

Zelda Dameron

By
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

He was a little fellow and he was angry; but he was a gentleman, too, and, seeing that Rodney Merriam was really surprised, he relented toward the old soldier, who had thrust his hands into the side pockets of his coat, looking as foolish as it is possible for a fine old gentleman to look.

"Captain Pollock," he blurted out, suddenly, "I haven't a doubt that you are telling the truth. I don't care whose son you are, I like you anyhow!" And then snatching his hands from his pockets he held them out to Pollock, demanding with a gruff kindness, "Will you shake hands with me?"

"Certainly, Mr. Merriam."

A few hours later the usual crowd lounged in the smoking-room of the Tippecanoe Club. Pollock had just finished telling a story when Rodney Merriam appeared in the doorway. The old gentleman advanced upon the little group, returning their greetings and thanking them all for the proffer of their seats.

"Gentlemen," he said, standing by his chair, "I wish to make you an explanation. Owing to an unfortunate misunderstanding, due wholly to my own stupidity, I recently showed Captain Pollock a slight in this club. I wish to make the ampler possible explanation—"

"This is wholly unnecessary," exclaimed Pollock, rising. "This is wholly uncalculated for, Mr. Merriam."

"I wish to say before all of you," Merriam continued, "that I was wholly in the wrong, and that Captain Pollock is a gentleman, who is an honor to his friends and to his profession."

And the next day, in the same spirit of scrupulous honor, Rodney Merriam sought his niece at the Beeches and made his peace with them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Leighton always hated himself for laughing at Balcomb, whose loquacity was so cheap it was pathetic. Everything Balcomb knew he used constantly. At the college to which he referred in terms of rallery or contempt he had picked the nearest and gaudiest flowers; but he wore them all in an amazing bouquet that did not fail to impress many of his acquaintances as the real bloom of learning. Leighton was not at all glad to see Balcomb one night. His friend's eternal freshness palled upon him. But it did not occur to Balcomb that Leighton might not be delighted to have him for a traveling companion. He thought his conversation was shortening the distance for Leighton. Balcomb had been making social history fact. He had, in his own phrase, "batted in"; and since the performance of "Deceivers Ever" he had been included in most of the gatherings of the Dramatic Club circle.

"I say, old man," he began, abruptly, as the car skidded through a strip of woodland, "just between old college friends, what's your game, anyhow? Which is it?"

"Which is what?" demanded Leighton, who had been enjoying a moment with his own thoughts, while Balcomb stared out upon the darkling landscape.

"Which girl, I mean? There are two out here."

Leighton took off his hat and laughed.

"I haven't decided yet," he said, presently, with an irony that was quite lost on Balcomb. "I'm a good fellow, though, and I'll take the one you leave."

"Miss Dameron's certainly a peach dumping, all right. But say, the little cousin's a gem of purest ray serene. She ain't so stand-offish, some way, as her cousin; she jollies easier."

"I think I've noticed that"—and the irony this time was meant for himself.

"They say olives are a cultivated taste," persisted Balcomb; "but lawsy, I knew right away that girl was a good thing. And to think that she has to teach a lot of grimy little muckers how to cook."

"It is too bad, isn't it? But I don't think you need be sorry for her."

"She's as proud as Lucifer. Here's our stop."

The two men jumped out into the highway and started for the Dameron farm.

"I think a man ought to marry early," Balcomb announced, as they tramped along the road. "There's nothing like a woman and a home to put snap into a man," he continued, nobly. "A man fools away a whole lot of money in his bachelor days. Doing social stunts is expensive. Have you any idea what my carriage bill was last March? Eighty-four dollars! I honestly believe it would pay me to own a hack. But, I say, the man who will drag a girl to the theater in a street car is fit for treason, stratagems and the stone pile. It ain't enough to put 'em on four wheels when it's snowing; no, I make a specialty of hacks under the starry hosts of heaven, and eke the pale and haughty moon. There's no better way than that to get solid with a girl. There are some that put their faith in bonbons and a new novel now and then; but there isn't a girl in Marlona to-night that wouldn't rather go to see a good show in comfort than do anything else under the sun. I say, about hacks, don't give it away, but I've just got a transfer company pass—Wilson, the president, and I are pretty thick, and I do a little quiet work for the company occasionally. I help—"

ed 'em beat the vehicle tax before the Council last winter, and I have an annual now that gives me power of life and death over all the company's rolling stock night and day. And you bet I won't use it or anything!"

Leighton's silence did not disturb Balcomb; he talked for the joy it gave him. They reached the Dameron gate and followed the winding path toward the veranda.

"Ahoy, O bower of beauty!" Balcomb called cheerily when they were within hailing distance of the veranda. "Friends draw near bringing tidings."

On the veranda, as Balcomb's voice smote upon the air, two girls fell on each other's necks in mock ecstasy of grief.

"They're there, all right," announced Balcomb.

"If you yell at them again, they'll undoubtedly bolt," said Leighton, whose thoughts since they had left the car had been far away from Balcomb's babble.

"If you're not afraid of the June-bugs, we'll stay here," said Zelda, when she and Olive had shaken hands with the men.

"There's nothing better; it's the center of the universe right here," Balcomb declared. "I brought some gossip for the June-bugs with me. I will place it on yonder rail, lest we forget, lest we forget."

This was Balcomb's happy idea of minimizing the value of his gift. He was relieved to find that Pollock was not there, and as it was past the usual calling hour in the latitude and longitude of Marlona, the army officer was not likely to appear. Ever since the unpleasant incident on the stairway at the Athenaeum building, Balcomb had been in the undignified attitude of dodging Captain Pollock, though he had said, during Pollock's absence from town, exceedingly cruel things about the officer.

Mr. Dameron came out and shook hands with the young men, addressing a few words to each. Balcomb had called upon him repeatedly in reference to the purchase of the tract of land on the creek, but without encouragement. Dameron had just been wondering how he could communicate with the promoter without seeking him directly, and this call gave him an opportunity.

"By the way, Mr. Balcomb," said the old man, pleasantly, "some time when you are passing, I'd be glad if you'd call at my office. There's a matter of mutual interest that I'd like to speak to you about. A beautiful night, gentlemen. Very much cooler here than in the city, as you may have noticed." And he went down the steps and out upon the highway for his usual evening walk.

"A remarkable man, your father, Miss Dameron. He's quite the ideal business man of the old school," said Balcomb. "We youngsters are quicker on the trigger, but our aim isn't so sure. No, siree; your father is an ideal business man."

He had spoken impressively. He would, in his own language, "make himself solid" when he had a chance. Leighton was talking to Olive, and Balcomb set about entertaining Zelda. He ran on monotonously. He was anxious to make an impression at once without relinquishing the floor.

"I suppose you and Miss Merriam do a lot of reading out here. What are the books one ought to talk about?"

"We don't read much—except the cook-books," replied Zelda.

"Ha! ha! That is rich—from the great Miss Dameron, too. I like that! I suppose as a matter of fact you really spend your morning with the classics."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but our mornings are spent with cook-books. My cousin is writing a cook-book and we're reading all the old ones to be sure hers is all new. It's delightfully exciting."

"Wouldn't that jar one? I say, I want to speak right now for an autograph copy of the first edition of that book."

"Olive will be delighted," said Zelda. "It's designed, you know, for the very young."

"There it goes again. Everybody has it in for me! Oh, well! My time will come!"

It came in an unexpected way. Captain Pollock was riding up the driveway. He was on very good terms at the Beeches, and had been told that while there were lights there was a hope of finding some one at home.

"Here comes another messenger bearing tidings," said Balcomb, in his most cheerful note. "I hope it isn't bad news."

"No; it's Captain Pollock. That horse of his is a beauty, isn't it? I wish he would trade with me," answered Zelda.

Leighton groaned inwardly at the sight of Pollock, whom he liked well enough ordinarily. He did not understand the reason for Balcomb's hurried flight, so that the humor of the situation did not strike him.

"You may have Mr. Balcomb's seat there by the railing, if you like," said Zelda to Pollock.

"You do me too much honor," said the officer, as he shook hands with Leighton.

"Oh, I don't know!" and Olive's imitation of Balcomb's intonation was so true to life that they all laughed.

"I don't see why any one should laugh," said Zelda.

"I'm sure I don't," declared Pollock. He put back his arm against the railing, knocking down the box of candy that Balcomb had left behind him.

"Ah, I beg everybody's pardon!"

"Mr. Balcomb's feelings might be hurt if he came back," suggested Zelda.

"He won't come back; I'll wager another box he won't," replied the officer, blandly, as he fumbled with the string. "Miss Dameron, permit me—I'm sure they're delicious. Chocolates, I fancy, from the bonquet—and, Miss Merriam, you will not decline. Mr. Leighton, a little candy now and then is relished by the wisest men. I propose Mr. Balcomb's health, to be eaten sitting and in silence."

"It isn't polite to treat the gift of a parting guest in that way," protested Olive. "I'm surprised at you, Captain Pollock."

When a man is in love, he becomes a master of harmless deceit and subterfuge. Morris Leighton had sought Zelda Dameron to-night with a great hope in his heart. He did not intend to miss a chance to talk to her alone, if he could help it. He had taken her wrap from her, and purposely dropped it; and he seemed to have difficulty in finding it, although it was a white thing that one could not miss in the moonlight, unless one were blind. But Zelda paused when they reached Pollock's horse, which whinnied and put out its nose to her in a friendly way.

As they reached the road, which lay white in the moonlight, Ezra Dameron came toward them, walking slowly, hat in hand, and the two watched him—his queer shuffling walk, his head bent, his gray hair touched with the silver of the moonlight.

"Won't you come with us, father?" said Zelda, as they met in the road.

"No! no, I thank you, Zee. I have had my little constitutional. Don't go too far—there may be malaria abroad."

Leighton looked furtively at Zelda. She had greeted her father kindly, happily; but there was something repellent in Ezra Dameron. Leighton never felt it more than to-night. That such a girl should have a father so wretched seemed impossible; but the thought quickened his love for her. There was something fine in her conduct toward her father; her unflinching gentleness and patience with him had impressed Leighton from the time of her homecoming. She made a point of speaking of him often and always with respect. Leighton was well aware that no one else, with the single exception of Michael Carr, ever spoke of Ezra Dameron in anything but derision. Rodney Merriam never mentioned him at all, which was doubtless the safer way. Farther along the road Pollock and Olive were tentatively staging a popular song of the hour.

"Sing it all—don't pick at it that way," called Zelda.

"Sing it yourself, if you don't like it," came back the answer from Olive.

"There is only one song that I should care to hear to-night," said Leighton, after a moment of silence. "It's the only song that ever meant a great deal to me."

"Oh, I know! One of Herr Schmidt's from his great operatic triumph of last winter. Your taste is only fair, then."

"It goes back a little farther than that. It's Traume—Tristan and Isolde, wasn't it? Do you remember?"

"I have heard it sung, beautifully, in Berlin," she said, evasively.

"I never did. But I heard you sing it once, and it has haunted me."

"Is that the one?" she asked. "Yes; it is about dreams."

"That is the one I meant. It is the most wonderful thing in the world! Yes, it's only about dreams—a dream; but it's the sweetest dream in the world, it means—"

"A dream!" and she laughed, but it was a mirthless little laugh.

He paused and looked out over the moonlit cornfield; his heart was beating fast. She felt for a moment that she must turn and fly from him; but he started forward again and she followed.

"It is more than a dream. I am building upon it as though it were a veritable rock."

"A dream—to build the real upon? The architects of fate don't like that plan, do they?"

"But we must hold to our dreams," he said, soberly.

"I suppose we must, even though they are things of air that only lead us astray. I didn't think you were sentimental. I'm afraid I can't sympathize exactly, for sentiment was left out of me utterly," and she hated herself for the bravado with which she spoke.

"I can't believe that! Every one has it. I'm a thoroughly practical person, and yet I have my dreams—my dream!"

Olive and Pollock were singing again. They were far in advance and their voices stole softly upon the night. Zelda stopped to listen. Her heart was in a tumult of happiness and wonder. The splendor of the moonlight upon the fields about them, the gloomy shadow of the woodland beyond, the man beside her hesitating, yet ready to tell her of his love. There stole across her spirit the tremulous awe of a girl to whom love has come for the first time as it can never come again. Leighton drew close to her.

"Zelda," he said, "Zelda!"

"No, Oh, no! You must not!" she cried.

"I love you, Zelda!" he said.

"No; you must not say it!" And there was a sob that caught her throat.

"You are the dream. It is too sweet; I can not lose it—I must not."

"You have talked of dreams and love," she said, hurriedly, but with a lingering note of contempt on the last word that stung him as though she had struck him in the face. I wonder what love is!" and hastened away toward her cousin and Pollock, who waited, idly and trying their voices, and chaffing each other over their failure to carry a tune.

(To be continued.)

TURE OF HIDDEN TREASURE.

Two Fruitless Trips Have Not Discouraged California Men.

Major W. A. Desborough, who has made two trips to find a reputed buried treasure on Cocos Island, in the Pacific, off the coast of Central America, will make another attempt within a few weeks, and he hopes the third time will prove the charm.

His first trip was made twelve years ago, but mutiny in his crew compelled him to give up the search, although he proved the correctness of his drawings and maps at that time.

Last summer he made another trip, sailing from Los Angeles in the yacht Ramona, the Express of that city says, but heavy and continuous rains and the lack of power to operate machinery prevented him from making sufficient excavations. This time the locality was considerably changed from what it was twelve years ago.

Cocos Island is famous as a pirates' retreat, and others besides Major Desborough have searched it for hidden plunder.

The particular treasure for which Major Desborough is searching is supposed to have been taken from Peru in the middle of the last century and buried on the island by Capt. John Keating, who died soon afterward. Since his last trip, Major Desborough has met a man in New Orleans who visited the island ten years ago in company with a son-in-law of Captain Keating. They had maps and drawings which appeared correct, but indicated that considerable excavation would be necessary. Keating's son-in-law was an old man then, and he turned over the maps to the New Orleans man, but the latter has never tried to find the treasure. He gave copies of the maps and details to Major Desborough.

Tradition says there is \$50,000,000 worth of pirates' loot buried on the island, but the particular treasure sought by Desborough is \$17,000,000 in gold bullion. He says that since his visit twelve years ago there appears to have been a great deal of blasting in the vicinity of one deposit, as the hillsides are changed and the creek bed altered.

Where the bullion is supposed to be buried, however, there appears to have been only the change of formation due to the rainfall, which sometimes amounts to an inch an hour, making work difficult.

Major Desborough has had several offers both from New York and on this coast to finance another expedition, which he estimates will cost about \$50,000, and he is now looking for a steamer of about 800 tons to make the trip.

FASHION HINTS



If you want the very newest thing in a white lingerie dress, trim yours with black. It may be chiffon, lace or ribbon, as long as it is black. The dress in the sketch is trimmed with a deep flouncing of Brussels applique on the skirt, and touches of the same on the waist.

TOAST TO THE FINEST JERSEY.
Here's to the maid who can handle the rod.
Who can throw a long line with a backle;
May she land with a "swish" most any old fish
That gets in the way of her tackle.
—Boston Herald.



...About Us.

Let not care and humdrum deaden us to the wonders and mysteries amid which we live, nor to the splendors and glories. We need not translate ourselves in imagination to some other sphere or state of being to find the marvelous, the divine, the transcendent; we need not postpone our day of wonder and appreciation to some future time and condition. The true inwardness of this gross visible world hanging like an apple on the bough of the great cosmic tree, and swelling with all the juices and potencies of life, transcends anything we have dreamed of superterrestrial abodes.—John Burroughs.

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How Matches Are Made.

Certain kinds of matches are shaved with the grain from sawed blocks; others are cut both ways by saws. In still further varieties the blocks are boiled to make them cut easily. By some machines a boiled or steamed log is revolved on its own axis, and a shaver the thickness of a match is cut round and round. This shaving is at the same time cut into lengths and split into match sticks. It may be said that there is hardly a limit to the varieties of methods employed. Round matches are made by forcing them through dies.—Harper's Weekly.

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Dog Forsook His Chum.
Police were summoned by the loud howling of a dog to the rescue of another dog that had fallen into the river at Yarmouth, England. The second animal was saved, and the first then refused to leave the policeman, and spent the night at the station.

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Where the Leap Came In.
Fair Arrival—But why do they call this unpicturesque spot under a craggy tree "Lover's Leap?"
Her Friend—Probably because you can't sit here five minutes without a caterpillar dropping down your neck.

On the Installment Plan.
One day Robert said, "Uncle Bill, how much do you want for those pups?" "Oh, about \$3 apiece," was the reply. "But, Uncle Bill," said Robert, "what could I do with a piece of pup?"—The Delinquent.

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