

and the assailant would have fallen in a crumpled mass beside his struggling horses, had not the same arm jerked him forward into the sleigh.

In the deep gloom the two men thrust their faces close, then drew suddenly back.

"And what way is this to greet a neighbour on the public road, Hiram Riles?" demanded the driver of the sleigh. "Ye'll have strange tales for the wife to-night, I'm thinkin', by the breath o' you. Away home with ye, and mind the road. It's no fit night for a man in your shape, Hiram."

The other murmured thickly, "I'm all right," but showed no further belligerent tendencies; and when the team had been extricated from their entanglement and set upon the road again, the two old-timers parted in their opposite directions.

"It's a sore temptin' o' Providence for a man to venture on the country roads a winter's night without all his senses, Raymond," said the elder man, as they drove on. "See ye're no guilty of it. There's many a tragedy blamed to the climate that's begun in the gin-shop."

Already the town lights were peering mistily through the haze, and in a few minutes the sleigh drew up at the door of Gardiner's general store. The two men got out and lifted a trunk to the