

fantastic

ADVENTURES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

Contents for August, 1942

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Front cover painting by Robert Gibson Jones illustrating a scene from *The Daughter of Thor*. Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul depicting *Vulcan—God of Heavy Industry*. Illustrations by Bill Rand; Robert Fuqua; Bill Brady; Ned Hadley; Malcolm Smith; Rod Ruth; Ed Gordon; Robert Gibson Jones

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

WHILE on the subject of covers, we call attention to the second of our "Gods Of Olympus" series, on the back cover, painted by the old master Frank R. Paul. This one's Vulcan, the god of heavy industry, and it's a very fine portrayal of it, you'll agree.

VULCAN— God of Heavy Industry

by HENRY GADE

**The Roman God of devouring flame, who masquerades
as a smith and forges weapons for the Olympians**

IF we are to believe the legends about him, Vulcan is a fake. He purports to be the god of smiths, the deity of the sword and plowshare, quite respectable, and a decent citizen of Olympus. But actually, it is doubtful if he, like Hephaestus, is any deity of the smith at all, but has merely stolen from that god his characteristics as a mask to his true nature.

According to Virgil's Aeneid (5. 662), Vulcan is the god of devouring flame. His official title is Volcanus, according to the Romans. He is their god of fire.

Perhaps the most noted place on Earth that can be associated with his name is a place in the Comitium called "area Volcani" which was also called "Volcanal." At this place, on August 23, the Flamen Volcanalis sacrificed, and the heads of Roman families threw small fish, which the Tiber fishermen sold on the spot, into the fire in a strange rite.

The popular conception of the name Vulcan being a derivative of volcano, is probably completely unfounded, since nowhere is Vulcan associated with the eruptions of a volcano. The word is a direct derivative of the Roman word for fire. And his association is always with an unnatural fire, not that of nature.

Vulcan also had a surname, Mulciber, which was a contradiction of his more familiar name, since it meant that he had power to allay conflagrations, to put out fires.

In historical times, Vulcan's association with conflagrations becomes apparent. For instance, when Augustus organized the city to check fires, he designated areas known as *regiones* and *vici*. By this method a careful check was kept, and the danger from fires alleviated.

The *magistri victorum*, officers of these administrative districts, worshipped Vulcan as *Volcanus quietus augustus*. On August 23 they also sacrificed to him, together with Ops Opifera and the Nymphae, which suggests the need of water in quenching the flames.

The cult of Vulcan also became very famous at Ostia, where most of the corn of the Roman population was stored. Safety from fire was

very vital at this place, because it fed the Romans.

Since Vulcan is most consistently associated with the forging of swords, it must be logical, that at some time in history, someone associated with fire created a weapon of this type which became very famous and valuable. It was a secret that, like the builder of a better mousetrap today, would bring many people to his door.

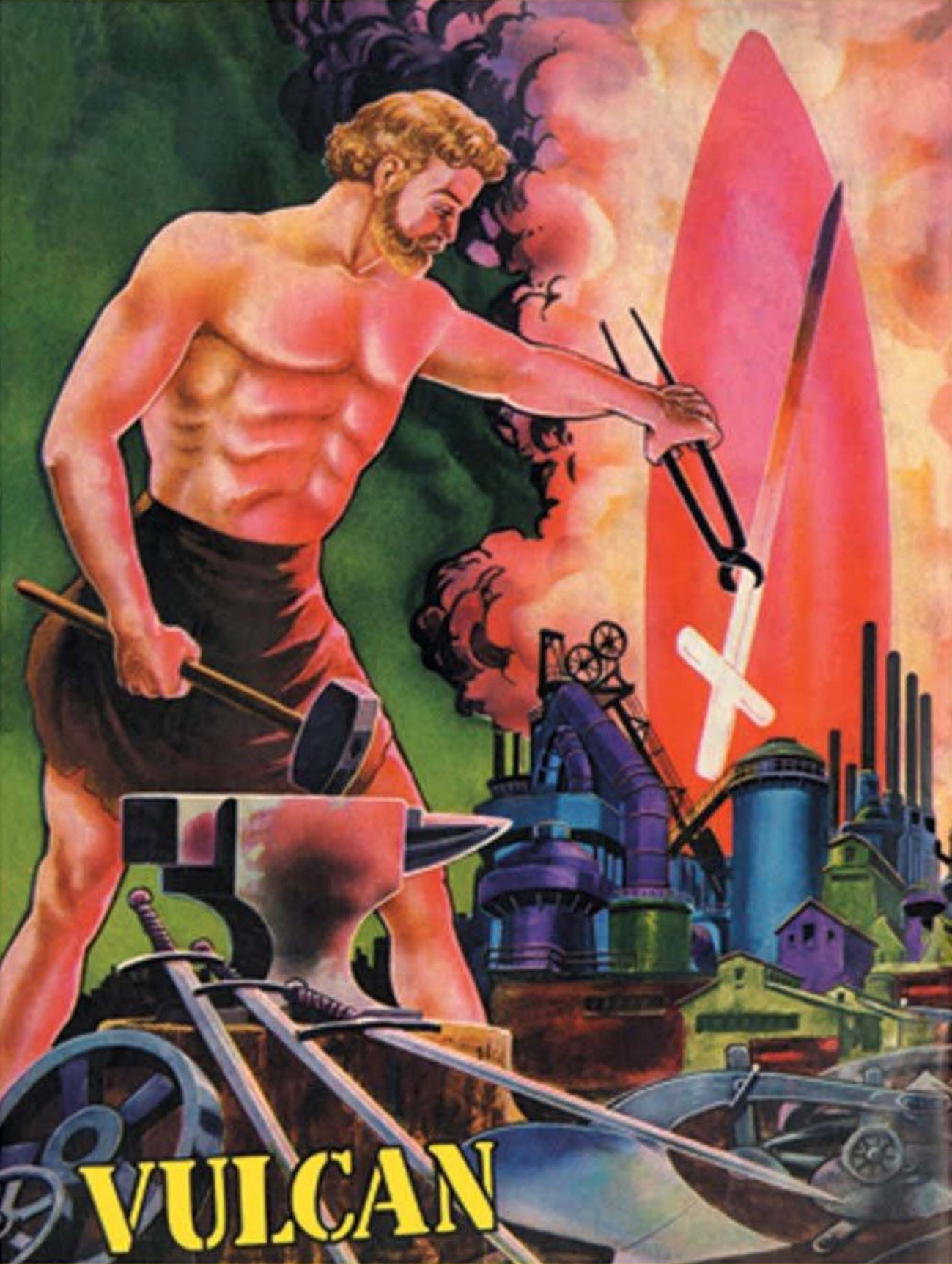
Perhaps we can safely say that Vulcan, from time immemorial, was a mythical figure blamed for all terrible fires, such as forest fires (caused by a flaming sword—of lightning—from the sky); fires which destroyed cities, etc. Thus he became the god of devouring flame.

Then when the theft of the reputation of Hephaestus occurred, it seems evident that it was the work of this mysterious smith who became known as a "god" of flame and steel (and therefore of industry) because of his flaming forge, but who disliked the cognomen of Vulcan because of the fear and hate it instilled because of his flaming deeds of death and destruction.

Later, when Augustus developed his system of fire prevention, his disguise became even more complete, and perhaps it was Augustus himself who gave him the name of Mulciber. The order to sacrifice to Ops Opifera and the Nymphae at the same rites with Vulcan is an obvious effort to tie him up with water and the quenching of flame. This must have been necessary to allay the superstitions of the people over his acts designed to control fire, which to them was a diety, and not to be tampered with, much less controlled, lest he devour them in anger.

The legend surrounding smiths, relating to their bravery, only becomes understandable when we associate him with this desperate fear of fire, since it took a brave man to turn fire to his own use, and forge a sword in its fiery heart. Thus we can easily understand how the first smith became a god, and a god he didn't desire to be at all. The natural result was the adoption of a disguise.

Therefore, we can say that Vulcan, the god of heavy industry, as we know him today, once was a man, and not a god born of myth.



GOD OF HEAVY INDUSTRY

Legend tells of his forge in the sky, and of magic swords and plowshares that are made on it. Is it legend of god or man? (See page 238 for details)