Family Had Just Come From Arkansas In Covered Wagon

His Father a Country Baptist Minister and Lost 100 Slaves as Result of War—Mother a Great Reader and Lover of Literature—Brother a Great Preacher.

BY CHARLES H. DICKIE.

“Mr. Dixon,” I suggested, “would you mind telling us how it feels to have the favorable attention of so many millions of people?” I was interviewing Thomas Dixon, famous author, playwright, actor and former minister, son of a Cleveland county Baptist preacher.

“In the main,” he said, “I lose consciousness of it entirely. It is just a question of personal living and study work with me. The fame and the outside glow is a thing that I enjoy subconsciously, but it really does not affect my life one way or another. I absolutely, in the main, ignore it and go right on as if I were a student just starting out.

“But it probably affected you differently,” I chimed in, “on your first burst of success?”

“Tes. The greatest excitement that I ever had in my life was the launching of The Clansman. Then I made a great deal of money, and made it quickly. Of course, I can see now that I was a success and told me about this journey after.

“I said to him, ‘Why didn’t you sell your slaves, and we would all be rich today?’

“He said, ‘Son, I couldn’t sell a slave. They were my people, and had that he couldn’t do that—that it was against the law. But they wanted him to place them on the farm and look after them as he had been doing in the old days.

At this point, Mr. Dixon seemed to be working into a reminiscent mood. His mind had gone back through the decades to the time and place he was born in Cleveland county. He said:

IN ARKANSAS

“I was born near Shelby, North Carolina, on January 11, 1864. Earlier my father had moved to Arkansas. The family were living in Arkansas during the Civil war. ‘My father removed, with his household and slaves, back to Cleveland county during that war. That long journey was made in covered wagons. That was only a short time before I was born, and on that journey my mother slept in the old covered wagon each night with a rifle by her side.

“I recall that the stories they told me about this journey afterwards made a great impression on me. I used to ask my father about the slaves and all. He had sold his farm for gold and got a big price. He also had a hundred slaves which he would not have to pay the soldier and labor which he had put into them.

After the war was over, they came back to him and tried to get them back. He told them that he couldn’t do that—that it was against the law. But they wanted him to place them on the farm and look after them as he had been doing in the old days.

At the time of which I speak, we were living on a little farm just out of the town, and I had not left them with strangers in Arkansas any more than I would have left your little brother.

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BORN ON FARM

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“They took all the corn and meat. When they got past their place, they were on the farm and stripped of all the fences, and we did not have anything to eat. At this time, my father went back to Shelby.

“My father’s ministry was very interesting to me. As a little boy I used to go with him, for he always wanted to take me along. I went to his church every Sunday. I sat in the pulpit behind him.

“He was a wonderful preacher. I was too small then to understand his powers, but he did have a wonderful power over his audi-ences. He always preached the Bible and never used anything else. Of course, I think his great power over the people was not so much his ability to reason, or his scholarship, but his realization of the presence of God. That was the quality that carried the people.

“I was in the north and did not go back to the funeral.

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“One day my father said, ‘Son, I will never marry again. There is another woman for me.’ That was the way he looked at it.

“She was a romanticist. She was a great reader—a reader of novels and everything else.

“That is where I came in.

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