

Zelda Dameron

By
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

"Pardon me—" Zelda brought her horse to the curb—but I've lost my way. Can you tell me—"

The girl stepped to the curb and described the easiest way across town. She was small and trim of figure and had very blue eyes.

"Thank you," said Zelda, and Zan started forward.

"You are Miss Dameron," the teacher said, hesitatingly.

"Yes," Zelda turned toward her in surprise.

"It's been a long time since I saw you—as many as a dozen years." The girl smiled and Zelda smiled, too.

"I wish I could remember. I'm sorry, but won't you help me?"

"It was when you were a little girl—so was I, but I was older—and my mother took me to see your mother, and we played, you and I, that is, in the yard, while our mothers talked. You were a red dress and I thought you were very grand."

The blue eyes were looking into the dark ones. There was a moment of hesitation and scrutiny. Then Zelda put out her hand.

"You are my cousin. Olive—is it Merriam?—please don't tell me that isn't right!"

"Yes; that is just right."

"I'm going to take you home, if you're ready to go, Cousin Olive. I'm lost and don't remember the way."

"Me to go. It's so exciting, meeting a new-found cousin!"

Olive Merriam, a new-found cousin, a girl of about the same age as she, had started home when the battle at the school-house gave her pause. There was an excuse for refusing. Zelda had gathered up the reins, and waited.

"Do come! Zan isn't dangerous—and neither am I."

"Thank you. I'll have to come now to show that I'm not afraid."

The boys lingered at a safe distance, and as Zelda drove past them at the corner, several of them snatched off their caps and grinned, and Olive Merriam called good-night to them.

As Zelda followed the route indicated by her cousin, she was busy trying to find a lost strand of family history that proved elusive. She did not at all remember her mother's brother, Thomas Merriam. She had never heard her aunt or uncle speak of the relationship, and she surmised, now that she thought of it, that there must be another of those breaks in the family connection that had already revealed ragged edges. It was growing late, and she put Zan to her best paces, until presently they came out upon a broad paved thoroughfare.

"That's better," said Zelda. "I'm sure I should never have found the way out alone. I don't believe I was ever down there before. Please let me drive you home. I haven't the least idea where that is, so if I'm going wrong—"

"It's Harrison street," she described the route. "You're taking a lot of trouble about me."

"No. It's the other way around. I'd never have seen the court-house clock again if it hadn't been for you. And then—" they approached a cross street, and Zelda checked the flight of Zan and bent forward to see whether the coast was clear—"and then"—she loosened the rein and the animal sped forward again—"I've been looking awfully hard for a friend, Cousin Olive, and I want you!"

"You are kind—but you don't understand—a lot of things," said Olive Merriam. "You and I can't be friends. There are reasons—"

"I don't care for any reasons," said Zelda.

"But they're not my reasons—they're other people's! That's our house there, where the shades are up and a light is in the window."

"I don't care what other people say about anything"—and Zelda brought Zan to a stand at the curb in front of Olive's door.

"I'd ask you to stop—" began Olive.

"I'm going to stop," said Zelda—"to see you quite on your threshold. Zan stands without hitching, usually. I'll take my chances."

Harrison is only a street in miniature. A poet wrote a song about it that made it the most famous street in Mariona. The houses there are chiefly one-story-and-a-half cottages, and in one of these, which was saved from intrusive eyes in summer by a double line of hollyhocks, and which had at its back door at seasonable times a charming old-fashioned garden, lived Olive Merriam and her mother.

Olive threw open the door and Zelda stepped into a sitting-room—the house had no hall—where a coal fire burned cozily in a grate. The room ran the length of the house; the woodwork was white; the floor was pine, stained a dull red and covered with rugs made of old carpet. A student lamp with a green shade stood on a table in the center of the room. There were magazines and books on the table, and shelves in the corners held other books. An elderly woman looked up from the paper she had been reading as the door opened. A cane lay on the floor beside her and told the story of the lines of pain in her face.

"Mother, this is Zelda Dameron. She has brought me home," said Olive.

"She didn't want me to at all, but I

made her let me," said Zelda, crossing the room and taking Mrs. Merriam's hand.

The woman bent her eyes—they were blue like Olive's—upon the girl with a grave questioning.

"You are Margaret's daughter—you are Ezra Dameron's daughter," she said.

"Yes; and I didn't know about you at all until I found Olive to-day. And I didn't know that any Merriams anywhere lived in a house like this. Why, it's a home. I'm going—but tell me—that I may come back again."

There was something so sincere and wistful in Zelda's tone as she spoke, standing between the firelight and the lamplight; something, too, in the glance of appeal she gave the little room, that broke down the antagonism in Mrs. Merriam's eyes. She put out her hand again.

"Yes; I hope you will come. We shall be glad to see you."

Olive followed Zelda to the steps, and saw the runabout turn in the narrow street and whirl away. She watched it until Zelda's erect figure passed like a flash under the electric light at the corner and disappeared into the dark beyond.

"What miracle is this?" asked Mrs. Merriam of Olive. "Nothing short of a miracle would account for it."

"I met her down at the school-house. She had lost her way and asked me how to find Jefferson street. I called her by name—she seemed to remember me, and then she insisted on bringing me home. She seemed rather

strange, she said she was lonesome and wanted a friend."

Olive sat down on a stool at her mother's feet. She was afraid to show too much interest in this new-found cousin. Her mother was clearly puzzled and troubled; the moment was difficult; but she felt that it was important to determine their future relations with Zelda Dameron now.

"She is very like her mother. It gave me a shock to see her. Margaret had that same impulsive way. In any one else it would have seemed strained and theatrical, but no one ever thought of it in Margaret. Every one always said, when she did anything a little odd, that it was just like Margaret Dameron. Your father hadn't any of that; he wasn't like the rest of the Merriams. He tried to be on good terms with Ezra Dameron, though Ezra never appreciated it; and the rest of them dropped out for countenancing him. But Zelda—what do you think of her?"

"She didn't give me time to think. She charmed me! I never saw anybody like her in the world. She has such an air of mystery—that doesn't seem just the word, but I don't know what to call it. She's adorable!"

CHAPTER VI.

Rodney Merriam and Morris Leighton walked up High street to the Tippecanoe Club, which occupied a handsome old brick mansion that had been built by the Merriams who had afterward lost his money. Merriam usually went there late every afternoon to look over the newspapers, and to talk to the men who dropped in on their way home. He belonged also to the Hamilton, a much larger and gayer club that rose to the height of five stories in the circular plaza about the soldiers' monument at the heart of the city; but he never went there, for it was noisy and full of politics. Many young men fresh from college belonged to the Tippecanoe, and Merriam liked to talk to them. He was more constant to the club than Morris, though they often went there together.

A number of men were sitting about the fireplace in the lounging-room. The lazy blazing logs furnished the only light. A chorus of good-evenings greeted the two men in unmistakable cordiality, and the best chair in the room was pushed toward Rodney Merriam.

"Mr. Merriam, Captain Pollock; and Mr. Leighton."

A young man rose and shook hands with the newcomers. Merriam did not know most of the group by name. He had reached the age at which it seems unnecessary to tax the memory with new burdens. It was, he held, good club manners to speak to all the men you meet in a club, whether you know them or not. The youngsters at the Tippecanoe were for the greater part college graduates, just starting out in the world and retaining a jealous hold of their youth through the ties of the club.

"Captain Pollock has been telling us about the Philippines," said one of the group. "We've been trying to find out whether he's an imperialist or how about it, but he won't tell."

"That shows his good judgment," said Merriam.

"It shows that I want to keep my job," declared Pollock, cheerfully. "And I'll be cashiered now for certain, if I don't get back to the Arsenal. Major Congreve expects me for dinner."

Baker, who had brought Pollock to the club, shook himself out of his chair and the others rose.

"I'll see that you find your way back to the reservation," said Baker.

"That's very kind of you. And I'm glad to have met you, Mr. Merriam."

It was a soft voice, and as they went out into the hall, Merriam looked at the owner of it with interest. He was a slim young fellow, with friendly

blue eyes, brown hair, and a slight moustache. His carriage was that of the drilled man. West Point does not give a degree in the usual academic sense; but she writes something upon her graduates that is much more useful for purposes of identification. Frank Pollock had been the shortest man in his class; but his scant inches were all soldierly. The young man with whom he had spent an hour at the Tippecanoe Club had been gathered up by Baker, who had met Pollock somewhere and taken a fancy to him. They all left the club together except Merriam and Leighton, who went to the newspaper room. But Merriam stared at the evening paper without reading it, and when he got up to go presently, he stopped at the club register which lay open on a desk in the hall. He put on his eye-glasses and scanned the page. The ink was fresh on the last signature:

"Frank Pollock, U. S. A."

Rodney Merriam then walked toward his own house, tapping the sidewalk abstractedly with his stick.

The next morning he called for his horse early. He kept only one horse, for he never drove; but he rode nearly every day when it was fair. His route was usually out High street toward the country; but to-day he rode downtown through the monument plaza and then struck east over the asphalt of Jefferson street, where a handsome old gentleman of 60, riding a horse that was remembered with pride at Lexington, was not seen every day. Rodney Merriam was thinking deeply this morning, and the sharp rattle of his horse's hoofs on the hard pavement did not annoy him as it usually did.

Arsenal is a word that suggests dirful things, but the Arsenal that had been maintained through many peaceful years at Mariona, until the town in its growth leaped over the government stone walls and extended the urban lines beyond it, was really a pretty park. The residences of the officers and several massive storehouses were, at least, inoffensive to the eye. The native forest trees were aglow with autumn color, and laborers were collecting and preserving some dead leaves.

Merriam brought his horse to a halt as he neared the open gates. A private came out of the little guard-house and returned Merriam's salute. The man gazed admiringly after the military figure, on the thoroughbred, though he had often seen rider and horse before, and he knew that Mr. Merriam was a friend of Major Congreve, the commandant. The soldier continued to stare after Rodney Merriam, curious to see whether the visitor would bring his hand to his hat as he neared the flag that flapped high overhead. He was not disappointed; Rodney Merriam never failed to salute the colors, even when he was thinking hard; and he was intent upon an idea this morning.

The maid who answered the bell was not sure whether Major Congreve was at home; he had been packing, she said; but the commandant appeared at once and greeted his caller cordially.

Major Congreve was a trifle stout, but his gray civilian clothes made the best of a figure that was not what it had been. He was bald, and looked much better in a hat than without it.

"You'll pardon me for breaking in on your packing. I merely came to register a kick. I don't seem to know any of the local news any more until it's stale. I've just heard that the Arsenal has been sold and I want to say that it's an outrage to tear this place to pieces."

"It is too bad; but I don't see what you are going to do about it. I've already got my walking papers. The incident is closed as far as I am concerned."

"To give us an active post in exchange for the Arsenal is not to do us a kindness. We've got used to you gentlemen of the ordinance. Your repose has been an inspiration to the community."

"No irony! The town has always been so good to me and mine that we've had no chance for repose."

"But the Spanish War passed over and never touched you. I don't believe the powers at Washington knew you were here."

"Oh, yes, they did. They wired me every few hours to count the old guns in the storehouse, until I knew every piece of that old scrap iron by heart. If we'd used those old guns in that war, the row with Spain would have been on a more equal basis."

"I suppose it would," said Merriam, who was thinking of something else. "But I'm sorry you're going to leave. We never quite settled that little question about Shiloh; and I'm convinced that you're wrong about the Fitz-John Porter case."

"Well, posterity will settle those questions without us. And would you mind walking over to the office with me—"

"Bless me, I must be going! This was an unpardonable hour for a call."

"Not in the least; only I've another caller over there—Pollock, of the quartermaster's department, who has been sent out to take charge of the new post site. He's a nice chap; you must know him."

"I'll be very glad, some other time," said Merriam. "Which way does he come from?"

"He's a Southern boy. Father was a Johnny Reb. Another sign that the war is over and the hatchet buried."

"Pollock, did you say? Tennessee family? I seem to remember the name."

"I think so. Yes, I'm sure. I looked him up in the register."

(To be continued.)

Bill Too Material.

"Now," said Mrs. Dresser, "don't you think my new hat is a perfect dream?"

"Well, no," replied her husband; "to be a perfect dream the bill attached to it should also be merely a dream."

—Catholic Standard and Times.

HALL CAINE ON KING EDWARD.

Author Tells Story of Dead Monarch's Visit to Isle of Man.

During a visit to the Isle of Man, where I first had the honor to come to close quarters with him, he took obvious pleasure in the freedom with which the people who surrounded his person spoke to him. Hall Caine says in the New York Herald.

I remembered that one of our company said, pointing to the little gray town of Ramsey, which in a few hours had become transfigured into an oriental city, under the blaze of every available scrap of bunting.

"This beats coronation day in London, your majesty."

The King smiled and gracefully allowed himself to agree.

There were no police with him that day, no detectives and hardly any escort—only a gentleman in light bowler, two ladies in sailor hats, with a few carriages full of friends behind them and a number of bicycle journalists scudding at their side. It was a charming picture—a picture probably without parallel in any foreign country. It was the picture of a sovereign who felt absolutely safe in the love and protection of the people over whom he ruled.

"I trust we have not tired you to death, sir," I said.

He answered:

"It has been simply delightful. I've enjoyed it all immensely."

The King's memory was an extraordinary gift. Pointing to a monument on top of a hill, one of our party said:

"That is Albert Hill, sir. The tower is Albert Tower, so called after a picture of the prince consort's visit to Ramsey in 1847."

"I remember" perfectly," said the King. "I was on the yacht with the Queen, but I was only 7 years of age and the Queen was ill, so I did not come ashore."

"Perhaps you remember, sir, what happened when the prince consort landed."

"I do. He had come unexpectedly. There was nobody to receive him and a local barber took him to the top of the hill." A memory that retains an incident of such little moment can never have failed Edward VII. in relation to greater events of his life.

FASHION HINT.



The wardrobe of the summer girl who hasn't one or more little dresses on the order of the one sketched here, is decidedly incomplete.

This is of light blue handkerchief linen, plentifully trimmed with Irish lace, but carried out very simply. The style is one that is not extreme but always dainty and becoming.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

A plain salt gargle is very good for sore throat.

Gasoline is good to clean soft white leather shoes.

All frozen puddings are improved by being served with whipped cream.

Use ammonia and water rather than soap and water for washing marble.

Milk is good to wash white paint; cold tea equally good to wash colored paint.

In buying potatoes pick those that are firm and hard and have the fewest "eyes."

Left-over biscuit are much better cut in two and toasted than if merely warmed over.

When cooking mackerel or other salt fish, see that the skin side is placed uppermost.

To lengthen the life of a tin wash basin, paint is inside with any good quality of paint.

Clean zinc with kerosene, rubbed on with a soft cloth, and follow with boiling water.

A whisk broom that has outlived its usefulness can be shortened and made into a sink brush.

A few chopped almonds added to a custard or bread pudding will greatly improve its flavor.

A sprig of mint in the water in which potatoes or peas are boiled will add a piquant flavor.

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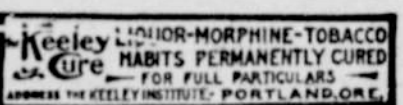
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Japanese is Hardest to Learn.

The Japanese language is claimed to be the hardest of all to learn. Even the Japanese find it hard, and several American army officers have found it impossible to master it. It takes the Japanese child seven years to learn the essential parts of the alphabet, and one must become familiar with 214 signs to learn this simple part of the language alone. The 214 signs serve as the English initial letters in our alphabet. To be able to read any of the higher class of Japanese newspapers one must be the master of from 2,500 to 3,000 ideographs.—Albany Journal.

Mothers will find Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup the best remedy to use for their children during the teething period.

Practical Experience.

The old farmer, equipped with the tools of his trade, was busy near the road.

"What have you growing in that field," asked the innocent passer-by.

"Weeds," answered the granger.

"But why are you cultivating weeds?" queried the other.

"Because," replied the man behind the hoe, "after years of experience I am convinced that is the only way to exterminate them."

What We May Expect.

The suffragette meeting had grown red-hot.

"And what will become of the great brewery buildings when we control the votes?" shouted the leader.

And the little man who had crept in unobserved shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess they'll be turned into chewing gum factories and complexion-powder mills," he muttered simply.

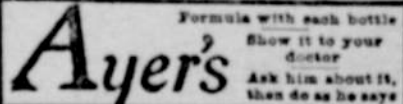
The Organist's Fox Pass.

"At that wedding last night," said Mrs. Lapsling, "the organist made the worst mistake I ever heard of. He played Meddlesome's wedding march when the bridal party came in and the march from 'Loneragan' when they passed out."—Chicago Tribune.

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