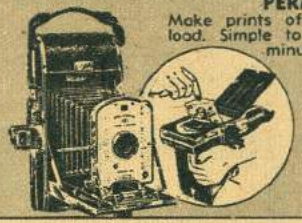
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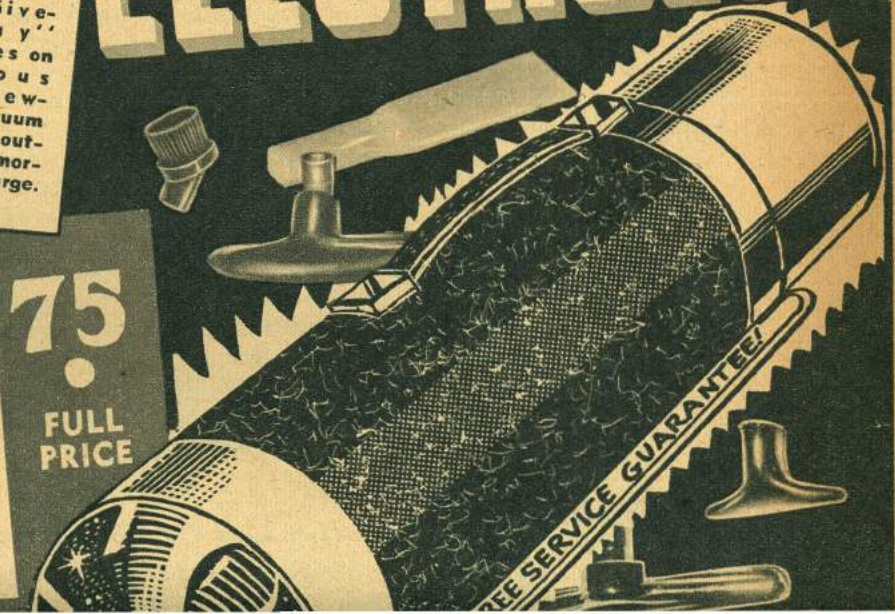
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The sights and sounds of nature are an ever intriguing drama to Royal Dixon.

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