THE MARINE MOSAICS OF W. COLE BRIGHAM

NDER this suggestive title some very original decorative work has been recently exhibited in the Powell Galleries at 983 Sixth Avenue. Mr. Brigham is a painter as well as a craftsman, and lives by the sea at Shelter Island where the shore evidently suggested other possibilities to him than the direct one of painting material. Mr. Brigham has been interested not only in the color of the shore as a whole, but also in that of some of those minute elements of color that go to make up the whole,—the beach shells and stones that are ordinarily of more interest to the child or the science student than the artist. These he has combined with sea-colored glass in their own color schemes, often with delightful effect.

In the collection were lamps and lanterns of various kinds—for candles, oil or electric light—windows, and glass fire screens. The process is his own invention. It consists of a mosaic composed of semi-transparent shells and pebbles, combined with rough and occasionally smooth-glass, held together with cement, and laid upon a background of clear glass. The cement is a compound invented by Mr. Cole, is weather and fireproof, and has very much the color and effect of the lead lines in stained glass. It has already been successfully tested in a memorial window in a church on Long Island.

The designs, as in stained glass, are draughted with the consideration of the lead lines—in this case the cement lines—held in mind. These lines, as every decorator knows, are conceived as a decorative element. The shells used in most of the designs exhibited were scallop shells and the common but very beautiful, small, opaque, yellow variety common to the Long Island beaches, known as "jingle" shells, which are like a miniature clam shell, and range in color from palest cream to deepest orange, and he has made use of oyster shells as well. The pebbles, as the interested observer by the sea must have discovered, range through every variety of warm color, and have a varying degree of opaqueness that one does not realize before viewing them with that fact in mind. This quality has been utilized most ingeniously by Mr. Cole to give color and value effects. In one lantern, the design of which is a bit of grape vine with a bunch of grapes, this difference in the stones is taken advantage of with an effect particularly happy.

THE lanterns are of different varieties. Some in the shape of the old-fashioned sailor's lantern,—cylindrical with a cone-shaped top, some square, and others sextagonal. Almost any of them could be used with electric light if desired. The windows, which call for designs of larger size, have sections of rough glass, bluish, greenish and sometimes brownish in tone, charmingly used in ways that suggest the look of water. As these depend upon the daylight for their color effect, they naturally call for more clear glass in their design than the objects lighted by artificial light.

The fire screens have the attractive quality of shutting off the extreme heat of the fire without taking away the pleasure of its color and light. One would expect them to be very beautiful and appealing to the imagination in the firelight hour, before the lamps are brought in.

Mr. Brigham has also made some interesting jewelry out of the sea pebbles and shells which have so beautiful a color under the water and are so comparatively commonplace when dry. What he has really done with the stones is to reproduce, by a process of polishing, the color they have when wet. These stones he has made up into bracelets, hat pins and necklaces, and the shells have been set into strong settings somewhat in the way that the so-called fresh water pearls are used. Sometimes the stones and shells are ground into a desired shape, sometimes left in their natural form. In color they are usually variations of red, yellow and brown, and have very much the effect of carnelians only with more uncertainty and variety in the color.

During March Mr. Brigham will have on exhibition at the Powell galleries a large window of the shell and glass mosaic in three panels, rather more ambitious than the work he has previously shown there. He has made a number of smaller windows for house boats and yachts and several for sea-side houses where they are most appropriate and, one can imagine, very charming. Altogether the whole exhibit has struck an interesting new note in decoration.