



## A Scrap of Paper

**A**T ten minutes past seven in the evening of the fourth of August last, within the four grim walls of the Berlin Foreign Office there transpired a twenty-minute interview the most dramatic of which history holds record.

"Will Britain," queried von Bethmann-Hollweg, "fight just for a scrap of paper?" In words that will ring down the centuries, Sir Edward Goschen made terse reply, "That solemn compact simply has to be kept." For that "scrap of paper" was the public law of Europe guaranteeing the independence and neutrality of the Belgian nation.

Eighty-three years ago Britain had *signed*. And, whatever the consequences, the mightiest of Empires was tossed into the melting-pot of a world-collision. Belgium also had subscribed. And forthwith, Devastation piled Louvain in smoking ruins and made of Antwerp a fiery inferno.

Magna Charta, too, was but a "scrap of paper," but it was the earliest monument of Anglo-Saxon freedom. The Declaration of Independence was only a bit of parchment—but it heralded the birth of the American nation. Just such scraps of paper have marked the milestones in mankind's upward climb to freedom.

Scraps of paper embody national and individual obligations; respect for them is the measure of national and individual honour.

Mortgages, bonds, debentures, promissory notes—all are but scraps of paper. But no self-respecting man and no honest corporation can wantonly repudiate such commitments. As it lies in your drawer or your safe, your Life Assurance policy measures but four inches by nine. It, too, is but a "scrap of paper."

But in times like these it may easily spell the salvation of your business. It may easily be the only arm outstretched to save you from a poverty-stricken old age. It alone may remain to buy bread for your mother, your wife or your children.

That "scrap of paper" represents the most sacred of your obligations. Respect for it is the measure of your honour.

Keep *it* inviolate, whatever the cost!