

Zelda Dameron

By
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CHAPTER IV.

The law offices of Knight, Kittredge & Carr were tucked away in the rear of an old building that stood at the apex of a triangle. The firm had been tenants of the same rooms for many years. There was a battered tin sign at the entrance, but its inscription could be read only by persons who remembered it from bygone days. Knight and Kittredge had been prominent in State politics during and immediately following the Civil War. They were dead now, but Carr, who had left politics to his partners, survived, and he had changed nothing in the office.

In the old days it had been the custom of the members of the firm of Knight, Kittredge & Carr to assemble every morning at 8 o'clock in the library for a brief discussion of the news of the day, or for a review of the work that lay before them. The young men who were fortunate enough to be tolerated in the offices had always enjoyed these discussions immensely, for Governor Kittredge and Senator Knight had known men and manners as well as the law; and Michael Carr knew Plato and the Greek and Latin poets as he knew the way home.

These morning conferences were still continued in Morris Leighton's day, though Knight and Kittredge had long been gone. It might be a topic from the day's news that received attention, or some new book—Michael Carr was a persistent novel reader—or it might be even a bit of social gossip that was discussed. Mr. Carr was a man of deliberate habits, and when he set apart this half-hour for a talk with his young men, as he called them, it made no difference that the president of a great railway cooled his heels in the outer office, while the Latin poets were discussed in the library, or that other dignified Caucasians waited while negro suffrage was debated.

Ezra Dameron was waiting for him this morning, for it was the first of October; and on the first of every month Ezra Dameron went to the office to discuss his personal affairs. He was of an economical turn, and he made it a point to combine as many questions as possible in a single consultation. His relations with the office were of long standing and dated back to a day when Knight, Kittredge & Carr were a new firm and Ezra Dameron was a young merchant whom people respected, and whose prospects in life were bright.

While Ezra Dameron waited for Michael Carr, Rodney Merriam was walking slowly from his house in Seminary Square down High street to Jefferson, swinging his stick, and gravely returning the salutations of friends and acquaintances. He came presently to the offices of Knight, Kittredge & Carr. He stepped into the reception-room and found it empty. The door into the library was closed but he could hear Carr's voice; and he knew that the lawyer was holding one of those morning talks with his clerks and students that Morris Leighton had often described. He looked about with interest and then crossed the hall. The doors of three private offices were closed, but he turned the knob of the one marked in small black letters "Mr. Carr," and went in.

Ezra Dameron was still looking out of the window when the door was flung open. He supposed Carr had come, and having been gazing out into the sunny court, his sight did not accommodate itself at once to the dim light of the little room.

"Ah, Mr. Carr—" he began.

"Good-morning, Ezra," said Rodney Merriam, blandly. Dameron knew the voice before he recognized his brother-in-law, and after a second's hesitation he advanced with a great air of cordiality.

"Why, Rodney, what brings you into the haunts of the law? I thought you were a man who never got into trouble. I'm waiting for Mr. Carr. I have a standing appointment with him this same day every month—excepting Sundays, of course."

"So I have understood. I don't want to see Mr. Carr, however; I want to see you."

Dameron glanced at his brother-in-law anxiously. He had believed Merriam's appearance to be purely accidental, and he was not agreeably disappointed to find that he had been mistaken. He looked at the little clock on Carr's desk, and was relieved to find that the lawyer would undoubtedly appear in a few minutes.

"I should be glad, at any other time, Rodney, but Mr. Carr is very particular about his appointments."

"I have heard so, Ezra. What I have to say to you will not interfere with your engagement with Mr. Carr. As near as I can remember, it has been ten years since I enjoyed a conversation with you."

"Better let the old times go—I—I am willing to let them go, Rodney."

"And on that last occasion, if my memory serve me, I believe I told you that you were an infernal scoundrel."

"You were very violent, very unjust; but let it all go, Rodney. I treasure no unkind feelings."

"It would be a source of real annoyance to me to have you think for a moment that I have changed my mind. I want to have a word with you about Zelda. She has chosen to go to live with you—"

"Very loyal, very noble of her. I'm sure I appreciate it."

"I hope you do. She doesn't understand what a contemptible hoodlum you are, and I don't intend to tell her. And you may be quite sure that her Aunt Julia will never tell her how you treated her mother—how you made her life a curse to her. I don't want you to think that because I have let you alone these ten years I have forgotten or forgiven you. I wouldn't trust you to do anything that demanded the lowest sense of honor, or manhood."

"There was no sign of anger or even resentment in Ezra's face. His inevitable smile died away in a sickly grin, but he said nothing."

"With this little preface I think you will understand that what I have sought you out for is not to ask favors but to give orders, in view of Zee's return."

"But, Rodney, Rodney—that matter needs no discussion. I shall hope to make my daughter happy in her father's house—I am her natural protector—"

"You are, indeed; but a few instructions from me will be of great assistance, Ezra. To begin with, I want you to understand that the first time I hear you have mistreated that girl or in any way made her uncomfortable I shall horsewhip you in front of the postoffice. The second time I shall cowhide you in your own house, and the third offense I shall punish either by shooting you or taking you out and dropping you into the river. I haven't decided which. I expect you to provide generously for her out of the money her mother left her. If you haven't squandered it there ought to be a goodly sum by this time."

"I fear she has acquired expensive tastes abroad. Julia always spent money wastefully."

"You ugly hypocrite, talking about expensive tastes! I suppose you have let everybody you know imagine that it has been your money that has kept Zee abroad. It's like you, and you're certainly a consistent beast. As I was saying, I mean that you shall treat her well, not according to your own ideas, but mine. I want you to brace up and try to act or look like a white man. You've got to keep enough servants in that old shell of yours to take care of it. You must be immensely rich by this time. You haven't spent any money for twenty years; and you've undoubtedly profited well in your handling of what Margaret left Zee. That was like Margaret, to make you trustee of her child's property, after the dog's life you had led her! You may be sure that it wasn't because she had any confidence in you, but because she had borne with you bravely, and it was like her to make an outward show of respect for you from the grave. And I suppose she hoped you might be a man at last for the girl's sake. The girl's her mother over again; she's a thoroughbred. And you—I suppose God tolerates you on earth merely to make Heaven more attractive."

Merriam at no time raised his voice; the Merriams were a low-spoken family; and when Rodney Merriam was quietest he was most dangerous.

Voices could be heard now across the hall. The morning conference was at an end; and Michael Carr crossed to his room at twenty-five minutes before nine, and opened the door in the full knowledge that Ezra Dameron was waiting for him. Many strange things had happened in the office of Knight, Kittredge & Carr; but Michael Carr had long ago formed the habit of seeing everything and saying nothing.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said, affably, and shook hands with both men.

"I have just been warning Ezra against overwork," said Merriam, composedly. "At Ezra's age a man ought to check himself; he ought to let other people use the hammer and drive the nails."

"Rodney always had his little joke," said Dameron, and laughed a dry laugh that showed his teeth in his very unpleasant smile.

Merriam wished both gentlemen a satisfactory disposition of their business. It was, of course, a perfectly natural thing for him to drop into a law office on a pleasant October morning and, meeting there a connection of his family, hold converse with him on matters of common interest. Michael Carr was not, however, a dull man, and he understood perfectly that Rodney Merriam had decided to resume diplomatic relations with Ezra Dameron; and he rightly guessed the reason to be the return of Margaret Dameron's daughter to her father's house.

Merriam found Morris Leighton at work in the library. The young man threw down his book in surprise as the old gentleman darkened the door.

"The date shall be printed in red ink on the office wall; I never expected to see you here!"

"It may never happen again, my boy. Is this all you have to do, read books? I sometimes wish I had been a lawyer. Nothing to do but read and write; it's the easiest business there is."

"Mr. Carr would like to see you; I'd be glad to call him—except that this is his morning with Mr. Dameron."

"To be sure it is; but don't trouble yourself. I've seen both of them, anyhow."

"Oh!"

"I just happened in and found Mr. Dameron waiting; so I amused him until Mr. Carr appeared. You still have your historic morning round-up here, I suppose. There are two things that you young gentlemen will undoubtedly derive from Mr. Carr—good manners and sound literary tastes."

CHAPTER V.

Zelda's days ran on now much like those of other girls in Mariona. Between Mrs. Forrest and Mrs. Carr, she was well launched socially, and her time was fully occupied. She overhauled the house and changed its furnishings radically—while her father blinked at the expenditures. Rodney Merriam, dropping in often to chaff Zelda about her neglect of herself, rejoiced at the free way in which she contracted bills. The old mahogany from the parret fitted into the house charmingly. The dingy walls were brightened with new papers; the old carpets were taken up, the floors stained, to save the trouble of putting down hardwood, and rugs bought.

Ezra Dameron's greatest shock was the installing of the telephone in his house; but every one else in Mariona, so Zelda assured him, had one; and it would undoubtedly be of service to her in many ways. Her real purpose was to place herself in communication with her aunt and uncle, whose help she outwardly refused but secretly leaned on.

Zelda did not disturb the black woman in the kitchen, though she employed a house-maid to supplement her services; but she labored patiently to correct some of the veteran Polly's distressing faults. Polly was a good cook in the haphazard fashion of her kind. She could not read, so that the cook books which Zelda bought were of no use to her. She shook her head over "book cooking," but Zelda, who dimly remembered that her mother had spent much time in the kitchen, bought a supply of aprons and gave herself persistently to culinary practice. Or, she sat and dictated to Polly from one of the recipe books while that amiable soul mixed the ingredients; and then, after the necessary interval of fear and hope, they opened the oven door and peered in anxiously upon triumph or disaster.

A horse was duly purchased at Lexington, on an excursion planned and managed by Mrs. Carr. They named the little Hambletonian Xanthippe, which Zelda changed to Zan, at her uncle's suggestion. It was better, he said, not to introduce any more of the remote letters of the alphabet into the family nomenclature; and as they already had Z it would be unwise to add X. Moreover, it was fitting that Zee should own Zan!

The possession of the pretty brown mare and a runabout greatly increased Zelda's range of activities. Her uncle kept a saddle horse and he taught her how to ride and drive. He also, under Ezra Dameron's very eyes, had the old barn reconstructed, to make a proper abiding place for a Kentucky horse of at least decent ancestry, and employed a stable-boy.

Zelda became daily more conscious of her father's penurious ways, that were always cropping out in the petty details of the housekeeping. One evening when he thought himself unobserved, she saw him walking down the front stairway, avoiding the carpet on the treads with difficult care. Zelda did not at first know what he was doing; but she soon found this to be only one of his many whimsical economies. He overhauled the pantry now and then, making an inventory of the amount of flour, sugar and coffee in stock, and he still did a part of the marketing. Zelda had given the black stable-boy orders that Zan was to be fed generously; and when she found that her father was giving contrary directions she said nothing, but convined with the boy in the purchase of hay and corn to make good the deficiency caused by her indulgence.

Late one afternoon she drove to a remote quarter of town in pursuit of a laundress that had failed her. She concluded her errand and turned Zan homeward, but lost her way in seeking to avoid a railway track on which a line of freight cars blocked her path. She came upon a public school building, which presented a stubborn front to a line of shops and saloons on the opposite side of a narrow street. Two boys were engaged in combat on the sidewalk at the school-house entrance, surrounded by a ring of noisy partisans. A young woman, a teacher, Zelda took her to be, hurried toward the scene of trouble from the school-house door, and at her approach the ring of spectators dispersed in disorder, leaving the combatants alone, vainly sparring for an advantage before they, too, yielded the field. Zelda unconsciously drew in her horse to watch the conclusion of matters. The young woman stepped between the antagonists without parley, catching the grimy flats of one of the boys in her hands, while the other took to his heels amid the jeers of the gallery. Zelda heard the teacher's voice raised in sharp raprimand as she dismissed the lad with a wave of her hand that implied an authority not to be gainsaid.

(To be continued.)

The Retort Courteous.

A young woman had fallen upon the ice-covered pavement, and a man stepped forward to offer his services.

"Allow me—" he began, but his feet slipped and he fell flat upon his back.

"Certainly," responded the young woman, gravely.—Lippincott's.

Elevating.

Wiggs—the man who loves a woman can't help being elevated. Wagg—And the man who loves more than one is apt to be sent up too.—Philadelphia Record.

Ever know a "jokey" man who amounted to much?

CROPS FOR DRY FARMING.

Fail-Sown Grains Generally Best for This Purpose.

Wheat is the great money-making crop of a large part of the semi-arid West. It is not particularly a drought-resistant crop, although certain varieties appear to succeed better than others in the dry districts. The hard Red Turkey or Russian wheat is the type or variety which has proven hardest and most productive throughout the Western part of the winter wheat belt. In the spring wheat states the standard sorts grown are Fife and Bluestem, which are also hard-wheats. The Durum, or Macaroni wheat, is rapidly coming into use in the North-western states, and it appears to be harder and more productive than the ordinary spring wheats. This wheat was introduced from Russia, where it has long been grown in a climate and under conditions similar to those of the western part of the Northwest states. It is decidedly a "dry land farming" crop, and it is the hope of those interested in introducing this wheat that it may prove successful in districts where the rainfall is not sufficient or is too uncertain to grow the common wheat, and thus extend profitable wheat growing still farther west and into the semi-arid lands of the Mountain states.

At present, with the varieties grown, the success of the wheat crop in the West is more largely due to the fact that the crop grows during a part of the year when drouth is least apt to prevail than to the drought-resistant character of the crop. But wheat is a deep feeder and a rapid grower. The plant draws its food and moisture from a large volume of soil and is able to withstand considerable unfavorable weather conditions; yet the crop is often materially injured and the yield decreased by drouth during almost any period of its growth. By hot winds and unfavorable weather conditions a promising crop may be destroyed in a few days.

Wheat cannot stop growing and remain dormant during an unfavorable period of growth, as does kafir corn or sorghum. The grain must finish its growth and mature in about a certain period, whatever the conditions for growth may be.

Spring wheat is not well adapted for growing in Kansas, but with sufficient moisture to start it in the fall, and with the usual spring rains, winter wheat is a profitable crop, even in the western counties of the state, where the annual rain fall does not exceed fifteen to twenty inches.

However, the methods of growing the crop are crude. Often the Western farmer plants so many acres that he is unable to farm the land well, and the result is a poor crop, if the season is at all unfavorable.

Some farmers, however, are adopting better methods. Enough good farming has been done to prove that it pays to cultivate and till the land well. Mr. H. W. Campbell reported remarkable results from practice of his system of culture on the Pomeroy model farm, in Graham county, Kansas. For several years this farm was made to produce twice as much wheat per acre as the average crop in the surrounding country, with no other treatment of the soil except thorough tillage and cultivation.

At the Fort Hays Branch experiment station, in Ellis county, enough has been accomplished, in the ten seasons since that station was established, to demonstrate that in the semi-arid West good farming pays as well or even better than it does in the rich farming states of the Mississippi valley.

Emmer.

Emmer has proved to be especially hardy and drought-resistant, and in the Northwestern states this grain has given greater yields per acre than barley or oats. However, at the Fort Hays station, in Western Kansas, emmer has not proved as hardy and productive as barley and oats. As a feed emmer will hardly take the place of barley and oats, but it may be ground and fed in combination with these grains or with corn. Wherever barley or oats produce well emmer is not an especially profitable crop to grow, but in those sections of the West in which the grains mentioned cannot be successfully grown, emmer may prove to be a profitable crop.

Barley.

Barley is successfully grown in Kansas farther west than any other spring grain. In fact, barley is produced in larger quantities in the western counties of Kansas than in the central and eastern counties. The counties producing the largest number of bushels in 1900 were as follows: Pawnee, Barton, Ness, Rush, Thomas, Pratt and Hodgman. Each of these counties produced over 150,000 bushels of barley in the year mentioned.

Winter Rye.

Another crop that grows successfully in western Kansas is winter rye. This crop, however, is not grown as extensively as barley, and is apparently a less profitable crop to grow than wheat.—Dry Farming Bulletin.

"The Newly Weds."

Sometimes we interpret too literally. "I want to learn to make jelly," said the newly installed housewife. "Is it hard?"

"Oh, Lord, no, mum!" replied the cook, with supreme pity. "It's soft!"—Judge.

Worms

"Cacarets are certainly fine. I gave a friend one when the doctor was treating him for cancer of the stomach. The next morning he passed four pieces of a tape worm. He then got a box and in three days he passed a tape-worm 45 feet long. It was Mr. Matt Freck, of Millersburg, Joseph Co., Pa. I am quite a worker for Cacarets. I use them myself and find them beneficial for most any disease (caused by impure blood.)"

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Youthful Taste.

"We keep our own cow," explained the hostess, proudly. "So we're sure of our milk."

"Well," interrupted the small son of the guest, setting down his cup, "somebody's stung you with a sour cow."—Toledo Blade.

England's Low Birth Rate.

England's birth rate last year was the lowest on record—25.58 a thousand of population. This is nearly 1.0 below the rate for 1908, which showed a slight increase over 1907, the first for many years.

There's a Reason.

Physician—I have told you to take long walks in the open air, and you are not doing it.

Confirmed Dyspeptic—I know it, doctor, but you told me I was to take them on an empty stomach, and I never have an empty stomach.—Chicago Tribune.

The Sun's Heat.

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