

NACHRUFE

IN MEMORIAM ARTHUR LANE

(1909 — 1965)

The death of Arthur Lane in 1965 took from the world of Oriental studies a scholar who had made for himself a special place in the field of Near Eastern ceramics. His two books on Islamic pottery, although written within the limitations of format imposed by their place in the larger series of the Faber Monographs on Pottery and Porcelain, have become standard works. Of these, *Early Islamic Pottery*, which appeared in 1947, was considerably cramped by the mould into which it was cast, and there is no doubt that Lane himself would have wished to expand and amplify it in a revised edition. Nevertheless, it provided in a compendious form the essence of his knowledge in this field, and presented it with a grace which was not to appearance hampered by the narrow confines within which he worked. The second, *Later Islamic Pottery*, published ten years after its companion, allowed him greater scope in which to expand his theme, and throws into contrast the deceptive simplicity of the earlier book.

These works of summarisation were only possible to one whose specialised knowledge was both wide and deep, but who was also able to show his narrower theme in its proper context against a far wider background of art and culture. The power to do this was the outcome of a thorough preparation in both education and the practical work of a Museum career.

Edward Arthur Lane was born on 15 December, 1909, as the only son of the Reverend E. A. Lane. He went to school at St. John's Leatherhead, where he had won a scholarship, and he proceeded as a scholar to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he took First Class honours in both parts of the Classical Tripos. In 1952 he won a scholarship to the British School in Athens, and the fruits of his experience there were garnered in a long and authoritative article on "Lakonian Vase-Painting" published in the *Annual* of the British School (1956). The following year brought a slighter notice on "An Etruscan bronze Mirror in the Victoria and Albert Museum", which appeared in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*. His appointment in 1954 to an Assistant Keepership in the Victoria and Albert Museum necessarily turned his energies away from classical studies into other fields, but he never lost his love of Greek art, and in the last year of his life a visit to Greece revived all his earlier enthusiasm, an enthusiasm which had informed his book on *Greek Pottery* (1948), probably the most readable and stimulating work extant on the subject.

In the Victoria and Albert Museum Lane was posted to the Department of Ceramics, which never left and where he worked successively under Bernard Rackham and W. B. Honey as Keepers. His interests had already turned to the Near East, and this enthusiasm was strengthened by a spell on the excavations at Al Mina, in Northern Syria, under the leadership of the late Sir Leonard Woolley. The outcome of this experience was his long and important article on "Medieval Finds at Al Mina in North Syria", published in *Archaeologia* in 1958.

It was perhaps the importance of tilework in Near Eastern pottery which first drew him to the study of tiles in general, and one of his first major tasks at the Museum was the organization in 1959 of a comprehensive exhibition of tiles of all periods and areas. This was accompanied by the publication of the Museum's *Guide to the Collection of Tiles*, which almost at once was generally adopted as the most useful introduction available to the whole history of the subject. Surveying as it did the ceramic productions of most areas of civilization over a period of more than a millennium, it was a remarkable achievement for one so young. Before the Second World War broke out he had already published three important articles on Islamic pottery, and was well on the way to a international reputation in this field.

With the outbreak of war in 1939 Lane left the Museum for the Royal Air Force, working in the Intelligence divisions of the Air Ministry, and rising to the rank of Squadron Leader. The war in Europe over, he returned