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THE ROMANCE OF AIR-FIGHTING

(Continued from last week.)

In addition to the big essential tasks, many minor duties fall to be performed by airmen on war service. Sometimes despatches have to be carried. Officers are very frequently taken from one point to another by air—by far the quickest mode of transport. It is a common practice, moreover, to deliver aeroplanes on the Continent by flying them over the sea. A fine example of air work was the conveyance of food to Kut, when that place was besieged by the Turks; between April 11th and 29th, 1916, aircraft supplied the British garrison with 18,800 lbs. of provisions together with various stores and even mill-stones.

In the Royal Naval Air Service, somewhat ticklish operations, not by any means to be classed among minor duties, have to be carried out at times in the forms of ascents from the deck of a battleship, and, what is more arduous still, landings in that very limited space. The possibility of such landings was first demonstrated, it will be remembered, on the United States cruiser "Pennsylvania", when it was a few miles off the coast of California. The late Eugene Ely, having started out from the shore on a Curtiss biplane, alighted on a platform on that vessel without the slightest mishap.

Deeds Of Heroism.

Most wonderful aerial achievements have characterised this War day by day, but only a twentieth part of them are recorded. This is inevitable. In the first place, official etiquette forbids a de-

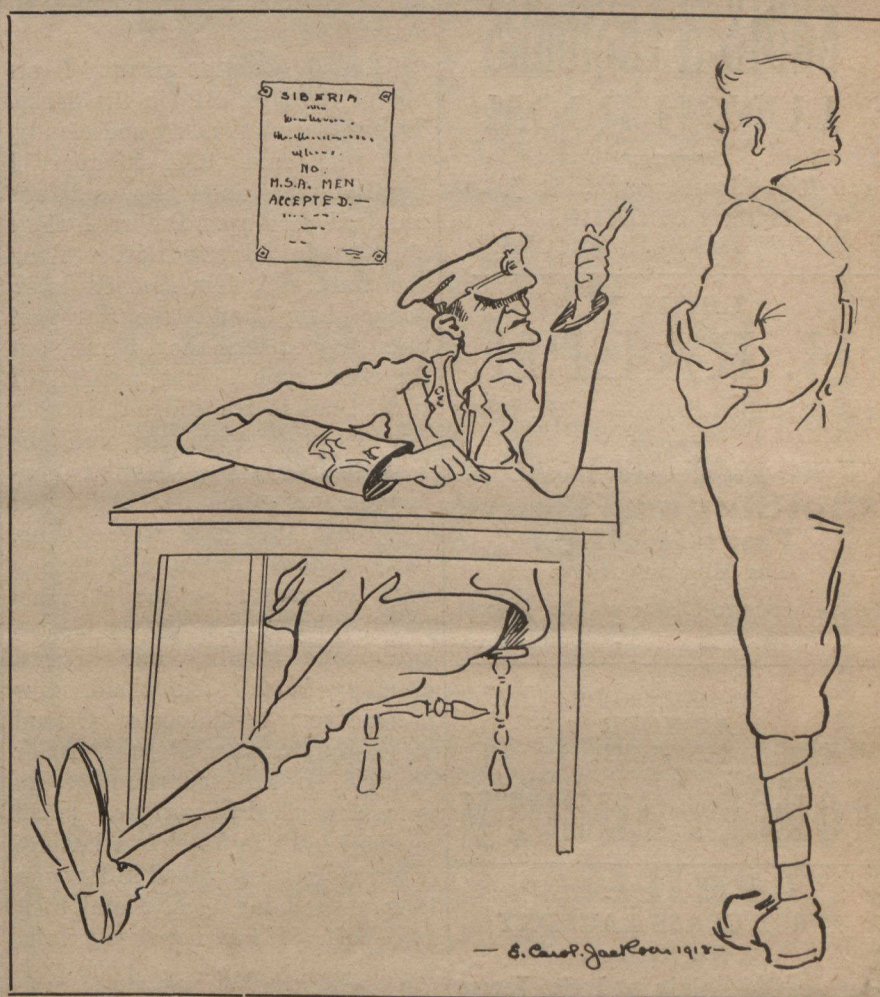
scription of the work of individuals, and the Royal Air Force and the Royal Naval Air Service object to the advertising of what they call "stunts". Fortunately for the British public which wants to hear about them, certain great deeds become known when King George confers honours upon those responsible for them.

Here are some examples picked out at random. The Distinguished Service Order was conferred in April, 1917, on a Flight-Commander for conspicuous bravery in the field in attacking hostile aircraft. Since February he had taken part in fourteen combats; on one occasion, he had brought down a machine in flames; on another occasion, after he had fired thirty rounds, the German machine went down spinning and side-slipping completely out of control. Another Flight-Commander, attacked by two machines, had his collar-bone fractured. Suffering considerably, he nevertheless managed to steer his aeroplane home, saving his observer's life and his own by sheer determination and pluck. From the most remote parts of Europe come stories of similar fine exploits. Distinguished Service Crosses were, for instance, given to a Flight-Commander and a Sub-Lieutenant for gallantry in a seaplane reconnaissance of Damascus; they crossed two ranges of mountains, where the lowest ridges are 4,000 feet high, and returned with valuable information.

Now let us take an achievement that was considered valorous enough to earn a Victoria Cross. The best description of the event was written by "T. N." in "Flying".

Two single-seaters went out on a bombing expedition—where, it doesn't much matter. When they were a long way from home, and a good stretch of sea between, No. 1 had engine trouble and had to land on a marshy plain. He did his best to start the "jigger", but it was no go, and, since the enemy

—a ragged lot of ruffians—were making for him at the double, and while they were yet about a mile away, he pulled out his automatic pistol and started to blow up his bombs, and with them the machine. That in itself was a devilish plucky action, for pistol range is fairly short, and he might easily have



Sapper:—"Please, Sir, I want to go to Siberia."

O.C.:—"Are you an M. S. A. man?"

Sapper:—"No, Sir, I'm a Draftee."

O.C.:—"How the devil can you be a Draftee and not a 'Military Service Act' man?"

Sapper:—"Oh please, Sir, I thought it meant 'Master of the Science of Agriculture'!"

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