

# Zelda Dameron

By  
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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## CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued.)

He repeated the words, "It feeds on itself," as though he found satisfaction in them. He was quite willing now to yield everything to Zelda's hands. The very way in which she asked questions was a relief to him.

"Mr. Balcomb gave you a thousand dollars to bind a bargain—in that what you call it—for the sale of the creek strip. I think I understand that. But are there debts—are there other things that must be paid? And if we still have two houses we can get money for them. We must face the whole matter now—please keep nothing back."

"I have told you everything. I have squandered your money in gambling—it is the name for it; but I have kept the farm and this house, untouched. Everything else has gone and I have given an option for the sale of that strip of ground on the creek. And I sold a block of lots belonging to you, in an irregular way. I could not sell property without an order of court—that was required by your mother's will; but my necessities were great, and Balcomb arranged an abstract to suit himself—but I let him do it. I am the guilty one; it is my crime."

"Let us not use unpleasant words. It's my birthday. I'm quite grown up and you must let me help—find help!"

"Yes; but not Rodney; not your uncle," he said, hurriedly. "He is violent, very violent. He would have no mercy on me. And I am an old man, and broken, very badly broken."

"I shall have to tell Uncle Rodney; but you need have no fear of him, I promise you that. Mr. Carr is your lawyer, isn't he?" she asked.

"Yes; but he has been away. I took advantage of his absence to do things he would never have countenanced."

"There is Mr. Leighton." "No, no, not that man!" She had tried to avoid any reference to the interview of the night before, but the mention of Leighton's name brought the whole wretched scene clearly before her again. It was he, more than her uncle, that she relied on.

"I'm sorry you feel toward him as you do, father. I believe that we might trust him. I look upon him as a friend."

Zelda Dameron was weak and the talk was wearying him. He closed his eyes and rested his head on the back of the chair, moving it from side to side restlessly. He was beaten and he was not heroic in defeat. He was stunned by the failure of his gambling operations. He had lived so entirely in dreams for a year that it was difficult for him to realize the broad daylight of a workaday world. Echoes of the harsh things that had passed between him and the child of his own blood but a few hours before still haunted him. She had summoned the apparition of her dead mother and had called him a liar; and he had insulted her in the harshest terms he knew; but he was now leaning upon her helplessly. He did not know, and he could not understand, the motives that were prompting her. He had thrown away her money, and she did not arraign him for it; she was even devising means of covering up his ill-doings; and the fact that one could overlook and pardon the loss of a fortune was utterly beyond his comprehension.

"Try to cheer up," she said, resting her hand on his shoulder for a moment. "Don't talk to anybody about business of any kind. I'm going down to uncle's; and you needn't be afraid of him, or of anybody."

Rodney Merriam greeted Zelda cheerfully.

"Am I not the early bird?" she demanded, walking into the library. "I had hoped that you would congratulate me in general and cheering words. It's my birthday, I would have you know."

"At my age—"

"You've said that frequently since we got acquainted."

"As I was saying, at my age, birthdays don't seem so dreadfully important. But I congratulate you with all my heart," he added, sincerely, and with the touch of manner that was always charming in him. He drew out the drawer of his desk. "Of course I haven't any gift for you; but there's some rubbish here—hardly worth considering—that I wish you'd carry away with you."

He took out a little jeweler's box and handed it to her.

"I've rarely been so perturbed," she said. "May I open it now, or must I wait till I get home—as they used to tell me when I was younger."

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The suggestion of poverty carried an irony to the mind of both. Her father was a rascal, who had swindled her out of practically all of her fortune. He was a lying hypocrite, Merriam said to himself, and here was his daughter as calm and cheerful as though there were no such thing as unhappiness in the world. His admiration and affection rose to high tide.

"I can't imagine doing anything so foolish. I can see myself cutting her off without a pearl."

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"I'm sorry if I seemed a little—pre-

dictate—yesterday," she said. "But it

But Zelda did not look at him. Her eyes appealed to Morris and he understood that in anything that we done, Ezra Dameron must be shielded, and the idea of hiding Dameron's irregularities struck him as reasonable and necessary.

"You can give your father a power of attorney to cover everything he has left of yours if you wish it," said Morris.

"I won't hear to it; it's a farce; it's playing with the law," declared Rodney.

"Uncle Rodney, I'm glad the law can be played with. There's more sense in it than I thought there was. You will do it for me that way, won't you? And there are some people who have paid father for an option on what he calls the creek property. I wish to protect them, too."

"You needn't do that," said Morris. "We can repudiate the option probably. It's not your affair, as the law views it."

"Father and I have had a long talk about his business. He approached it last night on his own account. I have told him that I was coming to you. Father has met with misfortune. He has told me frankly about it; he speculated with the money that belonged to me—and the money is all gone."

"Yes; I am not surprised."

"There is the house we live in and the farm—they are still free. He says they belong to me."

"If he has not pledged them for debt in any way, they pass to your possession to-day. They are yours now."

"Yes; I understand about that. This is my fateful birthday," and she smiled.

"But there are some things that are not quite right. Father has told me about them. There is something about an order of court, which affects a piece of property that he has sold through this Mr. Balcomb. Father takes all the blame for that. I suppose that is what you wished to tell me last night. But I'm glad I heard it from father. I hope you will not be hard on him. He has talked to me in an honorable spirit that—that—I respect very much."

"Zee!" he exclaimed. "Zee, he isn't worth it!"

"Please don't!"—and the sob clutched her throat again—"I didn't come to ask what it was worth; but to get you to help me."

"I'd rather you didn't—if my father pledged himself to sell."

"Let Morris do it his way," begged Merriam. "You may be sure Balcomb won't lose anything."

"I'm afraid he won't," said Leighton, and left them.

(To be continued.)

## FACTS ABOUT COFFEE.

**Java Plantations and the Mocha**  
Found in Arabia and Abyssinia.

"But there must be a way of making this good."

"Yes; perhaps several ways. That is for a lawyer. You are the only person that could take advantage of an omission of that sort, I suppose."

"That is what I wish to know. And it wouldn't be very much trouble to make it right."

"We must ask a lawyer. Morris understands about it. He is considered a good man in the profession. The advantage of calling on him is that he is a friend and knows Balcomb."

"I told father I might ask Mr. Leighton to help us."

Rodney looked at her quickly. Ezra Dameron, Zelda's daughter, and Morris Leighton! The combination suggested unhappy thoughts.

"Morris is coming up this morning. He said 11, and he's usually on time. That's one of the good things about Morris. He keeps his appointments!"

"Imagine he would. Uncle Rodney, I'm going to ask you something. It may seem a little queer, but everything in the world is a little queer. Did you ever know—was there anything?"

It was the sob again and she frowned hard in an effort to keep back the tears—"I mean about mother—and Mr. Leighton's father?"

The blood mounted again to the old man's cheek, and he bent toward her angrily.

"Did he throw that at you? Did Ezra Dameron, after all your mother suffered from him, insult you with that?"

"Please don't! Please, don't!" and she thrust a hand toward him appealingly. "I used to see the word past in books and it meant nothing to me. But now it seems that life isn't to-day at all; it's just a lot of yesterdays!"

The old man walked to the window and back.

"It was your mother's mistake; but it must not follow you. When did your father tell you this?"

"Yesterday—last night. I had provoked him. It is all so hideous, please never ask me about it—what happened at the house—but he told me about that."

"He's a greater dog than I thought he was; and now he has thrown himself on your mercy! I've a good mind to say that we won't help him. Morris' father was a gentleman and a scholar; and Morris is the finest fellow in the world."

"Yes; but please don't scold! It won't help me any."

"No; I can't ever scold anybody. My hands are always tied. I'm old and foolish. Talk about the past coming back to trouble us! You have no idea what it means at my age; it's the past, the past, until to-day is eternally smothered by it!" And then the old man rang and he went to open the door for Morris.

For Renovating Goods.

A process for the renovating of dress goods or other fabrics has been invented by a Missouri man. The apparatus consists of a stand, like a reading desk, with a roller attached to the lower end. The goods are placed on this stand and drawn up as the work progresses.

The actual work of renovating done by a sand blast, propelled through a tube with a fan-shaped mouth. The sand is propelled through the tube by compressed air, which may be supplied by a foot pump and is directed first against the direction of the nap of the fabric and afterward with the direction of the nap.

This results in a cleaning out of all extraneous material, and after this is done the particles of sand and other substances can be easily removed by brushing or by a blast of air. The advantage of using the sand is that it works its way under the nap as air would not do. After this treatment the goods are chemically cleaned.

"I understand," said Morris.

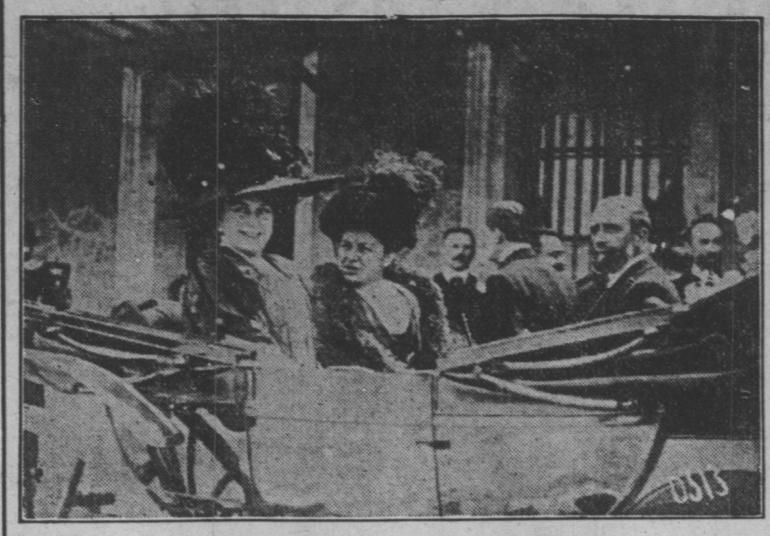
Zelda had purposely refrained from mentioning her father's own plan of continuing himself as trustee to hide the fact of his malfeasance; but with Morris' present, she felt that her uncle was easier to manage.

"The standard of height in the British army is greater than in any other army in the world."

Tobacco seeds are so minute that a thimbleful will furnish enough plants for an acre of ground.



## TWO WIVES OF EUROPEAN RULERS



The Queen of Spain and the wife of President Fallières of the French Republic in the president's carriage at the occasion of the king and queen's visit at Rambouillet, near Paris.

## TRUTH IN DAILIES

### Novelist Says Stick to Facts Is Best Policy.

Daily Newspapers, Richard Whiteing States, Prevents Apathy, Aids Literature and Helps the Poor.

to the contrary, that the daily paper provides a sort of first course in literature, and I am an immense admirer of the clear, incisive style adopted by the half-penny press.

"It stimulates curiosity, and when once you have done that in any human being you have started him on the right road. The one deadly thing is apathy. The cow in the field has no note of interrogation. The savage might see an aeroplane and not wonder.

"The dear old truth! That's all we want. The truth is so beautiful, so amazingly interesting, so much more wonderful than fiction. Therefore I say that, quite apart from morality, it is policy for a paper to tell the truth. It is policy in much the same way for a paper to keep itself pure, because the mass of the people are essentially serious. Life hits most of them very hard, and hard hitting does not make a frivolous generation."

Prince Won't Marry Sister.

San Francisco.—The crown prince of Siam is adding gray hairs to the head of his royal father, King Chulalongkorn, and has set the country by the ears in refusing to marry his sister.

According to Rev. Will C. Dodd, a Presbyterian missionary, all Siam is agog over the prince's announcement.

From time immemorial, the missionary says, it has been the Siamese custom for the crown prince to wed his sister, or if he has none, then a half-sister, the daughter of one of his father's numerous wives.

"I often think," he said, "when I see the order that reigns in our streets what it means to keep these people quiet. A good many of them suffer much. But the fact that the press is there, watching over them as a sort of poor man's friend in the big sense, helps them enormously. The fact that there is always some one who will represent you and your cause aright, as Hamlet puts it, is a great calming and tranquilizing influence."