

## NOTE

THIS catalogue has been prepared, as a memorial to her brother, by Miss F. U. Ridout with the help of Mr. W. B. Honey, who has written or revised the descriptions and introductory matter (most of which had been prepared for a catalogue long contemplated by Mr. Ridout) and chosen the specimens for illustration. It has not been possible to prepare a full *catalogue raisonné* with notes on the places where the specimens have been figured and references to comparable published pieces; but it is hoped that this volume with its illustrations will serve as a record of Mr. Ridout's personal achievement and taste as a collector.

A few pieces in the Netherlands and Spanish sections, marked with an "E" after the number, though part of the Collection, are the property of Mrs. G. T. Eaton, a cousin of Mr. Ridout's, who on many occasions gave him great help in forming his collection.

## INTRODUCTION

WILLIAM RIDOUT, who died in London on March 18th, 1933, at the age of 55, was known to a very wide circle of friends as an enthusiastic collector of pottery, as whole-hearted and indefatigable in his devotion to beautiful things as he was warm-hearted and lovable as a man. His death has been a grievous loss to all who knew him.

His interest in the ceramic art was of long standing. Though he did not begin to collect seriously until he revisited England after the death of his wife in 1921, his devotion to the subject, and his study of the great collection at South Kensington, had already begun while he was still in his teens, and there can have been few people outside the Museum itself with a more exact and detailed knowledge of its contents, so far as his particular interests were concerned. Those interests from the first lay in the field of Italian maiolica, and it was his lifelong ambition to assemble a representative collection of the incomparable works in pottery made by the Italian artists of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. He rightly felt that not only are they themselves among the supreme achievements of the Italian Renaissance, but with their imperishable colour they stand as evidence of the lost original splendour of the Italian paintings of the same period. It became his purpose to bring together a varied collection of this beautiful pottery in all its phases. That the ambition was successfully accomplished in no small degree this catalogue will serve to show. Although his final preference was for the boldly designed Tuscan and Faentine primitives of the late 15th century, his taste was wide enough to include the best of the *istoriato* wares of Urbino and its imitators, while on the other hand he had a special fondness for the vital "compendious" drawing of the later masters of Faenza, led by Virgiliotto Calamelli, and the charming wares in the revived pictorial style made at Castelli and Venice. Of these later classes he possessed some unsurpassed examples.

But though his interest was primarily that of a connoisseur delighting in the superb masculine drawing and sumptuous colour of the Italian wares themselves, he was no less a student of origins, with a scholar's interest in the derivation of the types he admired so much. It was this side of his interest that led him laterly to give more and more attention to the maiolica in the Italian manner made in the Netherlands, Spain, France, Germany and even in England. He was one of the first to pay attention to the problems of this subject, which is now occupying so many collectors and students in the countries in question. His help in this matter was generously acknowledged by Mr. Bernard Rackham in his pioneer work on the Netherlands maiolica; and his collection of the Antwerp wares was for long on loan at South Kensington and ranks as perhaps the best in existence. The maiolica of France, like that of the Low Countries, was for long mistaken for Italian, and the fine Rouen drug-jars in the collection are of types still obstinately called Italian in some quarters. The Urbinesque wares made at Lyons and the Durantine *alkarelli* of Antoine Sigalon of Nîmes are also represented in the

collection. The pottery of Spain, little studied in this regard, offered him a tempting field, and a long stay in that country brought him a number of specimens of Spanish maiolica of superb quality. English wares of the 16th century are more problematical still, but specimens of several classes with a good title to consideration as English are included here. Of the more common and definitely English derivatives of Italian maiolica, the so-called "blue-dash chargers" of the 17th century, he had a choice collection, taking a keen delight in their strong colour and bold summary drawing. Parallel with his liking for these was his interest in the Northern French wares, which were likewise indirectly of Italian derivation and show a marked kinship with both English and Dutch analogues. German maiolica is represented by a jug of a rare type with eagle spout and bird's foot handle painted with a Tyrolese shield of arms in blue, black, and yellow, while a magnificent Winterthur dish admirably represents the Swiss maiolica. A rare and puzzling type here tentatively classified as Italian or Tyrolese especially attracted Mr. Ridout, among whose many gifts to the Victoria and Albert Museum (numbering in all upwards of fifty-five pieces) was a striking specimen of the class. Though certain details in the costume and the style of drawing have suggested a more Northern provenance, the fact that the superb large blue-and-white dish of this class was bought in Spain may perhaps serve to confirm the view put forward long ago by Fortnum, that it is of South Italian origin. A few pieces of the faience of Hamburg and Nuremberg represent the transition from the Italian maiolica style to the Chinese blue-and-white manner that sprang into universal favour in the middle and latter part of the 17th century, with the Dutch importations of Chinese porcelain. A jar of the so-called Mexican maiolica (No. 8. 30) similarly unites the Spanish, Italian and Chinese elements and is evidence of the comprehensive nature of William Ridout's interest in maiolica in all its phases.

Though porcelain never greatly appealed to him, he took a keen delight in the best work of the Delft potters in their imitations of the Chinese ware. He felt them to have added something of the warmth of maiolica, a sympathetic quality perhaps due to their material, to the cold perfection of their Wan Li or K'ang Hsi models. In the same way the mid-18th century Bristol delftwares he naturally found vastly more attractive than the dull Chinese export wares they so often imitated; and some charming specimens are in the collection. Of the earlier Delft wares, inspired by late Ming blue-and-white of the 17th century, William Ridout was indeed an enthusiastic collector, as many superb examples illustrated in this catalogue will show. I do not know a finer specimen of the wares in this manner bearing the mark of Samuel van Eenhoorn than the bottle numbered II. 7 in this catalogue, with its enchanting manganese-purple and blue tone, which removes it far from its Chinese original; and the blue-and-black and plain blue-painted types are equally well represented. For similar reasons he was especially fond of the faience of Frankfort, which at its best almost surpasses the Dutch, and the wares of Savona and Genoa, in which the Chinese blue-and-white manner was grafted on an art derived from the earlier Renaissance maiolica. The European style in

Dutch and French faience pleased him less as a rule; but he greatly admired the early 18th century wares of Rouen and Moustiers and secured some characteristic specimens of each, while a large dish from the Count of Aranda's pottery at Alcora in Spain he rightly regarded as one of his greatest finds; it shows to the full the magnificent colour which was one of the great achievements of the factory. Enamel painting on faience he felt to signify a loss of pottery sense, and he never whole-heartedly liked it, but even here he possessed a few specimens of the finest quality.

All these classes of tin-enamelled pottery—maiolica, faience, delftware—were thus his favourite study. But there was another class quite distinct from these which had also claimed his devotion from the first. The English mediaeval wares, with their nobility of form and masculine substance, were long ago recognised by him as the supremely beautiful works of ceramic art they are now universally admitted to be. Twenty-five years ago, however, they were disregarded as rough and boorish, and a fine jug could be bought from a labourer for a few shillings. That time has now gone by, and the supply from excavations on old London sites is now exhausted. Mr. G. F. Lawrence, whose period of official activity in watching over the excavations on behalf of the London Museum has made the collection there the best and largest in existence, was a lifelong friend of William Ridout's, and most of the dozen or so picked specimens in the collection here catalogued were obtained through him. They admirably represent the whole range of the mediaeval wares, from the austere 13th and 14th century types to the relatively more refined pottery with rich green glaze made in the Tudor period.