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Jan.

In Honor Bound

1918

OUR GUARANTEE

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THAT was a fine touch of the great Fox, with his "debt of honor." A tradesman called on him one day for the payment of an overdue promissory note. Fox was engaged at the time in counting out gold. The tradesman asked to be paid from the money before him. "No," said Fox, "I owe this money to Sheridan; it is a debt of honor; if any accident happened to me, he would have nothing to show." "Then," said the tradesman, "I change my debt into one of honor;" and he tore up the note. Fox was conquered by the act; he thanked the man for his confidence, and paid him, saying, "Then Sheridan must wait; yours is the debt of older standing." A little incident that may raise a laugh from the "business man" of to-day, and yet it is the heart and soul of the only thing we can really bank upon in the nature of real security—a man's simple honesty of purpose.

Rated, as we may be, "the soul of integrity," how many of us are punctiliously and uniformly true to ourselves in the little things of daily import which in the aggregate make the fabric of our life? We dare

not answer the question—for ourselves, far less for our neighbor, but here is an opportunity for every Canadian citizen to demonstrate right away to himself or herself what he or she is really worth—reckoned always from the point of view of self-respect. We say self-respect, because no "respect" has a cent of value to it that doesn't begin and end with self-respect. How rare is that man who at any moment can look himself squarely in the face in the secret mirror of his heart—without wilting?

As 1918 opens, every citizen of Canada is called upon by the highest authority, in unmistakable terms, in the most solemn manner to play his or her specific part in a crisis, the tremendous import of which is not yet realized except by a comparative handful of the people of this country. Brothers and sisters of Canada, the fate of the world's army of liberation is largely in your keeping. That "lasting peace" which every honest man and woman longs for and prays for will be realized or postponed to a great extent according to the measure of your service this year of grace, 1918. Whether you are producing or simply consuming, the obligation is equally imperative to save food and to substitute, where such is possible, for the three great staples of flour, bacon and beef, other available foods which will keep you in ordinary health.

The food situation is exceedingly grave. With regard to wheat and flour it is especially so. As it is squarely put to us: "The whole world is short of wheat, and even supplies which exist in some countries are not at present available, because of lack of tonnage. Canada and the United States are the countries from which Great Britain and the Allies must draw supplies of wheat and flour for some months to come. At present the United States has nothing for export. What she may have next spring will be by right of saving and substitution." Canada can make herself appreciably felt only by saving and substitution; and it is not a case of saving by tons and hundred-weights, but by pounds and ounces.

To a great extent the law officers can look after the great corporations, the big businesses, the public institutions, but there is no effective system of policing the home and the personal habits of the private citizen. This is not an affair that takes in only the rich man and the entourage of his kitchen, but it is the immediate and intensely personal concern of the humblest wage-earner and dependent in the Dominion. It is primarily the affair of the great plain people of Canada, for it is by the small economies or wastefulness of the multitude that we are going to save the day or to seal the doom of millions of the noblest souls who ever went into battle for human rights.

No government of Canada was ever sent to its work with a clearer mandate from the people than the body of men we have recently elected, and no government ever had such an immense task laid upon its shoulders as that which confronts the nation's representatives now assembling at Ottawa. Are we on the very threshold of its career to hamstring that government in what we believe to be a whole-hearted, single-minded purpose to lead the nation to complete success in its hour of testing? It rests with the citizens—the small farmer and his household, the village storekeeper and his family—rich man, poor man, every man, woman and child who has to eat to live.

It is up to you and to me to see this thing through—by the simple means of a direct and habitual obedience to what we are asked to do. We are exercising no unreasoning submission to the fiat of a mere "government official." It is a direct appeal to our own self-respect. We are in honor bound. Perish the mean little fool that would crucify his own self-respect in facing this crisis.

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