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much you prize honor of lineage; and if you have been too powerfully attracted by this young beauty's charms, I know I need only to mention the fact of her parentage being unspeakably base and disgraceful."

Somerset brooded gloomily over the irony of fate, which had prevented his knowing the terrible truth until he had learned to love Theo. Lorne with all the passion and strength of his young manhood.

The endearing young creature had crept into his affections unawares, and had entwined herself round his very heartstrings.

To relinquish Theo, now would be like tearing that living heart from his bosom.

Pride was as much an element of his being as the blood in his veins; but so also was his love for Theo the very breath of his life.

Never until he met her had he thrilled at the sight of a woman's face, the touch of a woman's hand, the sound of a woman's voice.

And now, between the might of his pride and the power of his love, waged a fearful warfare which half maddened him.

"A marriage of that kind is worse than folly," said stern pride; "it is a sin—an actual iniquity. It is a blot upon an unsoiled name; it is misery for an entire family; and their misery could not help being an unceasing sorrow and humiliation to my poor bride. I must give you up, my Theo—I must renounce my love."

features. But it passed almost too quickly to be noticed. And Claudia was smiling softly and regretfully into his gloomy, dark face.

"Surely I will," she said in silky tones. "But we shall be doubly disappointed, because this time we were to have nobody but just our own select selves. That Lorne girl is away somewhere on one of her queer and dreadful unconventional rambles, and everything is always nicer when she is gone—everybody always feels so constrained and embarrassed when such people thrust themselves into any little gathering.

And with that evanescent trust the fascinating Claudia turned, blew him a gay kiss from her finger-tips, and so tripped off toward the Mosse-cliffe house.

The poisoned shaft struck its mark and rankled sorely.

Somerset had grown strangely changed and aged, during these days.

His dark eyes had a strained look; his fine face was white and haggard, and marked with lines of pain.

At Claudia's malicious speech those strange eyes flashed indignantly; an angry red flush kindled upon each haggard cheek.

He resumed his walk with an excited and unsteady stride.

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