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## Contents for June, 1928

- Cover Design-----C. C. Senf  
*Illustrating a scene in "The Devil's Martyr"*
- The Eyrie-----724  
*A chat with the readers*
- The Devil's Martyr-----Signe Toksvig 726  
*A romance of love and witchcraft and Satan-worship, and dark clouds of doom that rolled up about the two lovers*
- The Serpent Woman-----Seabury Quinn 737  
*Jules de Grandin solves a mystery involving a lost child and a giant snake—and back of it all is the serpent woman*
- The Elemental Law-----Everil Worrell 753  
*A weird story of aviation and reincarnation—indescribably eerie were the faces that stared out of the black pool*
- The Hate-----Wilford Allen 767  
*Born of a murderer's lust for torture, the Hate grew through the ages, and worked its retribution during the World War*
- The Dimension Terror-----Edmond Hamilton 769  
*Millions of lives were blotted out in the frightful catastrophe that came upon the earth out of the fifth dimension*

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

# THE HATE

By WILFORD ALLEN

**T**HE thing began far back in time, while the great Frank, Charles, claimed dominion over the rude western world. Deep in the mountain mass of northern Spain, a pair of youths loitered laughingly up a rocky path under the spotted shade of scrubby trees. A clatter and rattle of stones came suddenly from above, and they looked up to see a burly figure, accoutered in the skins and half-armor of the time, striding down the trail. Automatically, both lads stepped aside to let the petty noble pass; for who were they, common peasants and unarmed, to crowd such as he?

And then it happened, without reason or excuse. As he came abreast of the two, the stocky stranger suddenly whipped his short sword out, and in one quick motion ran it through the body of the nearer youth.

The other could have turned and run; indeed it was the expectation of the Killer that he would. If he had done so, the Killer would have roared and howled at his terrified flight, then have gone on his way, well pleased. But the other's reaction to the situation was not what the Killer's would have been, had the situation been reversed. Instead, he sprang full at the Killer's throat, unarmed though he was, but his frail strength was no match for the stouter man, who with a single hand brought the youngster into submission.

For a long moment the Killer looked gloatingly into the horrified eyes of the helpless boy; then, deliberately and shaking with fiendish laughter, he began to press the blade into

the slender body. Not quickly, as he had with the other, but slowly, pausing after each advancement of the stinging point to feast on the anguish of the dying lad, and, when that anguish did not seem of the ultimate degree, to twist the blade in the squirming body.

Whole minutes it lasted, and the end did not come until another Thing was born to take the place of the life which was ebbing into oblivion—a thing of which the Killer was unconscious then, but which was to live a thousand years; a Thing so contrary to the experience of human senses that it can not be described as one can describe a picture; a Hate too great ever to die until it had brought its maker and an adequate vengeance together. This hate can not be pictured: it was composed of that act which gave it birth, caught and frozen into invisible existence as if it were a four-dimensional thing, and also of its mission of Vengeance. Together they made up the Hate and gave it life and being, if not existence in time and space as we know them.

\* \* \* \* \*

**T**HE day had been nasty. A thunderstorm of unparalleled violence had lasted from 3 o'clock until after dark, and the ground was still littered with the melting hailstones. A bedraggled figure in horizon-blue slogged from the trench into the officers' dugout and jerked painfully to a salute as it faced the lieutenant.

"Corporal," the officer said after a perfunctory acknowledgment of the salute, "it is not often that I beg a

man's pardon, but I do for sending you out into this night of hell. But it must be done, for the colonel orders that we obtain information from in front of our sector. So it is you I am sending, for it is you who can do well what must be done well. Take two men, and tonight at fifteen minutes after 11 make patrol into the front and get the necessary information."

A night of hell it was. Caught by a flare, his two men were riddled at the very outset, leaving the corporal alone in his hole a bare stone's toss from the hostile trench. Ahead of him a machine-gun at the apex of a salient swept the ground about him with its humming death at each stir upon his part. The pain from his knee, which had been torn by a bullet that had mushroomed and cut the flesh into strips, throbbed in rhythm with the ever-pounding pulse. Pain was soon reinforced by fever and thirst, but, although the ground in the depression was yet moist from the recent deluge, no water had collected there, for it drained deeper into some dank cavern below, and he licked the steaming earth in the futile effort to stop the maddening thirst.

At last, in desperation, he drew himself chokingly over the edge of the hole. A burst of fire spurted toward him at the movement, and he tumbled back with blood streaming from a face marked with three parallel furrows. Another hour of torment passed; then, knowing that death was only a matter of time, the bullet-riddled Frenchman again stumbled over the edge of the shell-hole, but toward, not from, the enemy.

At the first appearance of his head over the earthen parapet the machine-gun began to stutter, and the impact of heavy blows told the half-delirious man that he was being struck, though there was no sensation of pain from the fresh wounds. Grimly he staggered on, while the thud of bullets against his flesh kept time with the rapid put-put of the gun.

As the man still moved doggedly ahead, the stocky gunner in the salient began to wonder, and then to fear. Surely he could not be missing, but with equal certainty no human being could come on against that hail of death. Yet on the dimly visioned figure came. On, and on, and at last it was so close that in the weird light of the flares the gunner could see the shots shake their target. A leg was dragging awfully, but still the figure advanced in a series of hops.

A change came over the gunner. Fear vanished, and puzzlement, and there remained only a gloating joy as each tearing bullet struck. The gunner counted each burst of shots with a brutish grunt of satisfaction, as it tore through the approaching figure. But on the other came, a musket which it had picked up held out stiffly, with bayonet fixed. Right up to the brink of the trench it came out of reach of the gun at last, and the gunner saw that the man was cut to pieces.

And then the gloating died and turned to fear. Fear and visions. Before him there lived the vision which had flamed in the consciousness of the other during that terrible march up to the spitting muzzle of the gun. In a distant twilight he saw the skin-clad figure of a lad, whom he was piercing with a stubby two-edged sword, his gloating smile met by a look of horror which gradually became transformed into one of unutterable hatred. The young figure sank lifeless, but on its face the hate still lived.

Outside, in the darkness following the death of a flare, the dead man lowered the point of the bayonet till it was level with the throat of the Killer; then he sprang. There was a burst of many-colored flame which lighted the world in the consciousness of both. Then they were gone. Only the sulfurous odor of the lines hung over the ground, which steamed in the darkness like a fetid thing.