

Essay on A Stitch in Time Saves Nine

This proverb is a console of prudence. Timely action very often prevents great loss. Steps taken early means less labor, better success, less chance of loss or damage. Suppose there is a slight rent in your garment; if you put in a few timely stitches further mischief may well be prevented. Similarly, if you do not attend to your books at the proper time when the examination comes you are all at sea; the mischief is beyond repair. A small banyan shoot is noticed appearing in the crevices of a building; uproot it immediately, it will save the house; delay may mean great loss; by prompt action, it may be possible to stop the erosion, but to remain indifferent invites disaster. It is so in all spheres of life. In politics, a problem left unsolved often leads to disaster; tackled in time it saves a world of troubles. In small things as in great, in one's household as in one's business, in all circumstances, promptness in action means profit; delay means loss.

But the average man is easy-going and indolent. He seldom likes to do a thing today when he can put it off until tomorrow. That is why the average man is so ordinary. And this habit of not doing a thing promptly, of delaying and postponing, grows from one's early years. A schoolboy has been set his tasks for his vacation. This work is not pleasant, and so he procrastinates, he postpones, he waits for a time when he has no gossip or game on hand. Ask him why he is delaying, the answer always is, "oh, I will do it tomorrow." But tomorrow finds him as unready as yesterday, and the work is never done. Or he will say, "I had no time; I will do this, that and the other things." This reminds us of the words of Chesterfield to his son: "it is an undoubted truth that the less one has to do, the less one finds time to do it. One yawn, one procrastinates, one can do it when one will, and so one seldom does it all." While we are idling, time slips by and opportunities are wasted. Procrastination is a concession to

weakness; to give it any countenance is to foster weakness.

Fruitful causes of delaying action are a feeling of complaisance or too much dependence on luck. Many feel that somehow things will come out all right in the end. But meanwhile difficulties crop up; the golden hour of opportunity slips by, and what might have been easy becomes inordinately difficult. Sometimes one complains that he has no luck. But, as the proverb goes 'we make our fortune and call it fate.' "This in ourselves we are thus and thus," says Shakespeare. But proper steps taken at the proper time would have eliminated chances of difficulties cropping up.

Hence we should make up our mind to act promptly and at once. "Never leave until tomorrow what you can do today", was the maxim of that most practical of all men, Benjamin Franklin. We must at all times be well prepared for all things. The shirtless man is always at his wit's end. He flounders in a sea of perplexity. So he seeks every opportunity of postponing his duties, and he paves the road to ruin with intentions that never lead to achievements. But times. If he had a rent in his garment, he knows where to find needle and thread to mend it. If he has a difficulty in his textbook, he is ready to tackle it immediately, before it complicates succeeding portions. He is strong-willed competent and efficient, and never surrenders to indolence or apathy.

There is one circumstance where action may be deferred. It is where you find that action is unnecessary because it is useless. Suppose the garment that is rent is badly worn out: to mend it today will not end your troubles. In such a case, it is permissible to wait, to consider, and then decide. Hence as a corollary, we may add, – never sacrifice prudence to haste. The Roman general Fabio's wore out the boyish impetuosity of Hannibal by his patience, and he won at the end. Above all never do anything in a passion. What is done in a

passion may have to be undone at leisure, and the cost will be heavy. The premature action also is unwise because something may occur that may make you regret it. It is wise to be cautious. "Look before you leap" is a maxim of wisdom. Barring these two exceptions, the proverb holds well in all cases. Procrastination, as a rule, leads to loss. Promptitude is the final arbiter of destiny.