



Four years of Charlie's life soon passed swiftly by in this pleasant and happy home. He is now twelve years of age and has grown into a tall, strong, healthy boy. His blue eyes are just as merry and his frank, fearless face just as sunburnt as when we first made his acquaintance on the pier. He is generous, cheerful, and affectionate, and John and Alice Heedman—Father and Mother as he calls them now—are so very dear to him.

I scarcely need tell you that they have never regretted the decision to make him their son. They could not love him better nor be prouder of him than they are. They found him from the first clever at his learning, careful in the tasks set before him, full of love to them, honest and truthful, thankful for God's mercy in saving him and anxious to please Him. But one thing has troubled them of late. For the last two years, they have seen him gradually giving himself up more and more to the dangerous habit of "putting off." Charlie had become, quite unwittingly, a very slave to it so that it now required quite an effort on his part to discharge any duty at once.

Perhaps some boys who read this will be inclined to exclaim, "Was that all? How needless for them to worry over such a small habit as that!" But if they think for a moment, I am sure they will see that "putting off" is very dangerous *because* they are inclined to think lightly of it. Procrastination is one of Satan's great temptations. Many a boy may be tempted to give way to it who would shrink from telling an untruth or committing some flagrant sin, but Satan knows well enough how soon and how surely procrastinating will lead him into sin some other way round.

Unfortunately, Charlie had no idea how this habit was growing upon him. He always contrived to find some

excuse for putting things off that satisfied him even if it did not satisfy others. And when "putting off" led him to do wrong or directed him into misfortune of any kind, he always fancied that *something else* or *someone else* was to blame.

"Charlie," said Mrs. Heedman one morning just before schooltime, "did you learn your lessons last night?"

"No, Mother," answered Charlie. "But I can learn them this morning—there's time enough."

"Do get your books, then, and begin; you have only a quarter of an hour before you set off."

"All right, Mother dear," he answered merrily. "I'll get them right now."

Charlie's good intentions aside, he became distracted when he passed by his dog, Jumper, who looked up at him with eager eyes and thumped his tail. Suddenly Charlie became very much interested in teaching Jumper to sit up. He put off going for his lessons until at last the quarter of an hour was gone, and he found he had only just time to get to school. Grumbling at the time for flying so quickly, he ran to his room, snatched up one of his schoolbooks, threw his satchel with the rest of them over his shoulder, and started off at a quick pace, attempting to learn his lesson as he went. Of course, he could not always look where he was going, and the consequence was that he bumped into people and trod on their toes. Far from apologizing in his ill humor, he declared to himself that it served them right—why didn't they get out of his way?

The clock struck nine. Charlie became desperate. Quickening his pace almost to a run and taking a last glance at his lesson as he turned the corner, he came into contact with a lamppost with a crash that sent him reeling backwards. His book went flying out of his hand, his forehead was bruised, and his nose was bleeding.

Poor Charlie sat on the ground, somewhat stunned,

scarcely knowing for the moment what it was that had hit him or where it was he now found himself. At last he got slowly up, gathered his books together, and turned toward home, holding his handkerchief to his bruised and swollen face and feeling most miserable.

"It was all the fault of that foolish lamppost, Mother!" he said angrily when he was telling his tale to her.

"No, no, Charlie," said Mrs. Heedman. "Was it not my foolish Charlie, not looking at all where he was going?"

It was no use returning to school that morning. The bruises were doctored, and Charlie, after learning his lessons, took up an interesting book. He was fond of reading and was soon deeply interested in the contents.

"Just run to Mrs. Brown's next door, Charlie, will you? And ask if she can let me have the bread tin I lent her yesterday," said Mrs. Heedman.

"Yes, Mother," answered Charlie, still reading on. To himself he thought, *There's time enough. I dare say the bread is not yet ready.*

After a short time Mother spoke again. "Come, Charlie, I'm waiting."

"Yes, Mother. I'm coming directly," said Charlie, getting half up off his chair but still keeping his eyes on the book.

*I'll just finish this chapter,* he thought. There were only a few sentences left to read. When it was finished, he looked up and saw his mother had gone herself for the tin. She came back in, looking weary and tired, for she had had a busy morning; and Charlie's conscience smote him.

"Oh, Mother, I'm so sorry!" he exclaimed. "I thought I had time enough to finish the chapter."

"Charlie, I do wish you would learn to do a thing at once. I cannot bear to hear you constantly saying, 'There's time enough,' " said his mother. "It truly makes me tremble for your future. A cousin of mine was led into sin, misery,

and poverty and at last died at enmity with his father as well as unreconciled to God—all due to his habit of 'putting off.' He gave way to the habit continually as a boy, and it grew up in him unchecked."

Charlie was rather frightened at hearing this, and inwardly he made some good resolutions; but as they were made in his own strength alone, you will not be surprised to hear that they were soon swept away. However, he made to his mind a very fair beginning. When he was called to dinner, he laid down his book and went at once. I'm afraid there was not much credit due to him for that though, for he was very hungry. But he did get ready and set off in good time for classes that afternoon.

"Be sure you come straight home, Charlie," said Mrs. Heedman as he was going out. "Your father's cough was worse this morning, and I want you to run along to the mine with some warm wrappings for him. The evenings are chilly now, and he feels the cold when he comes up."

"All right, Mother dear, I'll not forget," said Charlie, waving his cap to her as he went out the gate. He was in extra-good humor for having made the aforementioned resolutions and for having done so well since, quite forgetting that even the desire to do better was a gift from God.

The moment school was over, one of the boys caught hold of Charlie's arm and launched into a glowing description of a ship "nearly two feet long" that had been made a present to him. He finished off with "She's splendid, and that's just about it! I'm going now to christen her and launch her in that big pond in Thompson's field. Come along with me," he said, drawing Charlie in the direction of the field as he spoke. "You shall have the pleasure of naming her, and I'll do the launching."

"I'm afraid I can't go," said Charlie, looking miserable and making a weak effort to get his arm from Tom Brown's grasp.

"Why not?" asked Tom.

"Because I promised to go straight home, and I have to take some extra clothes to the mine for Father."

"Oh, is that all?" exclaimed Tom. "Well, look here, your father won't be ready for nearly half an hour yet. I know what time they come up. And you'll be wandering about there, cooling your heels, when you might as well be here, having fun."

*If only I hadn't promised,* thought Charlie with a longing look in the direction of the pond.

"You needn't stay long," urged Tom. "The ship is close by. I hid her amongst some bushes on the way to school so as not to have to go home again."

*Don't go. Remember your promise,* whispered Charlie's conscience.

*But I want to go so much,* answered Charlie's selfish little heart.

*You mustn't go; it would be churlish. Think of your father's kindness to you,* whispered the voice again.

*Well, of course I mean to take the clothes in my own good time,* Charlie's heart answered angrily.

The voice began to whisper again, something about it being a temptation and that he ought to ask God's help, but Charlie turned a deaf ear.

Tom Brown, seeing Charlie hesitate, felt pretty sure he would give in. Leaving loose of his arm and moving off towards the field, he said in a careless tone, "Come, make up your mind. Do one thing or do the other. I don't care whether you go or not—only I know that you'll not have such a chance again. Joe Denton would have jumped at it."

This last had just the effect which Tom intended. Charlie hurried after him, saying, "Well, let us be quick, then. I'll just stay five minutes; I dare say there's time enough for that."

The scruples of Charlie's conscience were silenced.

Conscience is a dangerous thing to ignore. It should be the prayer of every youth that God would strengthen him to keep his conscience tender; never mind if it be difficult sometimes to maintain a good conscience. In the end, as years go on, you will be thankful to find that it preserves you from many a snare, and gives such pleasure, and gains the confidence of those around you.

The launching went off most successfully, but the time flew by much quicker than the boys had any idea of. Charlie was in full enjoyment of the honor of guiding the *Explorer* on her trial trip round the pond when he was terribly startled at hearing the church clock strike five. In a moment he had dropped the string, caught up his satchel of books, and started off towards home.

"Here, I say, wait a bit!" called Tom after him. "What's the use of hurrying now? Your father would be at home long since; you may as well stay another hour."

Charlie did not even stay long enough to listen to all of this speech but tore along the dusty road, angry with himself and still angrier with Tom. He reached home out of breath and found that Father and Mother had just begun tea.

"Charlie, my boy, you're late," said his father in his usual kind tone.

His mother did not speak, and Charlie noticed that she looked distressed. But she treated him as kindly as ever and set out one of his favorite well-browned cakes for him as he sat down to tea. Charlie felt unhappy and repentant as he thought of how he ill deserved such tender attention.

His father's cough was very troublesome. It was a loud, hollow, consumptive cough, most painful to hear and still more painful to suffer. But not a word of complaint escaped John Heedman's lips.

Charlie's unhappiness and repentance increased as he sat listening to that cough. Then he heard his father say, in answer to a remark made by his mother, "Yes, I think the

cold air has seized my chest, and that makes it worse just now."

After that, tea was out of the question for Charlie, and the crisp little cake lay untouched. *If they would only scold me or punish me or do something*, he thought. *Then I should feel better.*

"How is it you are not getting on with your tea?" said Mrs. Heedman, looking at his plate.

Charlie immediately laid his head on the table, regardless of tea things and everything else, and burst into a flood of tears. "Oh, Mother," he sobbed, "I have been such a wicked fellow today. Why don't you and Father scold me or do something to me? I wish somebody would take away my new cricket bat or steal Jumper, I do."

There was a great sobbing after this, partly in sorrow and partly at the mere thought of the terrible nature of the punishment his imagination had suggested.

He lifted his head and went on, "I'm sure I meant to come straight home, but Tom Brown persuaded me to go and see his ship launched, and I only meant to stay five minutes, so I thought there was time enough. But then it seemed as if the clock struck five directly. I'm so sorry!" And down went his head on the table again.

"I'm very sorry too," said John Heedman seriously, "very sorry. I'm afraid when you were making your good resolutions about coming straight home, you forgot that you might be tempted to break them and neglected to ask God for help in keeping them. It is His help alone which can give you strength to resist temptation and choose duty before pleasure. Don't you remember the words 'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not' and 'Pray, lest ye enter into temptation'? \* Wipe your tears now and have some tea. We will talk about this more afterwards."

\* Reference for the first verse above is Proverbs 1:10. The second is excerpted from Mark 14:38.

We hope you enjoyed this excerpt from  
*Time Enough.*

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