

An American Opportunity

FLAG-STATIONS and cities of the first class, seaports and smelter towns, county-seats and wilderness—giving, giving until it hurts! The visitor turns from this dominion-wide watershed and its countless springs of succor with a feeling of humbleness. For, large as have been the gifts of the people of the United States to war relief, they have not been proportionate to this.

Would any people give and give, when fear and enmity and the sense of being in the fight are not present? Could they see a great patriotic achievement in spending themselves unstintedly not only for the sake of the families of their own soldiers, but for the help of those uncounted families whose men and homes and communities have gone down in the European war?

We cannot say "no" to these questions, for individually we know men and women who have answered "yes." But we cannot answer "yes," for nationally we have not tried it.

Is it not possible that here has lain, unused, an affirmative course of action which would have made the American people feel that they, too, were not sitting with folded hands? Is it not possible that such outstanding, all-inclusive, semi-governmental giving, not in thousands nor in millions, but in billions if need be, for relief and reconstruction abroad, now and in the years ahead, would have carried conviction as nothing else that the United States was not merely sitting back, spiritually unstirred, growing rich out of the war? Would it not have gotten "across" to the people of every warring nation as something they could tie to in the midst of their travail—a signal that the reserves of human feeling were not all closed to them; that in dealing with the United States, their governments were not only dealing with a champion of sea-rights, but unmistakably with a friendly people?

Perhaps the spread of such intelligence would not have swerved the German government in its war-zone program; but, like the news of the Russian revolution itself, it would at least have given the civil and democratic elements in Germany another leverage.

Whatever the means we take for protection against the German government's specific acts, whatever funds we raise to look after our own—and in that the Canadian Patriotic Fund affords compelling example—even now, as heretofore,