

Wandering Griffin

By LOUISE SCOTT

(On seeing an Italian jug in the University Museum)

The Adriatic shore of Italy
across the sea from the Illyrian coast
once saw the heyday of a pottery
called Gnathia ware, Apulia's ancient boast.
It may be there a Grecian griffin went,
cast in perpetual bronze. Such feral face,
part bird, part snake, aggressive ornament
immobilized with ibex on a vase
or cauldron, jug or oriental tomb,
recalls a gargoyle from whose vulture beak
gush seasonal rains, while from this classic flume
flowed wine to cool the throat of early Greek.
Italian potters modelled myth and beast
in handing down the spirit of the East.



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about 1800 tablets of the Third Ur Dynasty, as well as taking an important share in the *Royal Inscriptions*.

It was through the Ur Expedition and all the work which grew out of it that the writer of these lines was privileged to know Legrain, who visited London (and his native land) both at the ends of his seasons in the field and at other times in furtherance of work upon his publications, and also to represent Philadelphia in the division of the Ur antiquities allotted to the Expedition after deduction of the major share retained by the Iraq Museum. When the splendid objects from the Royal Tombs were in the balance these occasions were sometimes exciting. Particularly remembered was the decision about the celebrated mosaic 'standard' of Ur; it had been carefully set against a number of objects held to be collectively its equal, but both sides naturally hoped for the 'standard,' and it was decided in the end, after

much discussion, that it would be fairest to toss for the choice. When the hazard went against him Legrain took this with the perfect urbanity and good temper which he brought unfailingly to all these passages, whatever their issue, often ending with a joke in the manner and accent which added so much to the wit and charm of his conversation, never more pointed than when detailing his experiences on the 'dig,' commenting slyly upon the little oddities of his companions, or complaining with half-serious indignation about the young Philadelphians who were allowed to meddle with the exhibition of his beloved antiquities. All his friends would wish to have been remembered, especially in this vein of mischief, during the latter years of a man and a scholar in both characters so memorable himself, and so unmistakably a child of the happy country of his birth.

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