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Theodore E. Boyd World War I Collection - Handwritten Memoirs and Rosters

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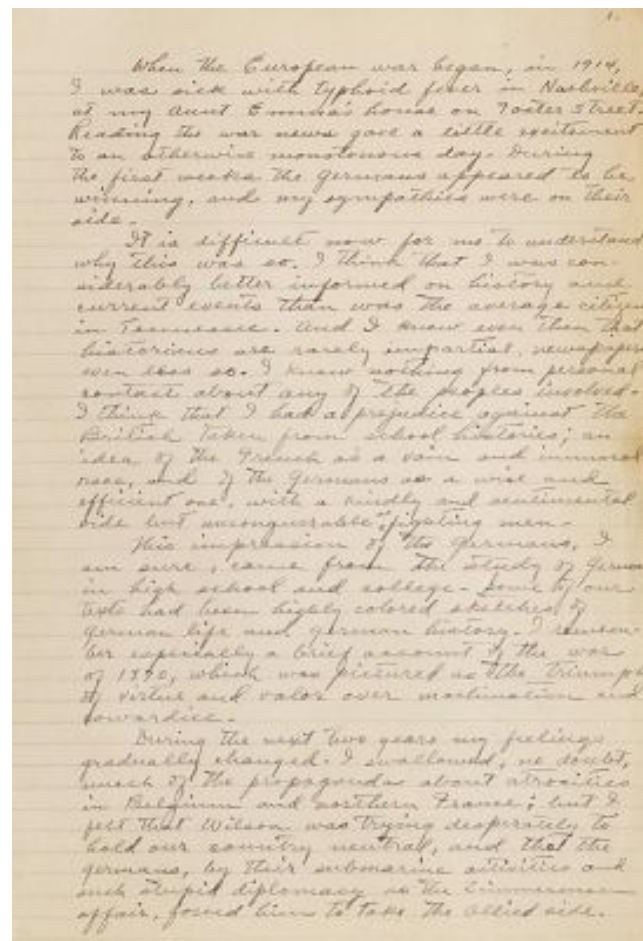
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When the European war began, in 1914, I was sick with typhoid fever in Nashville, at my Aunt Emma's house on Foster Street. Reading the war news gave a little excitement to an otherwise monotonous day. During the first weeks the Germans appeared to be winning, and my sympathies were on their side.

It is difficult now for me to understand why this was so. I think that I was considerably better informed on history and current events than was the average citizen in Tennessee. And I knew even then that historians are rarely impartial, newspapers even less so. I knew nothing from personal contact about any of the peoples involved. I think that I had a prejudice against the British taken from school histories; an idea of the French as a vain and immoral race, and of the Germans as a wise and efficient one, with a kindly and sentimental side but unconquerable fighting men.

This impression of the Germans, I am sure, came from the study of German in high school and college. Some of our texts had been highly colored sketches of German life and German history. I remember especially a brief account of the war of 1870, which was pictured as the triumph of virtue and valor over machination and cowardice.

During the next two years my feelings gradually changed. I swallowed, no doubt, much of the propaganda about atrocities in Belgium and northern France; but I felt that Wilson was trying desperately to hold our country neutral and that Germans, by their submarine activities and such stupid diplomacy as the Zimmerman affair, forced him to take the Allied side.



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