

THE GRIFFIN
THE COAT-OF-ARMS OF PERUGIA *



Fig. 1. - Coat - of - arms of modern Perugia, *Grifo rampante*. Above it, the badge of the Commune.

The Griffin originally was not Etruscan. The idea of this fantastic, composite creature was born in the haunted gloom of the forested mountains of north-east Russia. It had no kinship with the sunny shores of the Mediterranean. It took

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shape out of the shadowy fears floating in an atmosphere of cruel snows, icy hurricanes, long sunless winters. Men possessed of rather primitive minds saw vague forms slinking furtively from shadow to shadow, fierce eyes glaring from a dark hole, and from their imaginings they built up a strange beast. It moved swiftly, so they endowed it with foreparts like those of an eagle; it was strong and menacing, so its hind parts were those of the lion, King of the Wild Beast World. In this manner was the Griffin conceived.

A myth grew up. Bands of griffins came to inhabit the recesses of the hills, and were made the guardians of the gold hidden in the caves. Later versions of the legend spoke of one race of people as being the most dangerous of the robbers — the one-eyed race of the Arimaspi.

The myth nurtured in the far north filtered in the course of years to the knowledge of the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean. When it was already centuries old the historian Herodotus, writing about 500 B.C., referred to it in his «History». He expressed the opinion that it had travelled south by way of the Scythians, and also stated his disbelief in the 'one eyed race' of men. The subject caught the fancy of the pottery artists of these lands and it was used as a decorative theme on the products of Corinth, the Isles and Asia Minor coatts, from the seventh century B. C. onwards. Etruria was inundated with Greek pottery of every description, so the legend of the Griffin became familiar in many Etruscan cities.

Such was the early story of the Griffin which was to find a permanent home in Perugia.

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What is known about the appearance of the Griffin in Perugian territory? The earliest relics which give any information are the fragments of ornamental bronze plating found at San Mariano, about 6 kms. south-west of the city, where apparently there had existed a settlement of Etruscan people and also a Sacred Grove. The subjects used for decorative motives were very varied, including human beings, divinities, horses, sphinxes, lions and griffins. The Greek pottery found in the same place fixed the date approximately in the latter part of the sixth century B.C. The bronzes may have been made in Caere or in Vetulonia, but that is less important than the facts that the legendary griffin might have been familiar to the people living in or near Perugia at that time, and that trade was being carried on with the Greeks, probably through Etruscan ports on the west coast.

Eventually the strange beast must have found favour with the Perugians, for the funerary urns belonging to the fourth and third centuries B.C. found on the Palazzone supply definite information about the form in which the griffin was represented during that period, when, also, Greek subjects were in common use for the bas-reliefs on the fronts of the urns made in Perugia.

Here there may be stated an observation which I have made concerning the general representation of the griffin. It was given two distinct characters in different periods. Up till the first part of the fourteenth century it was the *Grifo passante*. The second type was the *Grifo rampante*, appearing after that date. A de-

finite date for this was fixed when it was formally adopted by the city as its *stemma* in 1378.

It is the griffin *passante* (female) which is used on the Palazzone urns. The best preserved and most typical example is that which stands by itself on one of the urns. The animal is walking in heraldic style, towards the left, one fore foot raised from the ground and touching one of the four corner rosettes of the frame. She was the guardian of the ashes of the dead (fig. 2).

In the scene on the second urn, a fierce *grifonessa* is launching herself on a bearded, armed man whom she has struck to the ground. The third urn presents



Fig. 2. - Griffin on urn from Palazzone.

a dramatic conflict; what appears to be a woman equipped with a sword and a semilunar shield is being forced down under the terrible claws of an attacking griffin (fig. 3). The contest on the next urn is between the monster and a man. The man is down on his knees, and is raising his oval shield as a very hopeless defence against the animal, which has forced him down in a savage rush.

In the archeological museum there is a terracotta urn on the front of which is represented a scene in which two female griffins are facing each other across a head of Medusa. They are extremely thin, with the ribs showing through the skin. They show several unusual features: the wings are prolonged backwards and curved over the haunches, the tail is carried downwards between the hind legs and rests on the ground, the ears are very prominent, the beak is very strongly curved (fig. 4).

On the left end of the urn is represented a fantastic animal; it is a combination of a winged griffin and a dolphin. The cover of the urn represents a



Fig. 3. - A Griffin fighting with a woman; on urn from Palazzone.



Fig. 4. - Two female Griffins on terracotta urn in Archaeological Museum.

kline, on which rests the figure of a woman. The urn is probably of the same date as those in the Palazzone; it was found in the neighbourhood of Perugia

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The Etruscan period of history closed, but some details in art remained in use for centuries afterwards. The employment of the griffin, for instance, as a decorative motive in sculpture was quite common well into medieval times. Perugia, however, can offer us no concrete example of its devotion to the griffin of its tombs until the twelfth (or, to be safe) the thirteenth century. When we do find it, is enjoying such high favour that its popularity must have been of long duration.

What was now the setting in social life for the Griffin? The thirteenth was a wonderful century in the history of Perugia. The atmosphere vibrated with intense satisfaction over military achievements; there was great content in the prosperity being built up by the highly organized activities in the form of the *Arti*, or Guilds; increasingly successful intercourse with the world outside the city was adding to the sense of importance. The Commune was strengthening its legislative structure, whilst civic pride and ambition grew apace. One outlet for the enthusiasm and affluence was found in great building projects. A fitting centre for the city's public functions and a dignified residence for the Prior was raised in the Palazzo dei Priori, completed in its first form in 1293-1297, to be followed almost at once by an extension. The lovely Fontana Maggiore was completed in 1278.

So frequently were the Popes in residence in Perugia during the century that it is not surprising that the city was sometimes spoken of as the «Perugian Vatican». Popes were elected there and Popes died there; some came as to a place more pleasant and more salubrious than Rome, some used it as a fortress from which to direct their military operations.

Many churches were built or improved during the period. One of these was raised to commemorate one of the city's protector saints, S. Ercolano, in 1297-1316. The whole city must have cherished the memory of the shrewd, devoted soldier-bishop who had headed the city's resistance against Totila and his Goths in 547.

The high honour in which S. Ercolano was held by the civic authorities was shown by the fact that his image was used for official seals of the Corporation in the thirteenth century. Most curiously, his companion on the seals may be a griffin.

On one particular seal, (now in the civic museum) the Bishop is seated on a throne, whilst the griffin has been given a place close to his feet, though not under them (fig. 5). The two guardians of the city — the faithful dog at its master's feet after their task is done — is that the interpretation of this device? Perhaps the Griffin was the city's «mascot» in the Saint's day, and if so, he might have been pleased to think that many centuries later it would be placed by his side as a supporter of the Church and the city. A second seal is preserved in the museum along with this one; it bears a *grifo passante* (fig. 6).

Long before the end of the thirteenth century the emblematic significance of the Griffin must have been accepted widely as being typical of the vigilant guardian. On a great wooden chest (now in the civic gallery), used by voters in the

city elections, the painted exterior depicts the emblems of the Guilds, and it is a remarkable fact that in many cases the Griffin has been chosen as the symbol of protection, by bodies ranging from the financiers to the butchers.



Fig. 5. - Civic seal of S. Ercolano and Griffin; probably late 13th, or 14th century.

The history of the Guilds in Perugia goes well back into the twelfth century. Known as the *Arti* they were severely organized associations of industrial pursuits in the city; in fact, they came to constitute the upper strata of the popu-



Fig. 6. - Civic seal of *Grifo passante*; probably late 13th, or 14th century.

lation, for every member of a Guild was an employer or his relative, whilst the paid employees were not members. They became the ruling class before a ruling class of nobles came into being. The main Guilds were very powerful; they

made and administered their own laws within their own courts, two of which still exist. Each had its own *stemma* or badge, which was the device on the pennon which headed them as a definite unit on the battle-field.

The Guild of the Money-changers was one of the earliest to be incorporated and became extremely important for it had charge of the finances of the city. Its consuls were already accepted in 1269. It chose the Griffin for its coat-of-arms, and its representation of it has left us an excellent idea of the early type of the *grifo passante*. In the Sala di Udianza del Collegio del Cambio (the court-room) the *stemma* is carved in wood above the tribune. Two griffins, facing each other, stand one on each side of the figure of Justice, her supporters, her watch-dogs. The carvings were executed about the end of the fifteenth century.



Fig. 7. - *Stemma* of the Collegio del Cambio.

The design expresses very forcibly the meaning which it is intended to convey. The Griffin stands on a great iron-bound chest which is symbolic of the wealth of the Guild and of the city; its aspect is strong and vigilant but not ferocious or aggressive. Three of its feet are planted firmly on the coffer, whilst the fourth, with its eagle talons outspread, is raised to indicate warning of swift movement. The curved beak is open and the long slender tongue protrudes. Amongst the feathers on the top of the head appear what are taken to be two upright ears, as well as the semblance of a small crown. The whole conception is expressive of wardenship of protection, as with the Griffin in the Ural Mountains (fig. 7).

The appearance of the crown on the *stemme* of the Guilds is of notable importance. It is a heraldic emblem. Its first appearance in Italy seems to have been

made in the first half of the XIII century, when it was placed on their helmets by commanders in the army. At a later date it was adopted by Kings on their helmets; it also became the emblem of noble houses, of corporations, and of cities; many variations were evolved.

The crowns of the *Arti* of Perugia were all alike; each consists of a simple circular band of metal from which spring five three-lobed leaves. Probably in the thirteenth century it was also to be seen on the *gonfalone* of the city. It is a remarkable fact that this part of the *stemma* has never been changed in detail; it is the same today as we see it in the *stemma* of the Cambio. In heraldry the *corona* is a definite mark of a definite rank of some kind, used in perpetuity by an individual or constitutional body.

The identity of the *corona* in the modern *stemma* of Perugia with that of the Guilds (*Arti*) in the thirteenth century is a most conclusive piece of evidence of important facts. It proves, beyond a doubt, the continuity of the whole *stemma*, in the two forms of *passante* and *rampante* up to the present time. It is also a proof that the *Grifo passante*, as seen in the *stemma* of the Cambio (for example) was also the *stemma*, radically, of the city at that time.

Summarizing chronology of the *Stemma* we have:

1) The heraldic institution of a *corona*, a band of metal on the helmet, by leaders in battle. A general practice. In the first half of the 13th century.

2) In the second half, approximately, of the 13th century, the city of Perugia adopted a form of *corona* as a sign of rank. They placed it over a *Grifo passante*, so as to form a *stemma* for the city.

3) During the 13th century several of the Guilds adopted, with modifications, the crowned *Grifo passante*, as a *stemma*.

4) In 1378, the city adopted as its *stemma* a crowned *Grifo rampante*, which was derived from the *Grifo passante* (see below).

Probably of the same age and similar standing with the Collegio del Cambio was the Collegio della Mercanzia. In its Audience Hall under the Palazzo Comunale is to be seen carved high over the tribunal its *stemma* (fig. 8). It resembles very closely that of the Guild of the Cambio in the comparatively pacific but strong and watchful attitude of the creature, which is again standing on three legs and holding aloft the fourth. One minor difference between the two badges is that there is only a slight suggestion of a crown among the tuft of feathers on the head. Here again the Griffin appears above the seat of Justice. The carving belongs to the fifteenth century. The dates at which the emblems were adopted officially by the Guilds are unknown.

Various other Guilds (the Notaries, the Doctors, the Pharmicists, the Butchers) employed the griffin in the composition of their coats-of-arms in conjunction with emblems of their craft or profession.

All the above evidence points to the conclusion that the Griffin was regarded by the builders of the city's industries as being a worthy symbolic *Guardian* of their interests.

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The Perugians of the thirteenth century honoured their Griffin as it might have been a suitable ally for their patron saints. But what can explain the amazing fact that Dante, in his *Divina Commedia*, has immortalized the legendary foreign

conception, has indeed selected it for the highest role of all symbolism, that of the Saviour of mankind. Dante was a Florentine, and Florence harboured no Etruscan traditions; where did Dante find his inspiration?

In the 29th canto of the *Purgatorio* Dante wrote:

« Lo spazio dentro a lor quattro contenne
 Un carro in su le rote trionfale,
 Ch'al collo d'un grifon tirato venne.
 Ed esso tendea su l'una e l'altra ale
 Tra la mezzana e le tre e tre liste,
 Sì ch'a nulla fendendo facea male.
 Tanto salivan che non eran viste;
 Le membra d'oro avea quant'era uccello,
 E bianche l'altre di vermiglio miste.
 Non che Roma di carro così bello
 Rallegrasse Affricano, ovvero Augusto »...

The radiant car represents the Church Triumphant; its motive power, its hope of progress, is drawn from the Saviour who founded it, that is, from His personification of the Griffin. Dante sees in it the two-fold nature of the kingdom which includes heaven and earth. He sees the white and the gold and the vermilion of the image. In cantos 30, 31, and 32 the victorious advance of the car is described, the Griffin again being mentioned.

What impulse impelled Dante to select the Griffin? Did he visit Perugia and was he struck by the originality of the symbol which was so popular? Authorities are divided on the likelihood of the poet's ever having visited the city. Dante travelled widely in Italy previous to his exile, and may very likely have stayed in Perugia. He was in Rome, acting as an ambassador to the Pope, on that date in February 1302 when he was exiled for life by his fellow-citizens. Shortly afterwards he went to Arezzo, the headquarters of the political party with which he subsequently fought.

For me, personally, the answer to the question about his sojourn is given in a passage in the 11th canto of *Il Paradiso*:

« Intra Tupino e l'acqua che discende
 Del colle eletto dal beato Ubaldo,
 Fertile costa d'alto monte pende,
 Onde Perugia sente freddo e caldo
 Da porta Sole; e dietro le piange
 Per greve giogo Nocera con Gualdo.
 Di quella costa, là dov'ella frange
 Più sua rattezza, nacque al mondo un sole,
 Come fa questo talvolta di Gange.
 Però chi d'esso loco fa parole
 Non dica Ascesi, chè direbbe corto,
 Ma Oriente, se proprio dir vuole.
 Non era ancor molto lontan dall'orto,
 Ch'ei cominciò a far sentir la terra
 Della sua gran virtude alcun conforto »...

No one could have written these lines unless he had stood on the little terrace on Porta Sole in Perugia, and had gazed on Monte Subasio and Assisi until the spirit of Saint Francis had taken possession of his soul, until the very ground beneath his feet suggested to him that the Saint had come as a *Sun* to illuminate the world. Who but one familiar with the city ever heard of its Porta Sole? Could anyone devoid of personally local knowledge use so naturally and

accurately two names of insignificant towns like Nocera and Gualdo and would have knowledge of what they had suffered but recently at the hands of Perugians themselves? The two streams rising on the sacred hill, one of them Topino, he would have to know. And who except one who had consorted with the people of Perugia would have introduced as familiar weather trials the blazing heat of



Fig. 8. - *Stemma* of the Collegio della Mercanzia.

the midsummer sun or the piercing winds which sweep down from the mountains? Every line of the verses gives us answer that it is the voice of one who had stood on that spot.

I have spent lingering hours in that quiet little Piazza: it refuses to be forgotten.

I feel sure that Dante once stood on Porta Sole, as no doubt Raphael at a later date once stood, and drank in deep draughts of the lovely spiritual beauty of Umbria.

There is some slight confirmation of Dante's familiarity with Perugia in a passage in which Dante, as they are passing through the fourth heaven — the Sun — makes Saint Thomas Aquinas tell the story of S. Francis. Porta Sole receives the first rays of morning sunshine. Thomas Aquinas had been a monk in San Domenico.

If Dante did visit Perugia about this time he could not have failed to be impressed by the predominance of the Griffin as a symbol which was held in



Fig. 9. - Two female Griffins sarcophagus in Tarquinia Museum.

high esteem; stored up in his mind the impression might have offered itself when he wanted an emblematic figure to draw his triumphal car. As he passed to and fro in the city did he see the heraldic beast leading in another sphere of the life of the city — as the device on its battle-flag? It was most probable. When the heads of the first of the Guilds were searching for a suitable emblem, it would be natural, considering that they were essentially identical with the communal authorities, that their thoughts would turn to the city's *stemma*. On the other hand, they might have found their object on some Etruscan relic. If the first supposition was correct then we know that in the thirteenth century Perugia's coat-of-arms, its herald in battle, was the *Grifo passante*, radically similar though not necessarily identical with the form preserved in the *stemme* of the chief Guilds.

Whether it was the Commune directly, or the Guilds indirectly who raised

the Griffin to its elevated function there remains the problem of the prototype from which the device was copied and adapted.

Nothing found in Etruscan tombs in Perugia supplies us with any good clue. But such a model must have been available, and have been lost again.

Since that time very suggestive material has come to light. I saw, in 1961, in the Museum of Tarquinia, a sarcophagus of the third (or second) century B. C., the front panel of which was occupied almost entirely by two *grifoni passanti* which are nearly duplicates of those used for the *stemma* of the Guild of Money-changers. The resemblance is striking; it is intrinsic, though there are differences in details (fig. 9).

The two animals, both female, face each other, each with a fore foot raised to touch a conventional *patera* which serves as a centrepiece and which may be compared with the 'rosettes' on the urns from the Palazzone. In both animals it is the limb which is the farthest from the spectator which is raised (i.e. one right, one left). The bodies are similar in shape to those in Perugia; the limbs are disposed in the same attitudes; there is the same air of strength and alertness, a front bold but free from ferocity. Some of the details are obviously arranged so as to fit into the available space. The most important of these is that the tufted lion tails, instead of curling upwards and back over the bodies, are tucked between the animal's legs. The heads are the parts which differ most from those in the Perugian *stemma*, and the head of the animal on the left differs decidedly from that of the other, being longer and bare of feathers, resembling very closely that of the true eagle, except that a real eagle has no ears visible.

The fact is indubitable. The man who designed the first griffin *passante*, whether for the Commune or for the Guilds, must have had access to some such model as those to be seen on the Tarquinia sarcophagus.

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The continuity of the life of the griffin legend from Etruscan to medieval times was due to a blend of ideology, sentiment and public pride, which made it Perugia's own peculiar possession. There is, however, another approach to the subject, another set of tracks along which the legend may have spread, which deserves very serious consideration. It was not confined to Perugia. The principle at the heart of this explanatory theory is that *the artist* was the chief agent involved; he took this griffin figure and appraised it only (or mainly) with regard to its value as an element of beauty in his schemes of decoration. Its symbolism did not touch him except when it expressed something in his artistic composition. He used it in wood and stone and bronze; he employed it in painting, low relief sculpture and in the full round. The practice of treating the griffin as an artistic motive was widespread in Italy, regardless of period. It is illustrated by three main examples in Perugia herself.

Another artistic habit of very frequent occurrence is the association of the griffin with the lion in decorative schemes. This was a very old practice, familiar indeed to Etruscan workers in bronze and ceramics; in the sixth (? seventh) century B. C. *lebetes* made in Vetulonia, the heads of lions and griffins are used alternately in decorations. Examples are to be found all over Italy, and again in Perugia. There is here no intermixture of ideology or politics.

The general principle of the responsibility of the artist for the continuation of the griffin cult is beyond doubt. To what extent can it, without distortion or

prejudice, be applied to answering some of the questions concerning the origin of the *stemma of Perugia*? The three monuments which may be regarded as being inspired purely by artistic reasoning may be helpful if examined with that in mind.

The first example is found in the Fontana Maggiore (1275-1278). There Nicola Pisano has allotted two adjacent panels in the lower basin to the Griffin and the



Fig. 10. - Sculptured Griffin and calf on the cast doorway of the Palazzo dei Priori.
(ed. Alinari)

Lion respectively, labelled *Grifex* and *Leo*. These are usually described, on no specific grounds, as « emblems of the city ». As two out of twenty-five mixed subjects in the series, their position would not be sufficiently eminent. Perugia was, at this time, a supporter of the Popes against the Emperors, and when Perugia's forces went out to battle in the Guelphic cause their banner bearing the Griffin would of course accompany that of the Gueiphic Lion. The two would be conspicuously suggestive to the sculptor. The Griffin is reduced to an *ornament*.

For the second illustration of the theory we must go to the handsome doorway on the Corso which gives access to the interior of the Palazzo dei Priori. This

was finished in 1340. The door is flanked by two pilasters each of which stands on the back of a lion. Each pilaster is crowned with a group sculptured in the round representing a griffin holding down a calf with its claws; this is a modified version of the emblem of the Butchers. There is no obvious reason why this subject should have been chosen for such an important position in the design. It is to be found elsewhere in the city where there is no explanation. I should judge that it is there simply because the artist thought its outlines were well suited to run in accord with the rest of the design. It is to be noted also that the Lion is again used in conjunction with the Griffin, but this springs from no local political sentiment (fig. 10).

The last and most important monument to be considered is one round which much controversy has circled without arriving at any agreed conclusion. It is the group composed of the two bronze figures of the Griffin and the Lion which occupies a position of prominence above the north portal of the Palazzo dei Priori, at the head of the ceremonial Scala della Vaccaria. The history of the figures is known in part, unfortunately only in part. They were in store in the Duomo in 1276; in 1284, they were taken out and repaired, the Griffin being given new wings but left without a tail; after that, they seem to have been incorporated in an older fountain on the Piazza Grande; in 1308, they were placed in the position which they now occupy. The date of origin of the bronzes may be thrown back to the middle of the thirteenth century. Francesco Santi has written an article in *Perusia* in which he discusses the bronze Griffin, and suggests that it is the work of a Venetian artist (fig. 11).

At the Etruscan Congress held in Perugia in 1961 Prof. Giacomo Caputo gave a highly rational and most stimulating address on the griffin of bronze standing on high at the outside of the Palazzo dei Priori. He was the first to put forth the hypothesis that the griffin of bronze pre-existed the heraldic bearings of the city instead of being a reproduction of them, and that it may be Etruscan and not medieval as it has always been considered. (See *St. Etr.*, XXIX, 1960, pp. 417-422: « La tradizione etrusca del grifo perugino e l'emblema di Perugia »).

[See further the order of the day approved by the Congress and published at page 560 of the same volume. E.N.]

In it he advocated taking down the bronzes for minute examination; this would give the safest chance of determining their workmanship and origin.

Whilst the general appearance of this griffin agrees with that of the traditional Etruscan type, there are quite significant differences in details. The right front limb is raised as usual to indicate walking (i.e. *passante*) but the foot is leonine, not aquiline; the attachment of the wings is different, though this may be traceable to the restoration; there is a minimum of feather and hair elements; a small beard, rather like that of a goat, is an addition fixed under the head — a greatly changed Etruscan Griffin. The platform on which the two animals stand seems to be a misfit — too short. *This griffin wears no crown.* This proves that it has no connection with the *stemma* of the city; it is purely decorative.

There arises the important question of the purpose for which this double monument was originally prepared. There must have been recurrent scenes of demolition, alteration and re-construction during the second half of the thirteenth century, and the Piazza Maggiore must often have been strewn with débris. Possibly one of the edifices which had to go had been adorned with the ornamental bronze group which would possess little or no political, religious or tra-

ditional implication. Such an incident in its history might account for the damage which it had sustained. The two figures might have been stationed one on each side of the door of an important building. Such a griffin would be the expression of an artist's conception of the composite creature, though the choice of subject



Fig. 11. - Bronze Griffin and Lion on the north door of the Palazzo dei Priori.
(ed. Atinari)

might have been influenced by the fashion of the day, by the prevalence of the two symbols in current social life. Certainly the very bare outline of the bronze griffin would never have acted as an inspiration for the fine *Grifo passante* of the Guilds, still less could it be conceived of as the model for the *stemma* of modern Perugia.

The two bronze figures I should take to belong to the general course of artistic development throughout Italy as a whole, tradition, ideology, politics interfering only as secondary factors.

The foregoing pages may be summarized in the following way. In Perugia, two factors acting for the conservation and utilization of the griffin as a symbol

may be traced. The first is the local attachment to the Etruscan original round which had grown up a religious and ideological tradition; this is illustrated in the *stemma* of the Guilds and the battle-standard of the city. The second is part of the artistic movement in general, and is represented in the Fontana Maggiore, the east door of the Palazzo, and the bronze griffin over the north door.

The *Grifo passante* is the city *stemma* of the thirteenth century and somewhat beyond it; within that period there is discernible not a single sign of a *Grifo rampante*.

Il Grifo rampante

Let us turn our attention to the early part of the sixteenth century and fix it on the facade of the church of Madonna della Luce. There, had been sculptured in excellent bas-relief (1575-1578) on either side of the door a griffin, guarding very rightly a Christian church, Dante might have thought. But these were no griffins such as Dante would ever have seen. They were, in fact, counterparts of the *stemma* of modern Perugia (fig. 12).

They are emblems of the *Church Militant*. As the fourteenth century wore on the spirit of the city grew too war-like to be content with the old battle-flag; it must have a banner more defiant, more aggressive, to lead it against its foes. Finally the city fathers gave their instructions: a griffin of silver on a field of red, talons, tongue and beak of gold, crowned with gold, rampant on one lion's paw. The result was the *Grifo rampante* which the General Council, in 1378, decreed should be the *stemma* of Perugia. It was this form which the sculptor of Madonna della Luce used for the keepers of the door.

An early representation of the *Grifo rampante* is to be found in the Chapel of the Priors in the Palazzo dei Priori. It is carved in wood above one of the seats of the Priors. It dates from about 1470. It may be compared with that on Madonna della Luce.

A minor instance of a decorative figure of the Griffin exists in the interior of the municipal palace. Leading from the eastern portal the main staircase takes one to the first floor. A door here leads into the Hall of the Priors, and over the doorway there is a representation of the griffin enclosed in a garland as a frame, a very ornamental work of the school of Agostino di Duccio (15th century). It is a *Grifo rampante*.

In devising the new version Perugia's long cherished Griffin was not wholly discarded. The designer removed its pedestal, poised it firm and erect on one lion's paw. He metamorphosed it. He raised aloft and thrust forward the three other limbs, with talons outspread ready to clutch and rend; the whip-like tail is about to lash out; the horrid beak curves over the gaping mouth from which the sharp tongue seems to be hissing hate; the ears have grown more hostile; even the wings in their stiffly outstanding feathers shriek « Keep off ». It is a masterly conception of a fierce fighting beast; it is the *Grifo rampante* — an aggressor, not a warden. *The stemma of Perugia was the conception of an artist of Perugia.*

The Griffin as it was conceived in 1378 was an extraordinarily graphic expression of the spirit which animated the city. Perugia was alive with unbounded pride in its war glory, and its arrogant threats to all opponents — to Foligno and Assisi and Arezzo and Siena. By the close of the century Perugia was exercising authority over all fortified Umbria and its borders. Her industries, her external trading and her wealth were growing rapidly. She was full of enthusiasm over her artistic and architectural projects. After she had got rid of the obnoxious

Monsignore she set about re-organizing civic procedure, and it was at this time that the new emblem was created and adopted.

Summarizing the conclusions at which I have arrived: the crowned *Grifo Rampante* of the *stemma* of the modern city of Perugia was the conception of an



Fig. 12. - Griffin on the church of Madonna della Luce.

(ed. Alinari)

artist of the fourteenth century; he evolved it, by extensive modification, from the similarly crowned *Grifo, passante* which was the *stemma* of the city in the 13 th. century.

* * *

In the year 1860 the wheel which governs the fate of Perugia swung completely into reverse. In Etruscan time she had been not merely a *City*, but a *City-State* in the national Federation. In 1860, by royal decree, she became once more a *Province* exercising authority over wide territory.

In 1928, there was recognized officially as her Provincial *stemma* the *Grifo passante* of ancient Etruria.

In the Provincial Palace of Perugia there is preserved and displayed with all honour the original royal specification of the *stemma* of the Province. It is signed by the King and by Mussolini. I give it here *verbatim*.

Stemma: Di rosso, al grifo passante d'argento, coronato all'antica ornato imbeccato e linguato d'oro.

Lo scudo sarà fregiato di ornamenti di Provincia.

The specific emblem denoting provincial rank is placed above the *shield*, it consists of a circular gemmed band from which arise a branch of oak and a branch of ivy.

* * *

Down in the Volumni Museum, far outside the Etruscan wall, there still keeps his already twenty centuries — old vigil the guardian of the ashes of a modest Etruscan citizen of Perugia — a *Grifo passante*.

On the proud Colle Landone, raised on high on the Prefettura of the Province as a triumphal chariot might stand on an arch of victory, strong in outline against the mild blue sky, paces another *Grifo passante*. The traditional guardian of the Etruscans keeps watch over the ancient city-state of Perugia spread far and wide around her — the symbol of eternal vigilance.

M. A. JOHNSTONE



Fig. 13. - Coat-of-arms of the Province of Perugia, *Grifo passante*. Above it, the Provincial badge of oak and ivy.