

FLAMING BULLETS

by FRANKLIN M. RITCHIE

The amazing chivalry of the men of the air astounded the whole world during the war. They were true sportsmen, those sky-fighters. Here is a breath-taking yarn from behind the enemy lines showing how the picture looked through the eyes of German War Flyers.

YOUNG OBERLEUTNANT FRITZ VON HULLESHEIM frowned toward Von Hensel's bobbing ship at the point of the jagstaffel's V formation. He pondered uneasily on what the new flight leader had meant when he announced with a grin, before they took the air, that he had a new trick up his sleeve.

The slim, blond pilot bit his lip and pressed a bit harder on his stick as he banked after the other ships. Von Hüllesheim still cherished the illusion that there was chivalry in aerial combat, but he knew that Von Hensel had no such idea.

To him, war was a mere excuse for killing. He had no pity for wounded enemies, nor did he scorn to swoop down with a whole squadron on a single clumsy two-seater observation bus.

An involuntary oath escaped Von Hüllesheim's oil-spattered lips as he glimpsed the black wreck of a graceful church spire jutting from the gray ruins of Varennes. War spared not even beauty!

The sudden chatter of a Vickers gun on his tail, so different from his own Spandau's clear bark that he knew it at once for an enemy, made him half-roll instinctively. From the corner of his eye he glimpsed a single purple Spad and he looped swiftly, wondering at the temerity of this lone attack on a whole squadron.

With unexpected ease he manoeuvred onto the enemy's tail, surprised to find that the other pilot handled his crate like a novice. As the bobbing Spad flashed across his ring sight, Von Hüllesheim pressed the trigger, without result. His gun had jammed. He worked furiously to clear it.

He found, however, that it was ridiculously easy to cling to the Spad's blind spot even while so engaged. The enemy pilot seemed to know little of air fighting.

Clearing the jamb at last, the German dived upon his foe, so close that the man's head and shoulders

were clearly visible over the purple cockpit, between the wings.

He wore no flying suit and Von Hüllesheim, with a little pucker between his brows, scanned a khaki tunic of unfamiliar cut which was certainly neither French nor British. He whistled through his teeth in sudden surprise.

It must be an American, the first to meet the Black Fokkers. Von Hüllesheim grinned at the thought that this explained the rash attack and the raw flying of a new pilot in his first battle. Acting on a sudden chivalrous impulse, he rolled over and headed toward the other ships which had drawn off a little to watch him, like black vultures circling above a death struggle.

The Yankee, however, didn't seem to realize that his life had purposely been spared. Undaunted by the number of his enemies or the fact that they had the sun at their backs, with the advantage of altitude, he climbed toward the jagstaffel like a clumsy, thoroughbred puppy attacking a pack of wolves. A thrill of admiration ran up and down Von Hüllesheim's spine.

Like a perfect machine three Fokkers dropped down out of the formation, spreading fanwise as they came. With easy grace gained in many battles, they boxed the American in.

VON HULLESHEIM heard the bark of the Spandaus even over the roar of his own big Mercedes motor as the pilots of the black ships opened fire. He frowned. It wasn't fair to slaughter a green pilot like that.

The American showed no sign of weakening. Tracer bullets, weaving wispy trails through the golden sunshine toward the circling black Fokkers, showed that he was firing. The little purple Spad drove, clumsy but unwavering, toward its foes.

One of the German craft—Von Hüllesheim recognized it as Von Hensel's—drew apart from the others. Like a hawk about to sink its talons into the flesh of a frightened dove, it settled onto the purple tail of the Spad. Tracer trails showed that Von Hensel had opened his attack. Flames burst out on the other ship.

As he watched, Fritz von Hüllesheim, flight lieutenant in the Imperial German Army, instead of rejoicing that an enemy ship had been shot down leaned out of his cockpit, shaking a bronzed fist at Von Hensel while he cursed guttural Saxon oaths.

The flames were starting in the "doped" linen on the back of the fuselage behind the pilot's cockpit, where there was no gasoline to be set ablaze. Von Hensel must have used incendiary bullets which were forbidden by the chivalrous code of the air.

His eyes bulging, hot waves of shame flushing his face, Von Hüllesheim saw the flames spread swiftly. The Spad heeled over on one wing like a stricken bird. Then it twisted into a spin, the tail whipping around in eccentric circles while fire streamed back along the fuselage like the tail of a meteor.

Before it struck the ground a dark shape leaped clear of the burning mass. The American had preferred swift death to the agony of the flames.

"*Donnerwetter!*" Von Hüllesheim cursed angrily. "That is not war! That is butchery!"

A red mist swam before his eyes. Swinging around in a swift Immelmann turn, he left the jagstaffel and headed back alone toward the 'drome, eager to get away from this Butcher who was his comrade. He drove forward blindly in his rage, flying by instinct. Off to one side a clumsy red RE observation bus was limping home, easy meat for his lithe Fokker, but he paid it no attention, being in no mood for further slaughter of helpless opponents.

Dropping down upon the smooth landing field of the trimly-kept 'drome which was the home of the Black Fokkers, he bumped to a halt in a cloud of dust and leaped from the cockpit without even bothering to cut the switch, which he left to the astonished mechanics who ran out to grab his wing tips.

Without a word he strode toward his own quarters past camouflaged hangars and machine shop, paying no attention to the stiff salutes of the soldiers whom he passed.

Dragging off his helmet and goggles as he stooped to enter the doorway of the little hut of corrugated iron, he hurled them into a corner of the bare room and sat down on the narrow cot, his head in his hands.

"*Ja wohl!*" he muttered. "Butchery!"

A wooden faced orderly in field gray, his flat, peakless cap grotesque atop his big, square head, appeared stolidly at the door with orders to report to the *Herr Kommandant*. The tall pilot rose stiffly, his blue eyes grim and his firm jaw set hard. An old saber cut on his left cheek bone stood out in white relief against the red flush which suffused his face.

THE shrill scream of wires cutting the still air, followed by the dull thuds of successive landings, had told him that the jagstaffel had returned with a report of his desertion. He followed the orderly past the rows of huts like his own to the stone building which served as squadron headquarters.

Von Hensel, a solid, stocky man with bulging jowls and stiff, upright hair which upreared itself like rows of bayonets, was waiting for him in the *Kommandant's* prim office on whose walls battered bits of linen bearing the insignia of many Allied squadrons told grimly of the work of the Black Fokkers.

There was a rudder from a Nieuport which Von Hüllesheim had shot down in single combat. There were others taken from ships upon whom Von Hensel had pounced with half a dozen companions.

The *Kommandment*, tall and spare and austere, faced Von Hüllesheim with blazing eyes as the pilot entered.

"Why did you leave your formation without permission?" he demanded, a guttural timbre in his voice betraying an unusual excitement. His grizzled eyebrows met in an angry frown.

Von Hüllesheim's thin lips were compressed in a purple line. A hot retort trembled on his tongue, but he fought it down.

"Captain Von Hensel used incendiary bullets!" he charged.

Von Hensel made no answer except a mocking grin. The *Kommandant's* cheeks flushed an angry red.

"I do not believe it!" he roared, though Von Hüllesheim knew that he was lying. "But even so, you are to obey orders and stay with your squadron! It is not for puppies like you to dictate rules. This is war!"

The tall pilot bit his lip until it showed white. But the habit of discipline was strong in him, and he made no answer. He bowed and waited for the curt order of dismissal. Von Hensel, who had never liked the aristocratic, idealistic Von Hüllesheim, twisted his cruel lips into a grin of mockery.

All night long the younger man pondered that,

grin, and the fact that Von Hensel had used incendiary bullets. Always he had been fiercely proud of the record of the Black Fokker Staffel, keenly eager to fight for the *Vaterland*. The war had been, for him, a valiant fight against worthy foes, not butchery.

By morning he had got himself under control. He decided that he might have been mistaken. Or at any rate Von Hensel might quit using incendiary bullets now that he knew how his own comrades resented such unchivalrous tactics. When Von Hüllesheim was ordered out on patrol with Von Hensel in the morning, he resolved to do his best to work with his companion.

The black Fokkers rose swiftly out of the gray mist which covered the 'drome just after dawn and headed toward the front. Von Hensel flew low, looking for enemy observation crates, while Von Hüllesheim skimmed the clouds, high above him, to keep off any Allied scout ships which might attack his comrade.

He watched Von Hensel dive suddenly on a slow Caudron pusher which was taking pictures over Thiaucourt. Von Hüllesheim didn't care, himself, for this easy work of butchering two-seaters, but he recognized it as being necessary, part of the cruel work of war. He waited grimly, teeth clenched, for Von Hensel to deal the death blow.

HE LEANED forward suddenly, staring hard, rubbing at his misted goggles with the back of a leather glove. Flames were breaking out on the Caudron's wing, far away from petrol tank or motor where a chance shot might start a fire. Von Hensel must be using incendiary bullets again.

"*Schweinhund!*" Von Hüllesheim yelled through the roar of his engine, shaking his fist at the other Fokker as the Caudron rolled over and plunged down in a mass of flame.

Two British S.E. busses dived suddenly out of a cloud bank after Von Hensel, harrying the Fokker with cleved swoops and turns. It was clear that these were no novices.

Von Hüllesheim watched them glumly, bitter resentment in his heart at Von Hensel, who had twice soiled the honor of the Black Fokker Staffel. It would serve him right to let the S.E.'s down him!

Von Hensel's crate wobbled suddenly as though one of its foes had sent home a burst of lead. Von Hüllesheim locked his teeth, shoved his stick forward, and dived. He couldn't let a comrade be done to death. Perhaps he could persuade Von Hensel to play fair.

But just now he had to help him. He drove at the two British ships, his guns chattering.

Disconcerted by the new attack, they swung about for a moment to meet him. While they were thus engaged Von Hensel promptly slipped away and streaked toward home. Von Hüllesheim seeing him depart, grinned sourly at the other's ingratitude.

Suddenly there was a crash and his motor raced madly. A bullet had smashed his propeller! Turning tail, he glided ignominiously toward his own lines, hoping he could make it.

The S.E.'s followed him, trilling and twisting in the sunlight, peppering him as he streaked toward the trenches which marked the limits of German territory. Bullets tore through the fabric of the fuselage, chipping struts and longerons. Only the timely appearance of an Albatross squadron drove them off and saved the black Fokker from certain destruction.

Von Hüllesheim barely succeeded in making his own side of the lines. He washed his crate out completely when the undercarriage caught in a shell hole and threw him into a ground loop.

Back at the 'drome, when he finally arrived there by motorcycle, he got a cold reception. Von Hensel met him in front of the gray stone orderly room, his hands in his pockets and his square jaw thrust forth belligerently.

"Why didn't you come down out of the clouds sooner to help me against those S.E.'s?" Von Hensel demanded gruffly, with a meaning glance toward the other pilots who were crowding around the doorway. "Afraid because Kent, the British ace, was in one of those busses? I recognized his insignia, so I guess you did, too!" The flight commander chuckled nastily.

Von Hüllesheim's fists clenched and his face turned a deep, dull red. It was bad enough to be called a coward, but it was doubly galling to take the charge from a man like Von Hensel who had himself dishonored the Staffel.

Von Hüllesheim stepped forward, his eyes gleaming. Just in time he caught himself and turned away, deciding it was better to endure the baseless charge than to do anything which might help the enemy in any way.

HIS eyes lighted up as a sudden inspiration seized him. He'd show them all whether he was a coward, and he'd prove to their enemies, too, that not all the pilots of the Black Fokker squadron were of Von Hensel's type.

That had been Kent, had it, the premier British ace? Well, Fritz Von Hüllesheim would go after him alone!

Taking nobody into his confidence and without permission, he hurried to the tarmac. Brushing aside the protests of frightened mechanics that the bus was being made ready for the *Herr Kommandant* himself, Von Hüllesheim climbed into the best looking ship on the line. Gunning the crate, he took off swiftly in a steep climbing turn which strained the motor to its limit.

Straight into Allied territory he flew, seeking Kent's 'drome. Von Hüllesheim saw Spads and Nieuports here and there, cruising about singly, as he crossed the lines and he knew they must have spotted him, too. However, he paid them no attention and they made no effort to attack him, so he drove forward on his self-imposed errand.

Direct as a homing pigeon he made his way over Allied trenches and batteries, ammunition dumps and railroad sidings, to the 'drome where Kent's squadron was located. Circling over the camouflaged hangars, he dropped a note, written in English, which he had weighted down with a couple of cartridges. It was addressed to Kent.

"Come up and shoot it out!" it read. "Anywhere and any time you like!"

Von Hüllesheim circled low over the field, risking ground fire, until he saw men come out and pick up the note.

He grinned and waved down at them when they good-humoredly set out a ground panel on the field near the landing T to let him know that his message had been received. The signal showed, however, that Kent was not at the 'drome just then, so Von Hüllesheim started back to his own field.

Ahead of him he made out a black Fokker like his own, speeding toward the German lines. He recognized it as Von Hensel's bus. Von Hüllesheim frowned angrily, shoving his throttle all the way open. The flight leader must have followed him over to see what he was doing!

When Von Hüllesheim set his black Fokker down on the tarmac the *Kommandant* was waiting for him at the dead line, his cheeks puffed out red and angry.

"You are under arrest!" he snapped, teetering back and forth on his heels, frowning at the disheveled pilot in his dirty, oil-smeared flying togs.

Von Hüllesheim stared at him in amazement.

"Aber—!" he began. "But—!"

"How do you explain the fact that you were seen to

pass a dozen French and British ships without being attacked?" the *Kommandant* demanded. "And that Captain Von Hensel saw you actually communicating with a British airdrome?"

Taken aback by the unexpected charge, still seething with fury at Von Hensel's unfair use of incendiary bullets, Von Hüllesheim flushed hotly. However, instead of answering he stood mute, twirling his goggles in his hands, his eyes on the ground. He bit his lip angrily.

"WHAT have you to say for yourself?" the *Kommandant* demanded, thrusting his empurpled face into the pilot's. "Speak up!" Von Hüllesheim refused sulkily to answer, staring back with sullen, obstinate resentment.

"*Ja wohl!*" the *Kommandant* snapped at him. "You have now had your chance. If you cannot explain, there is indeed something wrong. I shall report to Great Headquarters.

The pilot bit his lip and was silent. "Go to your quarters!" the *Kommandant* ordered. "Do not leave except for duty." He paused again, his face hard and grim. "*Und, mein leutnant,*" he added, "you will do no more patrols alone! You will go out with your flight, and you will stay with them no matter what happens!" His eyes bored into the pilot's.

Dismissed, *Oberleutnant* Fritz Von Hüllesheim walked slowly toward his hut of corrugated iron. Reason compelled him to admit that the the *Kommandant* was right, but that merely turned all his resentment toward Von Hensel, who had spied upon him and lied to the Squadron Commander about him.

"I'll get him!" he promised himself.

For three days he was a prisoner in his hut while G.H.Q. discussed his case. He did not leave the place even for meals. His anger and resentment swelled and grew as the days passed. He was more and more determined to get revenge on Von Hensel.

On the fourth morning he was notified to turn out for dawn patrol. On the line, waiting in the half darkness for the grease balls to warm up their ships, the other pilots held aloof from him as they stamped their feet and chattered.

Talking in whispers, they gathered in little knots which fell silent as Von Hüllesheim approached. The slim pilot, walking toward his ship with his shoulders bent forward, noticed it all and his anger at Von Hensel flamed hotter.

The *Kommandant* was waiting for him at the edge of the tarmac, his face hard and stern. "You will

get another chance to make good," he told the pilot soberly. You have had a good record, and that saved you. But—" he paused, studying the younger man, who twisted uneasily, kicking at the mud with the toe of his boot and fumbling with his goggles, "—you are to remain with your flight regardless of anything which may happen. Remember that!"

Dazedly Fritz von Hullestheim climbed into the cockpit of his bus and gave her the gun. He thundered out across the field, exhausts flashing redly along the fuselage in the dim light, and climbed to meet the other ships at the appointed gathering place. He was all in a muddle. He, who had only tried to preserve the honor of the squadron, was suspected of treason, while Von Hensel was the flight commander.

He'd been ordered to stay with the squadron. Very well, he would! He'd do not a bit more!

Over Vigneulles they struck a flight of Nieuports, down below them, and the Fokkers dived swiftly. Von Hullestheim went with them, but the old joy of battle was gone.

Knowing he was half a prisoner, the light-hearted, reckless deviltry of the days before his disgrace was missing. Then, too, he couldn't help comparing the brave awkwardness of the American pilot he had seen with Von Hensel's cruel grace.

THE Nieuports rallied, banking swiftly to attack the black Fokkers. A widespread dogfight developed in which there was much confusion, the formation being completely broken. Even so, however, Von Hullestheim saw that there was always a German ship on his tail. He swore bitterly. They were shadowing him!

His resentment made him strive harder against the Nieuports. One of the little ships came after him, and, in a breath-taking Immelmann, Von Hullestheim changed direction, let the enemy flash by him, then twisted sharply and sent a burst into the other pilot. The Nieuport hung for a moment in a flat stall and then plunged downward.

Looking back, Von Hullestheim saw that a Fokker was still following his every move. He shook his fist at its pilot.

The Nieuports were driven off at last—those who hadn't been washed out. The Fokkers headed homeward, wagging their wings, looping and rolling in their triumph. Von Hullestheim alone took no part in the demonstration. Moody and silent, he held his bus to a straight, unswerving course.

Near the lines they ran across a lone S.E., painted

purple. Fritz von Hullestheim nearly jumped from his cockpit in surprise as he recognized its markings. It was Kent! The German's foot pressed on the rudder bar, eager to turn the ship in search of the British ace.

Von Hensel, up in front, wagged his wings as a signal for the other Fokkers to keep their formation. Von Hullestheim grunted his contempt. The flight commander was afraid of a trap, evidently. Of course Kent might be luring them on, with an S.E. squadron hidden in the ceiling. But Von Hullestheim preferred to risk it.

His jaw set grimly as he stared at the purple S.E., circling gracefully in the golden sunlight. Von Hullestheim had challenged the British ace boastfully, but now, when Kent was out there in plain sight, the German dared not fight him because Von Hensel wouldn't let him risk it.

Out of pure deviltry Kent dived on the Fokkers, his guns blazing. Then he banked sharply, thumbing his nose at them, and sped away. Fritz von Hullestheim sputtered incoherently because of the ignoble part he had been compelled to play. His resentment at Von Hensel swelled and grew. Sulkily he followed the Staffel back to their own 'drome.

A WEEK went by, a week of fruitless sallings in formation, of uneventful flying up and down the lines. Each day Von Hullestheim sighted Kent, but Von Hensel never permitted a battle. Von Hullestheim grew sulkier and moodier under the constant scrutiny of his companions.

He resented bitterly the fact that another Fokker always trailed him, indicating that his loyalty was suspected.

He wanted a fight!

At last he got his wish.

The jagstaffel was flying steadily through the smooth air above the clouds one morning, the eyes of the pilots roaming constantly along the horizon in search of hostile ships.

Suddenly Von Hensel wagged his wings and pointed down. Von Hullestheim, following the indicated direction, saw a flight of S.E.'s heading southward a thousand feet below the Fokkers. The flight commander shoved his stick forward and dived, his guns rattling as he went down, and the rest of the Staffel followed.

Spotting their assailants just in time, the S.E.'s rolled out of the way and a general dogfight followed. Von Hullestheim held back for a moment, smarting under the sense of injustice which his surveillance had developed. The lure of battle proved too strong,

however, and he closed grimly with a British ship. Yet he still had the uneasy feeling that his own companions were watching him all the time.

The battle was short, for the Fokkers had the big advantage of surprise and of superior altitude. Before long the S.E.'s were in full flight. Von Hüllesheim noted with a grin that his own companions were in confusion. For the moment nobody was watching him at all.

JUST then he recognized a purple S.E. It was Kent's ship. Von Hüllesheim's lips curled backward in an angry snarl. He forgot that he was under suspicion and had received orders to stay in the formation. His anger flamed up and he followed the S.E. without thought of the consequences to himself.

He saw Von Hensel's bus dive after him, but he paid it no attention, centering every effort on overtaking the S.E. The other Fokkers had evidently failed to notice the departure of their two companions, for they failed to follow, and in a few minutes Von Hüllesheim was alone in the air except for Kent, whom he was pursuing, and for Von Hensel.

Suddenly the S.E. doubled back in an unexpected Immelmann, his guns beating a staccato tattoo. Von Hüllesheim pointed his nose upward, confident that he could outclimb his foe and then dive upon him. Von Hensel had fallen far behind.

Kent, however, climbed as swiftly as the Fokker. Von Hüllesheim rolled out of his way and banked at an eighty degree angle to keep out of the British pilot's fire. The two ships settled down to a grim game of tag.

In his long pursuit of the other bus the first fire of Von Hüllesheim's passion had died away; and now he followed Kent calmly and calculating, taking no chance on letting his long-awaited opportunity slip from his grasp because of any false move on his part.

He saw Von Hensel hovering around. Watching him again! Von Hensel, who had dishonored the Squadron!

Getting a momentary advantage of altitude, Von Hüllesheim dived instantly, but Kent rolled his purple S.E. out of the way and the German missed. He grinned in open admiration of this splendid adversary. This was what he liked, a fair flight with an able enemy.

Diving steeply, he jerked the stick back into his stomach for a loop. For a moment, as the ship whirled around, earth and sky intermingled in one vast kaleidoscopic blur of shifting color. Von Hüllesheim took his eyes off his enemy. As he came out of his loop he found himself square on tail of another bus.

Grinning savagely, he pressed the stick trigger with his thumb.

His triumph was dissipated as swiftly as it had come. The vague outline of the other ship sharpened and became distinct. It was Von Hensel's Fokker! Von Hüllesheim turned pale. Now he had given the flight commander something on which to hang his charges of treachery!

Kent, however, was keeping him busy. Von Hüllesheim looped again. This was an enemy worth fighting! The German strained after his foe, forgetting Von Hensel in his concentration on the other ship. A victory over a fighter like Kent would be enough to salve his wounded pride.

With a great effort Von Hüllesheim shook off the British ship. Climbing swiftly, he outdistanced the other man. He had him now! He'd get him!

AT THAT moment Von Hensel's black Fokker dashed between them, its guns spitting. Von Hüllesheim saw the trails of the tracer bullets crashing into one of the wings. Flames burst out. Von Hensel was using incendiary bullets again! The S.E. dived, its pilot eager to escape the creeping flames.

Von Hüllesheim grew red and hot with anger. A mist blurred his vision. This man Von Hensel was a blot on the Staffel! At the very moment when Von Hüllesheim was about to win a victory by fair fighting Von Hensel had interposed with his unfair weapons. Von Hüllesheim dived after Kent in an agony of fear lest he had been seriously injured by the cruel trick.

The S.E. cracked up in an open field. Flames began to lick redly over the debris. In his admiration for the British pilot's skill and his resentment at Von Hensel, Von Hüllesheim forgot everything except the fact that an honorable enemy had been conked by foul means. He followed him down and landed his own ship close to the blazing crate, planning to pull Kent out of the wreck in case he still lived.

Von Hensel's bus settled to earth with a bump at the same instant that Von Hüllesheim's crate touched the grass. Its pilot leaped from the cockpit, a pistol in his hand, and rushed toward Von Hüllesheim before the latter could get out of his crate. Von Hensel's face was twisted into a grim mask of rage.

Von Hüllesheim had no pistol, and his only weapon, the fixed gun of his 'plane, pointed skyward now that the ship was on the ground with its tail depressed.

Lips set grimly, he 'gunned' the bus, which leaped

forward like a live thing. Von Hensel fired, but his shot went wide. Then, dropping his pistol, he leaped onto a wing of the Fokker as it swept past him, clinging to a strut for support.

“You won’t get away!” he shouted, trying to drag himself in toward the fuselage.

Von Hüllesheim lifted his bus off the ground with a gentle backward motion of the stick, though the ship wobbled uncertainly under the weight of the man on the wing. As he began to rise, he glanced down for a moment and saw Kent dragging himself away from the blazing S.E. But the stocky flight commander was approaching slowly along the wing, murder in his eyes.

Swiftly Von Hüllesheim climbed, seeking altitude. Once he was high enough off the ground to be safe, he tried every trick he knew to dislodge the other man from his wing. All distinctions had been forgotten in his bitter anger at the man who had dishonored the Squadron. No longer was Kent an enemy and Von Hensel a friend. It was the latter who had played the part of a mucker and who now was trying to kill Fritz von Hüllesheim.

THE slim pilot sideslipped and spun, with the wind screeching in his ears. He rolled and looped till he was giddy. He put his ship through every manoeuvre of which he had ever heard or dreamed.

Still Von Hensel clung grimly, refusing to loosen his hold even for a moment. Each time that Von Hüllesheim relaxed his efforts for the briefest instant the other man tried at once to inch his way closer to the cockpit.

Von Hüllesheim hurled an empty ammunition belt at him, but the wash from the propeller swept it backward so that it barely missed lodging in the elevator wires. The pilot fingered a big wrench, but he feared to throw it lest the wind drive it into the controls and wreck the crate. He waited grimly for the other man to close with him. His lips tightened. This was the man who had used incendiary bullets and brought dishonor on the Squadron.

He levelled off, deciding to meet his enemy and fight it out. Von Hensel advanced coolly along the wing, catching at flying wires and landing wires as he moved between the struts. Von Hüllesheim had to admire the other’s iron nerve. He tingled with excitement which was almost pleasurable as he waited for the death grapple.

There was a sudden clatter behind him, like a

riveter’s automatic hammer, and he glanced swiftly around in search of its cause. His eyes goggled. Von Hensel’s ship was on his tail, firing at him. Yet Von Hensel was on the wing of Von Hüllesheim’s Fokker.

The slim pilot grinned wryly as he suddenly understood what had happened. Kent had seized Von Hensel’s ship and had come up to shoot it out with the other Fokker. Trails of tracer bullets snaked past Von Hüllesheim.

He thrilled with admiration. Truly, this was a worthy enemy! Von Hüllesheim’s brows met angrily as he glanced toward the man on his own wing, drawing steadily closer, a revolver in his hand. Friend or enemy, it made no difference. This man had broken the chivalrous code of the air.

Kent’s bullets rattled past Von Hüllesheim with a shrill humming as of gigantic bees. He smiled grimly as he realized that Von Hensel was now in danger from his own bullets.

Von Hüllesheim straightened suddenly at the thought, his face tense. Kent was firing at him with Von Hensel’s own ammunition. Incendiary bullets!

Von Hüllesheim laughed bitterly.

“Punishment!” he shouted at Von Hensel, forgetting that the roar of the motor drowned his voice.

He swung squarely into Kent’s line of fire, marked by the white trails of tracer bullets. He held his bus steady, keeping an eye on the unswerving line of fire. His eyes on this trail, Fritz von Hüllesheim hurled the center of the wing on which Von Hensel crouched straight into the path of the Englishman’s bullets.

There was a rending and rearing of the wing, audible in spite of the engine’s noise. Flames began to lick along the aerofoil. The incendiary bullets had come home to roost.

Von Hüllesheim laughed as he watched the crackling flames. He chuckled as Von Hensel moved away from the blaze, seeking refuge out at the tip of the wing. The pilot didn’t care that the fire would get him, too.

He wanted to punish Von Hensel for breaking the code, punish him with his own dirty weapons. That done, nothing else would matter much.

THE CREEPING flames ate the covering from the wing, which was sagging already. The fire came closer to the fuselage, unbearably hot.

Von Hüllesheim shoved his stick hard the other way, and the bus heeled over into a vertical sideslip, plunging straight down on one wing. Air rushed

fiercely against his cheek—and carried the flames upward toward Von Hensel.

The man endured it only for a moment. Then he leaped free to avoid the agony of the fire. Von Hüllesheim's lips were set grimly tight as the man's body hurtled past him.

The ship dropped like a fiery meteor. When he tried to pull out of the sideslip the bus refused to answer the controls. He struck the ground in a blaze of glory.

When he came back to consciousness he was in a hospital, surrounded by khaki uniforms. He was a prisoner! Kent grinned down at him in friendly fashion.

"The war's over, old timer!" the Britisher told him. "The Armistice was signed this morning."