

# Zelda Dameron

By  
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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ZELDA DAMERON, an idyl of the Ohio Valley, a natural but entrancing romance, real as life. This is the truly charming serial which is now presented.

When you read this sterling story you will be delighted at its brisk, fresh tone of modern town life. The characters are genuine flesh and blood men and women. The heroine is a girl who has seen travel abroad and society at home. Zelda Dameron is the typical American girl of the hour. She is something more—a dutiful daughter who sinks all her own individuality in protecting and creating a miserly, and later a speculating father, whom she wins to the higher life of true manhood by her noble self-sacrifice.

There is a war flavor to this charming story, a college tinge, and Western-Southern characteristics that will fascinate the reader. The hero is a type of the ambitious young man of the day, an aspiring lawyer, chivalrous and honorable in his dealings with all mankind.

This story is a series of vivid life pictures. You will find no unnatural coloring to its settings, no actors in the rapid life drama that you will not recognize as strikingly natural.

"Zelda Dameron" is sure to meet your approbation as a bright, wholesome story of to-day, full of sparkling incident and a coherent progressive plot that will interest all readers.

## CHAPTER I.

"She's like Margaret; she's really one of us," remarked Mrs. Forrest to her brother. "She carries herself as Margaret did in her girlhood, and she's dark, as we all are."

"I hope she's escaped the Dameron traits; they're unattractive," said Rodney Merriam.

Mrs. Forrest and Zelda Dameron, her niece, who were just home from a five years' absence abroad, had, so to speak, stepped directly from the train into Mrs. Carr's drawing-room. The place was full of women, old and young, and their animated talk blended.

Mrs. Carr was forcing the season a trifle—it was near the end of September—but the dean of a famous college for women had come to town unexpectedly, and it was not Mrs. Carr's way to let heat or cold interfere with her social inclinations. Mrs. Forrest and her brother had ceased talking to watch their niece. The girl's profile was turned to them, and the old gentleman noted the good points of her face and figure. She was talking to several other girls, and it seemed to him that they showed her a deference. Zelda turned from her companions suddenly. She crossed swiftly to her uncle with a happy exclamation:

"This is indeed an occasion! Behold my long-lost uncle!" She seized his hands eagerly.

"And you are Zelda—our little Zee!"

"Quite that! We must be acquainted! Perhaps we shall be friends, who knows? Aunt Julia promised to arrange it—and I'm not used to being disappointed."

Zelda was a name that had been adopted in the Merriam family long ago. A great many people had never known that old Roger Merriam's wife's name was Zelda, so generally was Zee applied to her even in her old age. Margaret Dameron's child had been called Little Zee while her grandmother lived, and until her aunt had taken her away; and now, on her reappearance in Mariona, she was quite naturally spoken of as Zee Dameron.

There was a wistfulness in the girl's eyes that touched Rodney Merriam by the suggestion of her dead mother, the sister that had been the pride of the Merriams. Mrs. Forrest watched her brother curiously. She had speculated much about this meeting. Rodney Merriam was away from home a great deal. He had reached Mariona at noon from a trip into Canada, and had gone to Mrs. Carr's in pursuit of his sister. Mrs. Forrest understood perfectly that her brother had come to Mrs. Carr's tea chiefly that he might casually, and without apparent interest, inspect his niece. Rodney Merriam was wary of entanglements with his relatives. He and Mrs. Forrest were, it was said in Mariona, the only Merriams who could safely be asked to the same table, or who were not likely to cause embarrassment if they met anywhere. He had not spoken to Ezra Dameron, Zelda's father, for ten years, and the name Dameron was an offense in his nostrils; but the girl was clearly a Merriam; she was the child of his favorite sister, and he hoped it would be possible to like her.

"Yes, we shall be friends—much more than friends," he said, kindly.

"You must come and see me; Aunt Julia has graduated me, and I'm back on my native heath to stay."

"Come and tell me what you have learned in distant lands—and I'll tell you what to forget! Here's Morris Leighton; I want you to know him, Zee," said Rodney Merriam.

Merriam moved away through the crowd, followed by his sister.

"You know Uncle Rodney very well, don't you?" said Zelda to Leighton. "He was always my hero. When I was a little girl I used to sit on a trunk in his garret and watch him fence with a German fencing master. It was great fun."

"I sometimes fence with Mr. Merriam myself. I assure you that his hand and eye have not lost their cunning."

Morris Leighton's social adventures had not lacked variety. He knew a good deal about girls, and while a young man is still under 26 the delusion serves all the purposes of actual knowledge. Rodney Merriam had often spoken to Leighton of Zelda Dameron's home-coming.

Zelda Dameron's return to Mariona was more of an event than she herself understood. The Merriams were an interesting family; they were, indeed, one of the first families. There were Merriams about whom people laughed cynically; but Mrs. Forrest did not belong to this faction, nor did Rodney Merriam, of whom most people stood in awe. There had been much speculation, in advance of Zelda's coming, as to her probable course when she should return to Mariona with her aunt. Many had predicted that she would not go to live with her father—that Mrs. Forrest and Rodney Merriam would save her from that; but Zelda was already domiciled in her father's house.

Mrs. Forrest led her brother to an alcove of Mrs. Carr's library, and sent him to bring a cup of tea to her there. She was afraid to wait for a better opportunity; she must take advantage of his first impression at once. He brought what was offered at the buffet in the dining-room, and gave her his serious attention.

"This isn't quite the place I should have chosen for a reunion after three years," he began. "Where was it I saw you last? Geneva? I believe it was. The girl is very handsome. I suppose you found your house in good order. And Zee went with you without any trouble. That's as it should be."

"But, Rodney, she isn't with me! She has gone to her father; she wouldn't have it any other way."

"Oh! I'll fix that. I'll get her away from him. Now that you've given her to him, I suppose I'll have to take a hand," said Merriam, with frank displeasure. "I'll have to renew my acquaintance with that blackguard. I really suppose I'll have to call on him, or I might meet him accidentally, in the street, or at the bank. I might make a study of his habits and then lie in wait. I should like to give an accidental air to the meeting, to save my self-respect as far as possible."

"I suppose I might give a reconciliation dinner," she said. "We might as well go into it deep while we are about it."

Merriam shrugged his shoulders. "Don't push too fast. I don't remember Ezra as a good dinner man."

"I'll take you home if you're ready," said Mrs. Forrest, when, after some further talk, they returned to the drawing-room. "Zelda's father is coming for her."

"Thanks; but I'm going to walk down with Leighton, if I can find him."

It was nearly 6 o'clock, and a procession of women was coming down the stairs to Mrs. Carr's front door, as Rodney Merriam and Morris Leighton left the house with Mrs. Forrest and Zelda. The waiting carriages made

a long line in the street.

"How gay it looks! The old town really has a metropolitan air at us. A tea—with men present—it's almost beyond belief!"

"The town's not so bad, Julia; so it's a nice continental place for one old age. You'd better get reconciled. Mrs. Forrest's carriage had drawn up to the curb and Leighton shot into it.

"Be sure to come to my house to-morrow, Zee," she called to the girl.

"Miss Dameron's carriage!"

A shabby vehicle emerged from the line and came forward. Zelda and Leighton were talking animatedly; an Merriam watched the approaching carriage with interest, standing back from the curb. It was a box-like closed carriage of an old pattern drawn by one horse, with the driver mounted on a low seat in front. Leighton opened the door.

"Shall I say 'Good-morning' to you as the girl gathered up her skirts and stepped in."

"You needn't trouble yourself," said the driver, sharply. He was muffled in a heavy coat, and the air was warm, and as the carriage door closed he struck his horse with the reins and drove rapidly away.

"Sorry I made a mistake," said Leighton to Merriam, as they turned toward the city.

"It was her father," said Merriam.

## CHAPTER II.

"The cost of living is high, very high."

"Yes, father; I know that thing out of course."

"I have lived on very little while you were away, Zee. With one servant it's possible to keep down expenses. Servants are ruinous. And I'm not rich Zee. Like your Aunt Julia and Uncle Rodney."

"I want to do just what you would have me do, in everything. It's kind and generous of you to let me stay away so long. I know my expenses abroad must have been a great tax on you."

Ezra Dameron looked quickly at his daughter.

"Yes, to be sure, Zee, to be sure. Mariona is a simple place and your sojourn abroad has hardly fitted you for our homely ways. You'll find things are done very differently here. But of course you will accommodate yourself to the conditions. And you'll find the house quite comfortable. It's a little old-fashioned, but it was your grandfather's, and it rarely happens nowadays that a girl lives in the same house her mother was born in. Of course any little changes that you want to make will be all right; but you must practice economy."

They were studying each other with a shrewd sophistication on the father's side; with anxious wonder on the part of the girl. She knew little of her father. Even the memory of her mother had grown indistinct. The thing that had always impressed her about her father was his seeming age. She remembered him from her childhood as an old man, who came and went on errands which had seemed unrelated to her own life. The house he stood in a large tract when Zelda was away, but this had shrunk gradually as Ezra Dameron divided the original Merriam acres and sold off the lots. The front of the homestead was now only a few feet from the new common walk on what was called Merriam street, in honor of Zelda's grandfather. Sun and wind had peeled the paint from the brick walls and the green of the blinds had faded to a dull nondescript.

"Your aunt probably told you something of your business affairs—of the trusteeship," he said.

"Oh, no! Aunt Julia never discussed it; but I remember that she told me once I had some property. I knew nothing more—except that there is a trusteeship—whatever that is! And she laughed."

"Yes; it was a very wise idea of your mother's in providing for you. She always maintained her separate estate. She inherited some property from her father; I never touched your mother's property at all; never a cent, the old man went on. He did not know what Mrs. Forrest might have told Zee. He was dropping down his plummet to measure her ignorance. Zee knew nothing; and she cared very little. Her wants had always been provided for without any trouble on her part. Mrs. Forrest indulged herself, and she had indulged Zee. Ezra Dameron was wondering just what Rodney Merriam and Mrs. Forrest would expect him to do for the girl. His position as her father had been anomalous ever since his wife died, ten years ago. The Merriam had taken his daughter away from him at once and then they had sent her out of the country, and now that he had brought her back he was so without curiosity as to what their attitude toward him would be.

"The trusteeship will not be terminated for a year—on your 21st birthday, unless you should marry before the end of that time. This is always an emergency to look forward to, but I trust you will be in no hurry to leave me."

Zee laughed abruptly.

"It's funny, isn't it? the getting married. I honestly hadn't thought it before. I don't know any young men. We didn't meet any men abroad except very old ones. Aunt Julia was afraid the young men weren't respectable!"

"There's nothing like being careful where young men are concerned. There are many bad ones about these days. The temptations of modern life are increasing fast. A young girl can have no idea of them."

(To be continued.)

Good sense is not a merely intellectual attribute; it is rather the result of a just equilibrium of all our faculties.—Bulwer Lytton

## DROUTH RESISTANT ALFALFA VARIETIES

Drouth resistance of alfalfas is discussed in bureau of plant industry bulletin No. 169, by J. M. Westgate, agronomist in charge of alfalfa and clover investigations. He says:

In addition to the variegated strains of alfalfa being harder than corresponding strains of ordinary alfalfa, it has also been observed that the variegated alfalfas are usually somewhat more drouth resistant than the ordinary variety. The apparent correlation between hardness and drouth never received an entirely satisfactory explanation. The fact that the hardy, drouth-resistant, yellow-flowered alfalfa constitutes a small percentage of the percentage of these variegated strains suggests the origin of these characteristics. It is possible that the smaller number of stomata observed in both the *Medicago falcata* and the variegated alfalfa may offer a partial explanation of the drouth resistance, but it is difficult to see how this would materially affect the hardness of straw unless the growth be rendered less succulent during the periods of relative high winter temperatures which sometimes occur. The Grimm alfalfa, sand lucern and Baltic alfalfa have all proved relatively drouth resistant. In certain tests the Grimm alfalfa has proved drouth resistant in North Dakota, Montana, Nebraska, Eastern Colorado, Utah and Eastern Washington. The Baltic alfalfa has proved drouth resistant at Highmore, South Dakota.

The following weights of hay are reported to have been produced without irrigation by Mr. Paris Gibson, of Great Falls, Mont., in 1908. Each plot was one acre in extent and the entire product was weighed. The hay was weighed when in the usual condition for stacking and was not entirely dry.

Canadian alfalfa, (variegated), 7,505 pounds; sand lucern (variegated), 6,425; Turkestan alfalfa, 5,490; Wheeler alfalfa (variegated), 5,490; Nebraska dry land alfalfa, 4,700.

The normal rainfall at Great Falls, Mont., is 14 inches.

## Kherston Oats.

The Kherston oat was brought from Russia by Professor F. W. Taylor, of the University of Nebraska, in 1896, and thoroughly tested by the Nebraska station as to its adaptability to the corn belt of the United States, according to Farmers' bulletin 222, U. S. department of agriculture, which quotes from Nebraska station bulletin 82 as follows:

"The climatic condition most favorable to the growth of oats does not usually obtain in the 'corn belt,' and it has been difficult to find a variety of oats well adapted to this region. It is a curious fact that although the great corn-producing states are the largest producers of oats, they are not states in which the yield per acre is high. An oat to produce well in Nebraska, and particularly in the central and western part, should be very early in maturing and should not run to straw." Such a variety was found in the Kherston government in Russia, where the soil and climatic conditions (small and uncertain rainfall) are similar to those of the Great Plains.

The Kherston oat is vigorous, but not a rank grower. The straw is very short, the leaves are broad and expose a large surface. The panicles are spreading, i. e., it is not a side oat. The berries are light yellow, small, but numerous, and have a thin hull. It usually weighs well to the bushel and matures very early.

The results of careful tests of the variety in different parts of Nebraska indicate that it is "peculiarly suited to Central and Western Nebraska on account of its habits of growth. Although it usually yields well in Eastern Nebraska, there are other varieties that, in the river counties at least, compare favorably with it. West of that the tests indicate that it is earlier, yields better and weighs heavier than any other variety, with the possible exception of the Texas Red. It has steadily outyielded the Texas Red on the station farm. In the dry season of 1901 it showed remarkable drouth-resisting qualities."

The indications, the bulletin states, are that in introducing the Kherston oats the Nebraska station has rendered a great service to farmers of that large section of our western domain where the rainfall is too scanty or uncertain to insure good crops of ordinary varieties of oats.

## Seeding Grains.

A recent bulletin on crops for dry farming, issued by the experiment station of Montana Agricultural college, contains the following regarding seeding grains:

The crops ought to be planted on a moist, well pulverized seed bed. This can best be brought about by plowing in the spring, following immediately with the disc and harrow and cultivating the surface after each rainy period. Early seeding, from August 1 to September 10, is recommended.

For suggestions as to methods of organizing local dry farming clubs or associations, address the secretary, of the Dry Farming Congress, Hutton building, Spokane, Wash.

## A Budding Financier.

"I've got a boy in my employ who will be a king of finance some day," said a man who has a factory in New York. "A few weeks ago he sold a pair of homing pigeons to a man in Brooklyn. Two days afterward the pigeons appeared at his window. Another Brooklynite bought them, and again the birds came back. The boy has just made a third sale. I am wondering if I had not better get rid of him before he tries to sell me my own factory."

## Short and Sharp.

Urchin—Is this the office of the Bugle? Well, sir, I have come to subscribe for your paper.

Editor (with a genial smile)—Why, sonny, you don't look quite big enough to do such a thing as that.

Urchin—Sir, if a man has to be measured for his subscription at the office I shall subscribe for the Palladium, just across the street. Good day, sir.—Chicago Tribune.

## Foxy.

Rita (looking at photo)—Oh, yes, he's handsome enough, but he's an awful bouncer. Stella—What did he do? Rita—Didn't I tell you? He made an awful fuss with me one season and then asked me if I thought that dad would object to him as a son-in-law. I said no, I thought not, and he went away and proposed to my sister.—Illustrated Bits.

## Assisting Him.

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

"Is this the complaint department of the Daily Bread?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter with your thundering old shebang, anyhow? I've been trying for five minutes to get you!"

"I know it. I thought I'd give you something more to holler about. What's the kick this time?"—Chicago Tribune.

## Correcting a Wrong Impression.

"Mrs. Winkler, what I am going to say will surprise you, I have no doubt, but I love your daughter Minerva, and—"

"Mr. Spoonamore, do you think any young man ever stole a march on a watchful mamma? According to my calculations you were due to say two weeks ago to-night what you have said to me just now."

## Slightly Deeper Dye.

"Ever see an Indian policeman?" asked the passenger with the bristling moustache.

"Yes," said the passenger with the skull cap. "I used to know one in Omaha."

"How did he look in uniform?"

"Much like the ordinary copper, only a little more copper colored, of course."

## His Reason.

"Why do you always leave the house, James, when I begin to sing the old songs?" pouted Mrs. Howlit.

"Fresh air," said Howlit.—Harper's Weekly.

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