

To bail her out was now the only difficulty. Once that could be done, there remained at least a chance for their lives. But one thing they had already realized, and that was that there was not much time left them. The water was fast reaching up the side of their brave little craft, and they all knew well that a few minutes more, and her efforts to help them in their need must come to an end forever.

"Quick Ri! Quick, boys!" fairly yelled Uncle Solomon, who had already hauled off his big sea boots, and forced one into the mate's hands. "Bail for your lives. We must get clear before th' ship sinks, or she'll carry us all with her."

Now began a veritable race for life. Then in the dark, in that sunken dory, which was only kept upright by a fast settling vessel, were five men bailing out water with their sea boots, working with all their might, for life itself hung on the issue.

"You're gaining on her, hoys; you're gaining! Let her have it! T' seats only is awash now; t'rail's free. She'll float us in another minute! Keep at it; it'll keep you from freezing! Bail away!" And such like encouragement slipped off Uncle Solomon's tongue, as if he had been born to the rôle of orator. In the face of real danger he had neither desire nor time for complaints. Suddenly like thunder, "Leave it to the boys Ri!" he shouted. "Cut the oars loose: they're lashed under the thwarts! Push off! Push off! We're all safe now, but keep bailin' boys! keep bailin'. Then so that only the mate could hear, "She'll be gone in a second Ri, push as you love your life."

Even as he spoke something came up from the sea beneath, and lifted the boat they were in almost out of water. Had she not still been partly waterlogged, Uncle Solomon says they must have all capsized again. As it was the after leach rope of the mainsail scraped all along the bottom, and lifting their bow, as they finally slipped off into clear water, it nearly sent them all down stern foremost.