

had shot through those windows into the lit place beyond.

"I could only do that," he began unsteadily — "I — you know how it is with me . . . To the longest day I live — I'll love you . . . with every breath I draw. I could not do that — unless . . . Will you marry me?"

The stillness about them then was like a tangible thing, measureless and infinite. But into it faltered almost at once that voice like silver bells.

"If you're *perfectly sure* you want me to," said Mary faintly.

Her eyes met his in a wonderful union, divinely sealed the promise of her lips, stamped it forever and ever with a heavenly stamp. . . .

The bay horses curveted and pranced, the coachman sprang to his seat, a big red motor backed, snorted, honked, and whizzed past them. The speechmaking was over. The little line of gay carriages, breaking itself into pieces, was maneuvering for rights of way homeward. The bay horses, turning, too, were caught in the press and must needs go slowly: so that the whole vivid pageant might have been but the ordered setting for this moment — for Laurence Varney and the girl he had sworn to carry home to her father. . . .

In the square, the lingering crowd, attuned to cheering, was summoning one name after another to noisy felicitation. Out of the tumult rose one persistent voice, clamoring a changeless request. Yes, it was Hackley's voice, very near, evidently on his own front porch, and he was saying over and over: "Lemme ask

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