

# Geraldine Farrar Is a Thorny Red Cactus; Mrs. John Astor an Orchid, Says Royal Dixon





## Board of Education Lecturer Classifies All Woman-kind Horticulturally—Beware of the Human Mushroom and the Vampire Vine!

By Nixola Greeley-Smith.

Are you a white violet or a pink rose woman, a wild jessamine girl or an orchid maiden? Perhaps you are a cactus creature whose thorns are necessary to protect her flaming beauty. Let me express a vehement hope that you are not a mushroom woman or a vampire vine.



If you don't know how to classify yourself horticulturally, hearken to the wisdom of Mr. Royal Dixon, author of "The Human Side of Plants," who has just completed another book, "Beyond the Realm in Plantdom," which will have one interesting chapter, entitled "The Underworld Among the Flowers."

Royal Dixon is a lecturer for the Board of Education. He was at one time assistant botanist at the Field Museum of Natural History. He has travelled in Africa and South America in search of plants and plant lore for Kew Gardens, and in the course of his wanderings has discovered flowers that kidnap and murder, plants that go fishing, others that powder their noses, dance, go canoeing or swimming, and some up-to-the-minute flowers that can skate.

Mr. Dixon has a novel theory that every type of woman corresponds to a particular flower or plant. He told me that Geraldine Farrar, for instance, is a red cactus with a special endowment of thorns to protect her extraordinary beauty of mind and body. Talent, in Mr. Dixon's interpretation of the word, protects woman. And our Geraldine's great gift, her voice, is the armor of her marvellous puichritude. Mrs. Blanche Shoemaker Wagstaff, Mr. Dixon says, is a pink rose woman. Miss Edith M. Thomas is a white violet. Miss Jessie Rittenhouse is a wild yellow jessamine. You perceive that Mr. Dixon chose literary women rather than actresses to illustrate his views. The woman who fills the world with perfume and lures and captures men of all nations by her extraordinary loveliness he compares with the variety of orchid which attracts and imprisons white moths, holding them prisoners for twenty-four hours. He said that Mrs. John Astor is the perfect type of the orchid woman.

The wife who is content to "sit at the feet of great hubby" and say, "Yes, dear! Just as you say, dear! How I wish I had your brain, darling," he calls the mushroom woman who springs up in a night in the shade of the great tree—her lord.

The vampire vine explains herself. You know there really is a vampire vine, a huge plant which grows in the region of Lake Titicaca in South America, has a growth like a human face in its centre and long tentacles like white arms. These tentacles are charged with electricity and they paralyze animals which come within reach of them and suck the blood of their victims. The vampire vine has killed and eaten animals as large as a dog. Mr. Dixon told me the human vampire vine seeks even larger prey. She belongs to what Mr. Dixon calls the red light district of the flowers.

I found this unusual botanist in his study, No. 226 in the New York Public Library, yesterday afternoon. He is a slender, dark, young man, whose soft speech betrays his Southern birth, and who appeared just a trifle dismayed that his ideas on the human flower show had come to light so soon.

### ALL WOMEN LIKENED TO FLOWERS.

"But, really," Mr. Dixon protested, "the whole theory is very tentative. I have been asked to lecture at the New York Flower Show in the beginning of April, and the other day in talking with a friend I mentioned to him that I intended to discuss the correspondence in type of certain women and certain flowers. The moment I meet a woman I perceive the type of flower she is. You, for instance—I trust you won't misunderstand me—are a smilax!"

Just imagine my feelings. I was getting my most beautiful smile all ready to reward the botanist for picking out a nice flower for me. I hoped even for something explosively scarlet like the poinsettia. And here I was nothing but a demure thing used to help out the decorations at weddings. A mere background—worse than that—a VINE!

"You don't understand," Mr. Dixon said, and it was quite evident that some of my soul's disney had escaped. "The smilax is absolutely indestructible. It grows everywhere. Nothing can kill it. You may bury it in ten feet of snow and it will keep

on growing. You may dig a grave for it ten feet deep and ten years afterward you will find that smilax green and flourishing underground. The smilax women are the conquerors. Any woman should rejoice to be a smilax!

"Mrs. Blanche Shoemaker Wagstaff, one of our most wonderful poets, is a pink rose woman. Even her hair has the look of curling petals and everything about her glows. Edith M. Thomas is a white violet. Jessie Rittenhouse is a wild yellow jessamine; Mrs. John Astor an orchid.

### TALENT THE THORNY PROTECTOR OF BEAUTY.

"There is an orchid, do you know, which, by its beauty, lures and captivates white moths. I must explain what I mean by comparing Geraldine Farrar to the red cactus of the desert, perhaps the most gorgeous flower that blooms. The cactus grows thorns—the smilax, your type, grows thorns too by the way. The cactus has to have thorns, otherwise it would be destroyed by its own beauty. Talent supplies a woman with thorns. No men like brains in women, though they will have to get used to them soon, the age of the superwoman being at hand. At the foot of the giant cactus of the desert the prairie dog, the prairie owl and the rattlesnake dwell together in harmony. These creatures at the foot of the flowering cactus typify the diverse elements in an audience which are brought into harmony by a great voice like Miss Farrar's.

"Some women," Mr. Dixon added after a paragraph of silence, "have no souls—though many more women than men possess souls, of course. These soulless women are the mushroom wives who spring up in an hour and who lurk in the shadow of the great tree—great hubby—and who live their little hour saying 'Yes, dear.' Anti-Suffragists are mushroom women. Mothers and wives are the great cereals—the corn and wheat and rice which nourish the world. All the great flowers are feminine. Still," Mr. Dixon added thoughtfully, "a man sometimes quarrels—in his feelings, at any rate—with the feminist dictum that all women must work. There are women who are wonderful white orchids. They fulfil their purpose in life by supplying the world with beauty. Must they furnish bread and meat as well?"

"The flowers furnish their own bread and meat," I said, "all except the parasitic flowers, and they are murderers!"

"The parasites are the underworld of plant life," Mr. Dixon concurred, the botanist conquering the sentimentalist. "The devil's needle, sometimes called love-in-a-tangle, illustrates the plant typical of the red light district. Farmers despair if once the plant enters their field, for it snarls up every living growth within many feet of it and the soil and plants turn yellow and die. The type of woman corresponding to the parasite, it is not necessary to describe. And yet do you know a little excursion into the red light district of plants might prove very interesting?"

Mr. Dixon came to a careful pause. My wrist watch said—rather regretfully I thought—that it was time long since for me to be downtown. And because of that dashed time piece I shall never, never become famous as the flowers' Elmer Glyn.