

**DERRINGFORTH,
VOL. I**

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Derringforth, Vol. I by Frank A. Munsey

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DERRINGFORTH

By FRANK A. MUNSEY

VOLUME ONE



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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

"When should a girl marry?" is the theme of this story. It has to do with a single phase of the question, not the question as a whole. The argument is directed against the theory that a girl should get everything out of life before marrying—should have and see and do and know it all. Marriage in such a case furnishes a girl an escape from dropping back into the second tier, but it does not bring back to her the freshness, the sweetness, the innocence, the faith and enthusiasm that stand for the highest possibilities of happiness.

FRANK A. MUNSEY.

New York, September 1, 1897.

DERRINGFORTH.

I.

“ You know I love you, Phil, that I have loved you as you have loved me, ever since we were children, but mama is not willing that I should become engaged for at least a year.”

This was Marion Kingsley's answer to Phil Derringforth's proposal.

The color left his face.

“ Does your mother object to me ? ” he asked, unable to conceal his disappointment.

“ No, indeed, she thinks the world of you, Phil—you should know that.”

“ I have always thought so, but now——”

Phil hesitated, and Marion did not wait for him to finish his sentence.

“ You must still think so,” she said. “ It would break mama's heart to know you doubted her loyalty to you.”

“ Why does she want us to wait, then ? Are you and I not old enough to marry ? ”

“Mama thinks not, and besides, she wants me to see something of society as a girl.”

“And you?”

She looked up at him, and love and tenderness were in her eyes.

“Can't you see — don't you know that nothing in all the world would make me so happy as to be your wife? This love is not new to you and me, Phil. We have been lovers all our lives, and I have always looked forward to the end of my school days, thinking that you and I would then be more to each other than ever.”

“And now they have ended we are less to each other,” returned Phil.

“No, we are not—don't say that, Phil; it is hard enough for me to yield to mama without your making it harder.”

“I don't want to make it harder for you, little girl. I know you love me, but I am so disappointed.”

“I'm very sorry for you, Phil, dear—very sorry for myself, but what can I do? You would not have me marry against mama's wishes, I am sure.”

“I would not wish you to, and yet it might be best.” There was a touch of desperation in his voice.

“Phil!”

“I know, but we can't look into the future; we can't tell what changes a year will make in us. To-day we love each other and are suited to each other.

You have been free up to this time from the flattery of society, and I have cared only for you. How will it be at the end of a year?"

"I should be very sorry to think that in so short a time your love for me would be gone," said Marion, the tears starting to her eyes.

"I didn't mean that," answered Phil tenderly. "I can't imagine that I could ever cease to love you, and yet I have seen enough of life already to be convinced that the more a man mingles with people, the more lovable girls he knows, the less is his devotion to any one of them. The same thing is equally true with women, and what is true of others may be true of you and me, Marion. It is impossible for us to realize it as applied to ourselves, I know."

"But it is different with you and me, Phil. We shall never cease to love each other, and then it is only a year—think of that, dear, and help me to wait patiently—you will, won't you?" There was a sweet, gentle pleading in her tones that Phil could not resist.

"I will do anything to make you happy," he answered, "but this delay is so unnecessary, so unreasonable. Your mother was married at sixteen, and you are nineteen now."

"That is just it. Mama feels that she had no girlhood herself and is determined that I shall not marry without having some of the pleasures that other girls have."