THE AMERICAN INDIAN IN THE GREAT WAR.

By DR. GEORGE P. DONEHOO

What would William Penn have thought if he had been told that one day the descendants of the Lenni Lenape, whom he first met on the shores of the Delaware at Shackamaxon, were to cross the "Great Salt Water" to fight side by side with the Frenchman, the Englishman and the men of every race and creed who believe in justice and truth?

What would have LaSalle, and the countless other voyageurs who carried the Lillies of France from the lakes of Canada to the shores of Louisiana, have thought, had they been told that the descendants of the Chippewas, the Mississaguis, the Iroquois, the Loups and the many other tribes of Red Men, were one day to go to France to protect Paris from the invasion of savagery?

What would the Calvinistic Scotchman, who became a blood-thirsty hunter of the "Injun" along the foothills of the Alleghanies, have thought if he had been told that the descendants of the Senaca and Munsee, whose war whoop he had heard over the smouldering ruins of his log cabin, were one day to die on the fields of Flanders as comrades in arms with the "Ladies of Hell"?

What would have all of these worthy pioneers have deemed such a picture—an impossible one? And when we think of the short time which has passed since the frontiers of Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland were bathed in blood in the Indian Wars—less than 125 years—does not the picture seem a merely imaginary one?

The descendants of Tammany, Tedyuskung, Cansassatego and the great host of other Indian chiefs, fighting the Germans as aviators, as artillerymen, as sharpshooters, as "doughboys" and wearing the khaki as defenders of civilization in its great struggle with savagery. Does it not seem like a dream?

The American Indian has been noted as a warrior since his first meeting with the white race. As some one has said "the Indian has a genius for war." He is a born strategist.
He has shown his ability as a warrior in all of his battles with the white race from the time of John Smith to the masterly retreat of Chief Joseph. So far as the writer is aware, the only real battle with white men in which he was out-witted by strategy was at Bushy Run, in Pennsylvania, when Colonel Boquet showed superior ability to Kiasutha as a strategist.

It is small wonder then that the Indian has again made a name for himself in this greatest of all wars, in which the choicest soldiers of all nations have taken part. The extent of his services in this war was little understood or appreciated.

When one realizes the immensity of the injustice done to the Indian by the white race, as well as by the nation, the fact that he offered himself as a volunteer in this war to fight under the flag of the nation which has denied him all rights of citizenship is in itself a thing to be wondered at. The United States entered this war to make the world a safe place for the oppressed of the smaller peoples and make treaties between nations something more than "mere scraps of paper." And yet, the Indian has been denied every right of citizenship by the government and every treaty between his tribes and the United States has been nothing but a "scrap of paper", to be torn up whenever it suited the pleasure of the government, or the avarice of white men, to do so. And no one realizes this fact more fully than does the Indian himself. But, when the United States entered this war to fight for righteousness between nations, the Indian offered himself and his money to the utmost limit. More Indians enlisted, in proportion to population of fighting age, than did any race on the entire continent.

It must be kept in mind that the Indian is neither an alien nor a citizen. He occupies no place whatever in the scheme of governmental affairs. He is nothing but "a perpetual ward of the nation." He has never played a part in the political affairs of the government, simply because he has been ignored as a factor. We have had to meet the desires of the German-American, the Irish-American, the Greek-American, the Russian-American and all other hyphenates. In what political fight has the American-Indian ever been taken into consideration? What party has ever
tried to place in its platform some bait to attract the vote of the American-Indian? The Negro vote, the German vote, the Irish vote have all been sought by all sorts of devices. The Indian has never been sought—because it does not exist.

And yet, when the United States called for soldiers to cross the ocean to fight for the preservation of civilization, the Indian left the land of his ancestors to die on foreign soil, fighting side by side with his white brothers under a flag which he had no right to call "my flag" and for a nation which had denied him the right to call "my country". The warriors of nearly every tribe on the American continent are to-day sleeping side by side with the khaki clad Yanks on every battle-field of northern France, from Vimy Ridge to the Argonne Forest.

There were in the army and navy of the United States, in round numbers, about 10,000 Indians. Of this number over 6,000 enlisted as volunteers. According to the figures given in the Second Report of the Provost Marshal General, the total registration of the Indians, under the selective service, was 17,313. Of this number 6,509 were inducted into the army of the United States.

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs in his report for 1918 estimates that there were in the military service of the United States 8,000 Indians of all tribes. In his report he says, "Considering the large number of aged and infirm Indians and others not subject under the draft, leaving about 33,000 of military eligibility, I regard the representation of 8,000 in camp and actual warfare, as furnishing a ratio of population unsurpassed, if equaled, by any other race or nation." That is, 28 per cent. of the available man power of the Indian race. If the same percentage had been carried out by the white population of the nation, there would have been an army of 10,000,000 men under arms.

In addition to giving men, the Indians gave of their money, to the Red Cross, Liberty Loans and other war activities. To the First Liberty Loan they subscribed $4,609,850. To the four loans a total of $20,000,000, or an average of $58 for every Indian, man, woman and child, in the United States. In September 1918, there were 10,000 Indians in the American Red Cross. The Indian women
and girls worked as faithfully in making hospital supplies as any class of women on the continent.

The Indians of Canada have been equally patriotic and self-sacrificing in their service. According to the "Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs" of Canada, for 1918, more than 3,500 Indians had enlisted. "This number represents approximately 35 per cent of the Indian male population of military age resident in the nine provinces." Duncan C. Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, of Canada, says, "The Indians have established for themselves a magnificent record, which should place their race high in the esteem of their fellow-countrymen and our allies. The manner in which the Indians have responded to the call to the colours appears more especially commendable when it is remembered that they are wards of the government, and have not, therefore, the responsibility of citizenship, that many of them were obliged to make long arduous journeys from remote localities in order to offer their services, and that their disposition renders them naturally averse to leaving their own country and conditions of life."

Some of these Canadian Indians walked 500 miles in order to enlist. One of them travelled 3,000 miles, from the Arctic coast, near Herschel Island, by trail, canoe and boat, to Vancouver in order to enlist. Many of the Canadian Indians have been decorated for unusual bravery. They excelled as sharp-shooters. One of these, named Ballantyne, of the 8th Battalion, before being wounded, killed 50 Germans, the majority of whom were sharp-shooters, or "snipers," as they are now called.

Many of the Indians of the United States and Canada served as commissioned officers. The majority of the officers and non-commissioned officers of "D" Company, 114th Battalion of Canada, were Indians of the Six Nations.

These few facts, gathered from the official reports of the United States and Canada, show a part of the help given by the American Indian to the cause of the Allies.

Does it not seem to be the time, after the injustice of more than "A Century of Dishonor," to grant to this patriotic race a place, side by side with the white man and the negro, in the affairs of the nation? They were deemed
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worthy of a place by the side of their white brothers in the battles of Vimy Ridge, the Marne, Chateau-Thierry and in the Argonne Forest; they have been deemed worthy to sleep the last long sleep, side by side with their comrades in khaki, in those hallowed spots in France, why then are they not worthy to take a place side by side with the white man and the negro in the battles of peace?

As Charles A. Eastman (Ohiyesa) says, in the "American Indian Magazine,"

"It is not the fault of the people in a way; not perhaps the fault of any particular administration, that the soldier returning from the Marne or Chateau-Thierry should still find his money and land held by the Indian Bureau. When he asks for freedom, they answer him, 'Can you propose anything better than the present system?' He replies, 'Is there anything better today than American citizenship?'"

Until this blot is cleansed from the "Star Spangled Banner," we had better speak softly about injustice to the weaker races and not talk too loudly about the right of "self-determination." The Indian is not asking for a separate government. All he is asking for is the right to become an American citizen, under the flag for which he fought when all citizenship and government was at stake.