

insisted on their delivering up each week a number of eggs, fixed according to the number of their poultry, at the Kommandatur. If the right number was not forthcoming, a stiff fine had to be paid. At certain seasons the inhabitants had to collect a certain weight of nettle-stalks and bring them in. The Germans had a habit of coming unexpectedly into a kitchen just before meal-time, inspecting what was being cooked on the range, and if the fare was good, commandeering it for their own use and fining the people for living too well. The search after concealed arms was, of course, extremely thorough. An old Frenchman, a splendid old veteran of the war of 1870-71, told me a good deal about the petty bullying by the Germans in his village, by the Prussians in particular. There was a Prussian N.C.O. of a particularly obnoxious type in the small village where he lived. And, as the old man consistently refused to greet any of the Germans, when he saw them, the Prussian N.C.O. used every opportunity of making the old man's life a misery. On one occasion he headed a house-to-house search for concealed arms. The old man's rifle—he was too much of a soldier to want to give it up to his old enemies—was hidden in a small cellar beneath the kitchen floor. The N.C.O. came into the cottage and began searching. He came on the trap-door above the cellar and descended the steps, the old man following him with an axe in his hand. Had the Prussian found the rifle death would have come to him very quickly. But he did not find the place where it was concealed, and probably never knew how near he was to death. The old man told the story in most dramatic fashion.

Although, for the most part, the French population maintained a cool and dignified attitude towards the Germans, no country can be occupied for four long years without cases of fraternization and treachery occur-

ring. The courts now sitting in France will, no doubt, find some cases, where French people did actually help the Germans and informed on their own people. Some French women did marry Germans and went back to Germany with them when the German forces retreated, for their own people would have nothing to do with them. But many of these women, it is only fair to state, were women whose private life was not above reproach. The suspicions of the French against some of their own people were often ill-founded and based on rumour and prejudice. Monsieur M—— of Les Brébis, on the British side of the line, near Lens, one of the wealthiest colliery proprietors in France, very courageously—and, no doubt, for the sake of example to the people, who were keeping the mines going—stayed in his chateau, within four miles of the Front line from August, 1914, right up to the end of the war. The chateau, the White Chateau, as it was called, a brigade headquarters, was very little shelled by the Germans during the first three years of the war. Whenever a shell did fall in the chateau grounds, Monsieur M——'s gardeners quickly filled in the shell-hole and removed the débris, and the grounds looked as peaceful and beautiful, as if they had been on the coast of Normandy, instead of within a couple of miles of ruined Vermelles. But the villagers of Les Brébis, who had no love for the hard old capitalist, as they called Monsieur M——, said that there was a lot of German capital in M——'s mines, and that M—— himself was in league with the "Boche" and that was why the chateau escaped destruction. If those villagers had still been in Les Brébis, as Monsieur M—— was, after the Germans broke through our "ancient and honourable Allies", the Portuguese, in April, 1918, and had they been able to see what was left of the chateau a month later, they would have had reason to "doubt furiously" either the