

Zelda Dameron

By
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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CHAPTER X.

When Zelda asked her father one day where his office was, he answered evasively that it was in the Dameron Block. This was an old-fashioned office building, with a basement and a short stairway leading to the main corridor. It was no longer fashionable, as the better class of lawyers and real estate brokers had sought building of a later type that offered electric lights and elevators. The Dameron Block faced the court-house square, and was the habitat of divers small attorneys and real estate men. In the basement below, a justice of the peace sat in judgment next door to a musty old book-shop, where the proprietor, a quaint figure with a great mop of iron-gray hair, sold pens and paper and legal blanks to Dogberry Row, as this quarter of the street was called. Zelda strayed into this thoroughfare by chance one winter afternoon shortly before Christmas and was arrested by the sight of some old books in the bookseller's window. The venerable bookseller came out into the barement area and spoke to her of the books, holding a volume meanwhile, with his forefinger close upon the page he had been reading. Yes; he kept French books, and she went into the shop and looked over his shelves of foreign books.

"There is very little demand for them," he said. "Some of these are rare. Here is a little volume of Hugo's poems; very rare. I should be glad if you would take it for a dollar—of course I can only offer. It is for you to decide."

"I shall take the Hugo," said Zelda. He wrapped it for her carefully, even regretfully, and held the packet for a moment, caressing it with his hands, while she produced a dollar from her purse and took it from him.

"Call again. I have been here for twenty years; Congdon, Dameron Block."

"Yes, Dameron Block," repeated Zelda.

The constables and loungers on the sidewalk in front of the justice's court stared at her as she came out and glanced for a moment at the upper windows of the building. A galvanized iron sign at the eaves bore the name "Dameron Block, 1870," in letters that had long since lost the false aspect of stone given to them originally by gray paint.

Zelda went into the dim entrance and read the miscellaneous signs that were tacked there. One of them was inscribed "E. Dameron, Room 8"; and passing on she presently came to a frosted-glass door, where the same legend was repeated. It was late in the afternoon; possibly her father would go home with her, she thought, and turned the knob.

She entered a dark room on a court-way, evidently used as a place of waiting; there was another room beyond, reached by a door that stood half-open. Her father was engaged; his voice rose from the inner room; and she took a chair by the outer door of the waiting-room. She looked about the place curiously. On a long table lay in great disorder many odds and ends—packages of garden-seed under dust that afforded almost enough earth to sprout them; half a dozen fence pickets tied together with a string; and several strata of old newspapers. On the floor in a corner lay a set of harness in a disreputable state of disrepair; and pasted on the walls were yellowed sheets of newspapers containing tables of some sort. Zelda did not know what these were, though any of the loafers on the carbstone could have enlightened her as to their character—they were the official advertisements of the sales of tax titles. Ezra Dameron always "talked poor, and complained of the burden of taxes and street improvements; but he had been the chief buyer of tax titles in the county.

"I'm sure that I've been very lenient, very lenient indeed," Ezra Dameron was saying. "I have, in fact, considered it a family matter, calling for considerate treatment, on the score of my friendship with your husband. If it had been otherwise, I would have been obliged to take steps—steps toward safeguarding the interests—the interests of my trust, I should say."

"But another extension of two years would be sufficient for me to pay. I wish very much for Olive not to know that her schooling was paid for with borrowed money. She gives me all she earns. Her position is assured, and I am putting aside something every month to apply on the debt. We owe nothing else."

"But two of these notes are already in default, Mrs. Merriam. I have incurred obligations on the strength of them. A woman can't understand the requirements and exactions of business."

"I am sorry, very sorry, Mr. Dameron. All I ask is this extension. It can't be a large matter to you."

"I regret more than I can tell you that it is impossible. If it were myself—if it were my own money that I advanced you, I could perhaps be less insistent, but as it is, this money belongs to another—in fact, it is part of my daughter's estate. She is perfectly helpless, utterly ignorant of business; it is necessary for me to exercise the greatest care in administering her affairs. It is a sacred trust, Mrs. Merriam, a sacred trust from her dear mother."

"I came to-day," said the woman's voice, apologetically, "hoping that payment could be deferred."

"Yes, to be sure; it's wise to be fore-handed. But the loan must be paid at the maturity of the last note, in May. I must close my wife's estate very soon. I have timed all my loans to that end."

The purring voice stole through the anteroom, where Zelda sat forward in her chair, listening with parted lips and wonder and pain in her eyes. The book in her lap fell to the bare floor, making a sharp clatter that startled her.

She lay awake staring into the dark for half the night, with tearful eyes, one hand clasping the little book under her pillow.

CHAPTER XI.

Zelda saw much of Morris during the winter. He went often to the old house in Merriam street in spite of the fact that she did not interest him more than other girls. She continued to delight in plaguing him, particularly before her uncle, who learned, however, not to praise Morris to Zelda. Mrs. Forrest pretended to be a diligent chaperon, but Mariona social affairs did not amuse her, and she went out very little. Frequently Merriam took Zelda to the theater; now and then he convined with Morris to the end that Olive should be asked, and the four would go afterward for a supper at Merriam's house. Zelda brought Olive more and more into touch with her own life. She knew no happier day than Christmas, when Mrs. Forrest—not, however, without urging—gave a family dinner to which Ezra Dameron, Olive and her mother sat down at the same board, with Rodney presiding. There were times when Zelda's courage failed—when the shadow of her mother's unhappiness fell darkly upon her; but she made no sign to the world. So the winter passed, and in the first bright wistful days she went forth with Zan to find the spring.

"I have not heard you speak of your aunt and uncle of late," said Ezra Dameron to Zelda one day, after she had been for an outing with Olive.

"I saw Aunt Julia this afternoon. She isn't well; she suffers a great deal. She has asked me to go away with her again—she likes going about, and she has planned to visit a number of summer places."

"If you don't go, what will she do?" and the old man looked at Zelda with a gleam of humor in his small gray eyes.

"Well, I have asked her to come to the farm."

"I am very glad you did. It would be a capital arrangement."

"But she won't come. She does not like that sort of thing. She likes to be where there's something doing."

"Yes, yes; a worldly woman; a very worldly woman"—and Dameron wagged his head as he buttered his roll. He was silent for several minutes, and when he spoke it was in a tone of kindness.

"And so you are coming with me, Zelda? I had hoped you would. I have wished it so much that I have not pressed you to commit yourself. I knew that your aunt would be likely to offer something more attractive than a summer at The Beeches."

"Yes, father; of course I shall go with you. I have never had any other intention."

"You are very good to me, Zee. I am grateful to you for many things. An old man is very poor company for a young girl. I had feared that you might not be satisfied here. Your uncle and aunt have never treated me fairly. We have nothing in common. I am glad to find that they have not estranged you and me; the paternal relation is a very beautiful one; very beautiful."

Her father had spoken often during the winter of the farm. Zelda's willingness to go there was a great relief to him; and when she suggested that she should like to ask Olive to spend the whole of her vacation with them he made no objection. He knew that she saw Olive frequently; Zee had asked several times since the Dramatic Club episode, and her father had treated Olive with his usual formal courtesy. The main thing with Ezra Dameron was to keep Zelda away from her aunt and uncle; and it flattered his vanity that she remained with him so steadfastly and took apparently so full an interest in his happiness and comfort. Zelda went to Olive at once with her invitation.

"I'd be delighted, of course, Zee; but you mustn't make it hard for me to refuse. I'm in my busy summer; we have to move."

"Oh!" said Zelda.

"We're mortgaged; that's the trouble with us; we're not only mortgaged, but we can't pay! So we hope to find another house somewhere and get out of the way."

(To be continued.)

SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS.

Pennsylvania Educationalist Thinks They Should Be Abolished.

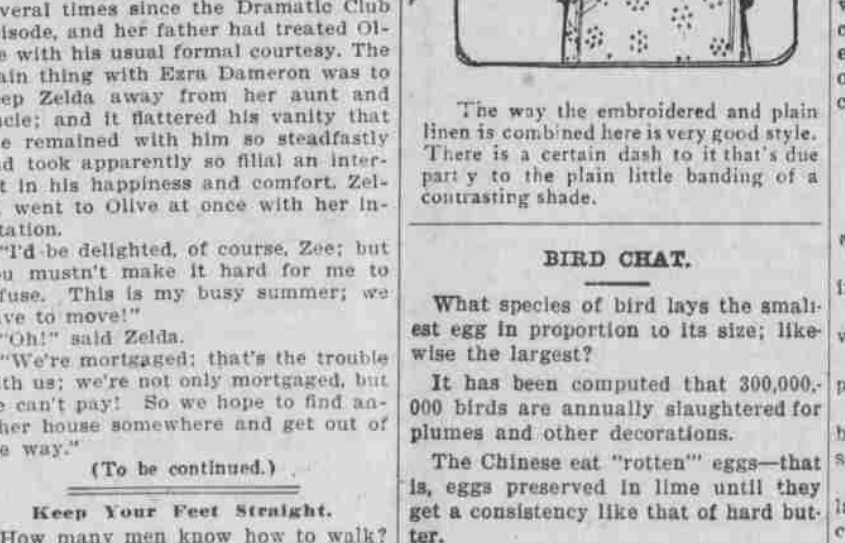
Public school students have a champion in the person of Dr. Nathan C. Schaeffer, superintendent of public instruction in Pennsylvania, in their antipathy to examinations. Dr. Schaeffer has gone so far as to say that he hoped he would see the day when examinations would be abolished. "They are," he said, "like drugs, since they have a primary as well as secondary effect in that they cause depression if kept up."

Dr. Schaeffer is himself a keen student and observer. He has profited by his years of experience since his connection with the public schools of the state and he knows whereof he speaks, says the Philadelphia Inquirer. But his opinion in this respect is not the result of deductions on the part of one man alone. There are many others who think with him, some of whom have so expressed themselves and others who, while convinced themselves, are too timid to take a decided stand in the matter.

There is little doubt that the examination is in many respects a barbarous institution. Education is, in the last analysis, only a means to an end, a process of gradual mental development, a plan by which each day the mind is broadened. To expect a child to pass successfully on details which it has used only as mental food and forgotten for five, six, seven or nine months seems not only unjust, but ridiculous. The consequence is that as examination time approaches there is a cramming of matter into the mind, mental indigestion ensues and, not infrequently, even the brightest students are injured physically.

In the big world where results count, a man is not examined at the end of each year as to his work during the past 12 months. The caliber of his work and endeavor at the end of each day is what counts, and so it should be in the preparation for this real work.

FASHION HINTS



The way the brocade and plain linen is combined here is very good style. There is a certain dash to it that's due partly to the plain little banding of a contrasting shade.

BIRD CHAT.

What species of bird lays the smallest egg in proportion to its size; like-wise the largest?

It has been computed that 300,000,000 birds are annually slaughtered for plumes and other decorations.

The Chinese eat "rotten" eggs—that is, eggs preserved in lime until they get a consistency like that of hard butter.

A fossil raphoryucus, a bird of 50,000,000 years old, sold for \$9,000 recently, the highest price ever paid for a bird.

Cranes are used as watchdogs in Venezuela by the natives, who call them "yakanuk," and are said to be excellent guards of poultry.

Cardinals have been known to alight upon window sills of houses and peck at the panes, probably attracted by their reflection in the glass.

Birds are not the only high animals that lay eggs, two quadrupeds, the duck-billed platypus and the Australian porcupine ant-eater, also lay them.

The rpr n'dooh, or "bird of death," is the only venomous bird known to science, but there is very little known regarding its habits, and especially its venomous qualities.

The hyacinthine macaw is one of the strongest as well as one of the rarest birds of its kind. There is one in the New York Zoo. There appears to be absolutely nothing known regarding its habits.

Love's Market.

She—Harold, do you speculate?

Harold—Well, I'm engaged to you—Life.

Cold Comfort.

"We shall be rescued. Don't lose your head."

Said the traveller lost on the arctic shore.

"Oh, I'm keeping cool!" his companion said.

As he shifted his seat on the ice once more.

—Puck.

Some people cannot bear to be left alone; they cannot enjoy their own company. How do you feel about it?

POULTRY LIKE GREEN FEEDS

Regarded as Absolutely Necessary Where Fowls Are Confined in Summer.

(By MILLER PURVIS.)

I regard green feeds as absolutely necessary to the welfare of poultry, old and young, both summer and winter. Where fowls are kept confined it must be supplied to them and where they have full liberty it may be fed to them with profit during the months when vegetation is somewhat burst by the heat.

A letter from a friend exactly coincides with the experience. He writes that last summer he had a batch of rape which he cut and fed to his hogs. He says his hens ate this rape as greedily as they would if they had not been shut up where they could not be out to find grass for themselves. I have noticed this more than once.

Throw out a lot of fresh lettuce leaves where the hens can get it and they will eat it up clean. Cabbage stumps thrown out to the hens will be picked clean, even where the hens run at large.

Those who must keep their hens confined will find that a small plot of rape will furnish a large quantity of green feed during the summer.

It will be large enough to begin cutting in five or six weeks and as soon as it is cut off will throw up new shoots, thus renewing itself constantly, so the same ground may be cut over time after time.

Lettuce or dandelions make a very good green feed for laying hens or growing chicks. There seems to be some medicinal property about both these vegetables which promotes good health in the fowls.

Both are easily grown and furnish a good supply of feed if the tops are cut off instead of pulling the plants out by the roots when gathering the feed.

Turnips and beet tops, mustard, pea vines and all other tender green stuff will be relished, and save much feed of a more costly kind.

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"Quite right. I think you could hold it down into an anecdote and get ten dollars for it."

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POULTRY NOTES.

Keep no breeding stock that is weak.

Use the eggs while fresh for hatching.

Supply grit and fresh water. Provide shade.

Do not overfeed or overfatten the parent stock.

Feed the ducklings not only grain, but meat or milk (protein food in some form) and plenty of green food.

Both mites and body lice accumulate very quickly in hot weather, and cause no end of trouble.

Farm folks are seeing from their more up-to-the-minute neighbors that good housing and feeding pay big returns on the work and investment.

As a rule more may be obtained for a two-pound chick in the summer than for one twice as heavy in the fall, and much feed, work and risk saved.

Handling Lambing Ewes.

At lambing time a ewe desires quiet and isolation, and she should therefore be put in a pen by herself for a few days.

She is apt to do better if she is kept by herself.

Sometimes, in the case of twins, the ewe will abandon one and let it starve unless it is fed by hand. If penned by herself she is more apt to accept both offspring. When by herself she is under better control and more easily handled.

The ewe should be watched, and upon the first indication of inactivity and listlessness, denoting the approach of the lambing period, she should be taken from the rest of the flock and kept by herself as much as possible. The appearance of the udder and other conditions also betray the condition of the ewe.

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