

## The Moving Finger Writes,



## ---AND HAVING WRIT---

"The meeting will come to order—"

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Three of us were talking—three of us, that is, of the Los Angeles Science and Fantasy League.

"Well, there goes one year of Unknown!" said Guy Amory, fan author, flipping through the pages of the March, 1940, issue. "And a pretty darned nice year at that, for a new magazine. Quite a record."

"You said it," Anthony Corvais put in, leaning against his stack of Unknowns.

"Well," said I, "which issue did you guys like best?"

"All of them," said Corvais. "They all had their points. Naturally, we all think that 'Sinister Barrier,' 'Slaves of Sleep' and 'The Ghoul' are the finest yet printed. But we can't neglect the smaller stories either."

"Hell, no," cried Amory. "H. L. Gold's 'Trouble With Water,' for instance."

"And Mona Farnsworth's 'Who Wants Power,'" I added.

"'Divide and Rule'" blurted Corvais. "Don't forget that one by De Camp."

"I think Robert Bloch's story about the vampire 'Cloak' was one of the finest things he's ever done," I said.

"And I think that 'Returned from

Hell' was the only snag hit by Unknown in all its issues." It was Amory who spoke. We both agreed with him. "But in the June issue there were two excellent stories, one by De Camp called 'The Gnarly Man,' I believe, and Guernsey's 'The Hexer.'"

"That was a good issue," I said. "Remember Coley's 'Don't Go Haunting'? That ending knocked me for a loop."

"The July issue! Ah!" Amory picked it up and flourished it. "Containing Hubbard's 'Slaves of Sleep'! I stayed up all night finishing it. The yarn scintillated! And again L. Sprague de Camp came along with 'Nothing in the Rules'—the tail of a mermaid professional swimmer." He chuckled at his feeble pun and we bombarded him with insults.

"August issue of Unknown," I said. "'The Ghoul,' another thriller-diller by Hubbard. That one certainly gave us a Ron for our money!"

"Kill him!" bawled Amory, looking for his flesh-eating ghoul.

"But look!" I hurried on. "Kuttner had a story in that issue, too. 'The Misguided Halo' it was. And darned good."

Amory looked at the wall in back of me. "Isn't that the illustration from Kuttner's story there, Brad?" he asked. I nodded: "I picked it up in New York at the con-

vention last year. Kramer did it. Those other illustrations are by Cartier and Isip."

"Cartier's work is humorous classic," Corvais put in.

"Isip is the sparkler when it comes to sweeping line and delicate work, though," said Amory. "Kramer isn't quite as good; nor Gilmore, but Wesso comes through O. K. in spots. What Unknown needs is some Rogers interiors like those for 'Divide and Rule.'"

"Let's get back to criticizing the stories," I complained. "How do we like 'None But Lucifer'?"

"Shines out like a nova," said Amory.

"I agree." Corvais glanced through the September issue. "Ray Cummings had a neat little fabrication in 'Portrait.' 'Over the Border' was a striking article, too, by Russell. Guernsey's 'Quicksand' was weird."

"October issue next," I said. "What was the best story?"

"'God in a Garden,' by Theodore Sturgeon!" was the unanimous verdict. Second: "The Elder Gods" by Stuart.

"'The Monocle' and 'The Bronze Door' in the November issue were two stories that started out nicely but fizzled," said Amory. "I was sorry to see it happen. Unknown stumbled that issue and almost fell down."

"December brought 'Johnny on the Spot,' a brief but glittering bit," Corvais remarked, squinting at the contents page. "Nice cover by Cartier, his first. Phillips' article 'Time Travel Happens' amazed me. 'Lest Darkness Fall' was one of De Camp's finest."

"I elect 'Swamp Train' as the best in January," I said. "Next place goes to A. E. Van Vogt for 'The Sea Thing.' And in February it was Hubbard's 'Death's Deputy.'"

"That winds up the first year of Unknown then," Amory said.

"How about writing down our favorite covers for the year," I suggested. So it was done. Best covers done by Cartier—December and February issues. Scott's cover for "Returned From Hell" most effective. "Sinister Barrier" cover best symbolic. November cover voted unimpressive. Best interior pics done for "The Ghoul" and "Death's Deputy" by Cartier. Welcome feature—poetry. Welcomed artist—Virgil Finlay. What we want more of: Theodore Sturgeon. Best short stories of the year in Amory's words: "The Cloak," "God in a Garden" and "Misguided Halo." Other

wants—more articles. We also suggest handling of a cover by new artist Hannes Bok and perhaps one or two by Rogers. Approved wholeheartedly—the addition of the two words Fantasy Fiction to Unknown.

And the March, 1940, copy? Williamson's story starts out imposingly. "On the Knees of the Gods" comes to a finish that is faultless. Theodore Sturgeon hits the bull's-eye with his punny "Derm Fool!" We nominate it for an Academy Award. And say, why not have a Fantasy Award at the end of each year and a bonus for the winner? Isip's first cover is satisfactory, but his element is interior line.

So, into another celestial year zooms the rocket Unknown on a brilliant path of fine stories.

The Unknown broth, or should we call it soup, has been a spicy monthly meal for we readers. Keep the broth a-boiling.—The Three Fictioneers—transmitted by Ray Bradbury, Los Angeles, Calif.

Actually, Heinlein's original title was "Magic, Inc." We had to change it because "Magic" constituted part of the preceding novel, "The Mathematics of Magic." Heinlein's vocabulary of magical terms is authentic, his other words accepted colloquialisms.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I definitely enjoyed "The Devil Makes the Law," but I believe Heinlein might have chosen a more appropriate title—say, "Magic, Incorporated," for instance—as actually, it was not the Devil who made the law—except in his own Half World—but Ditworth, a pseudohuman demon.

Notwithstanding the fact that I derived great pleasure from his novel, and would be the first to welcome more of his yarns in Unknown, I am firmly of the opinion that R. Heinlein must have a wonderfully unabridged—and unique—dictionary at his disposal. Androids (p. 63), gonifs (p. 48), black and red grimoires (p. 62), and Arcane Laws (pp. 21, 62) were never in any dictionary or encyclopedia I have ever referred to. Neither were stonkered (p. 23), and apparotation (p. 18)—the latter, though, might perhaps be justified as a futuristic term not thought up yet. Discommode (p. 48), a rare form of incom-

mode, was used, and what on earth is a "goon squad" (p. 52)? Finally, mandragoras and mandrakes were herbs the last I knew anything about them. So much for that.

What was it that flooded Archie Fraser's store? From Jedson's remark on page 17, I was under the impression that it was supposed to have been an undine—but an undine is a female water spirit—usually beautiful—and neither Cartier's illustration of a monster slug, nor Heinlein's unpleasant description of a rather disgusting shapeless something or other that "dripped and spread its slimy moisture to the edge of the magic ring," and "stank of fish, kelp and iodine" seemed to bear out such an idea.

Another thing. According to the theory of Paracelsus, a salamander was a being who inhabited the element fire, and did not constitute it. A different theory is that it is a mythical animal having the power to endure fire without harm—but in either case, *fire burns*. Could it be that Heinlein's specimen is a mutation?

My last criticism. Heinlein certainly picked a very novel assortment of characters to be wing commanders and the Fallen Thrones for Satan's army of demons. Let me explain:

**BEEZLEBUB**—I believe this was just a misspelling of Beelzebub, the fallen angel ranking immediately below Satan.

**LEVIATHAN**—This name is either a product of Heinlein's imagination, or was suggested by Thomas Hobbes' great work, "The Leviathan," which expounds his—Hobbes'—theories of government. Or it may have been taken from the Biblical leviathan, an aquatic monster.

**ASHTORETH**—the goddess of fertility and of sexual love. She was also regarded by the classical nations as a moon-goddess. (Not exactly the name for a demon. How come Heinlein overlooked Belial?)

**ABADDON**—Ah, Heinlein is getting warmer. Abaddon is the name of the destroying angel of the bottomless pit. (See Rev. 9:11.)

**MAMMON**—In Milton's "Paradise Lost," Mammon was the demon of Cupidity; in the Gospels, Mammon was a sort of personified riches.

**THEUTUS**—Heinlein seems to have been struggling with two ideas: Thetis, a Nereid of Greek myth, and theurgy, a kind of occult art in which the operator may evoke the aid of beneficent spirits. Heinlein apparently compromised with himself and took a little of each. Result—Theutus.

**ASMODEUS**—a demon of Hebrew story who plays an important role in the book of Tobit.

**INCUBUS**—an evil demon supposed to



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haunt the sleep of mortals and cause nightmares.—R: B: Kimball, 140 Parkchester Road, New York, N. Y.

Late comer to the fold.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Thanks again and again for a superb magazine. Hitherto I have been among that number of foolish beings who revel in showing how superior they are by despising pulp magazines. Now, I am happy to state, I am a convert and am crusading among a particular class of my friends to show the high standard of reading matter and unadulterated enjoyment that is found in Unknown.

Sprague de Camp's "Mathematics of Magic" was simply de-lovely. More of Harold Shea and Reed Chalmers. Allister Park's adventures were rather engrossing; and those of Archie in the incomparable "Devil Makes the Law" were whacky, but extremely amusing. "Fear" was horribly delightful, in fact virtually all your novels were great except for a very few which broached the mediocre. The shorts tend to be definitely weak.

I am much in favor of the new frock Unknown is wearing, which won over some of my conservative friends who were afraid to be seen reading magazines with grotesque covers.

If all Unknown possessed was L. Sprague de Camp, L. Ron Hubbard and H. L. Gold, with delightfully whacky Edd Cartier to handle the illustrations, it would still keep on with no friction to clog its wheels to gather more and more readers while rolling to greater heights. By the way, I've always wondered what sort of persons de Camp and Cartier were.

I am about to read "Sinister Barrier," and hope it is what it's cracked up to be.—Eugene V. Walter, 250 E. Gun Hill Rd., The Bronx, N. Y.

24

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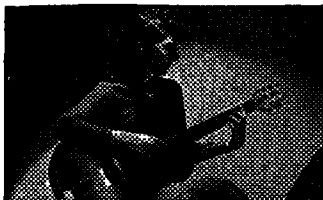
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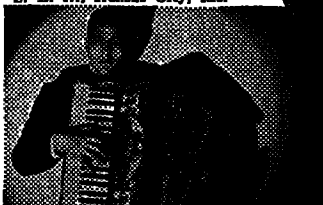
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