ESAJAS VAN DE VELDE
AND THE BEGINNINGS OF DUTCH LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

The historian of the beginnings of Dutch landscape painting in the seventeenth century is still confronted with so many uncertainties that the clarification of an individual problem might be considered worth publishing. Although the leadership of Esajas van de Velde in that process has long been recognized, this brief study proposes to re-emphasize his importance by way of presenting some early works of his which exhibit an amazing precocity with regard not only to the evolution of landscape painting in general but also to the artist's own development.

A memorable exhibition of Dutch paintings which was held at Rome in 1928 and for whose success Willem Martin was in large part responsible, has brought to light a number of interesting pictures from little-known Italian collections. Among these was a charming pair of small landscapes bearing the signature of Esajas van de Velde and preserved in the Mansi collection in Lucca (Figs. 2 and 3) 1. They represent Summer and Winter after the traditional Flemish fashion, that is, as companion pieces of allegorical descent. As staffage, the former contains Christ and the Disciples on the Way to Emmaus, the latter, The Flight into Egypt. The coloristic treatment is free, sketch-like, almost impressionistic, in contrast to the rather elaborate and meticulous handling of similar subjects by the Flemish painters and their Dutch followers in the years around 1600. In fact, but for their allegorical and Biblical disguise, one would at first glance hardly hesitate to classify them with a more mature period of Dutch landscape painting of the seventeenth century. This is particularly true of the Winter which shows an even more advanced treatment than the Summer, both in color and in composition.

The pictures are not dated, but the form of their signatures enables us to assign them to a very early period of the artist's activity. Since this method may prove valuable in similar cases, a short survey of van de Velde's signatures on dated pictures is here inserted. It is based on paintings and such
etchings as contain original (etched) signatures—the latter restriction being essential, since in many instances etchings show the artist's name added by their publishers in line engraving at a later date.

Both pictures are clearly signed: E·VAN·DEN·VELDE. This spelling appears exclusively on works which are dated or otherwise datable between 1614 and 1616, whereas all later productions bear the signature E. V. VELDE. 1614 is the earliest date appearing on any work of the artist, although he became a master in the Haarlem guild in 1612; in 1618 he left Haarlem for The Hague, where he died in 1630. Examples of the first signature are:

**Paintings:**

1) *Dinner Party*, The Hague, Mauritshuis, no. 199, 1614.
3) *Landscape*, sale Brussels, April 21st 1927, no. 43, 1614.
4) *Dinner Party*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, no. 2451, 1615.
6) *Village*, sale Berlin, February 26th, 1924 no. 95, 1615.
8) *The Attack*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, no. 2450a, 1616.

**Etchings:**

1) First of the series of „Sixteen Small Landscapes“, Burchard no. 18, trial proof with etched signature, most probably done ca. 1612-1614.
2) First of the series of „Large Landscapes“, Burchard no. 34a, trial proof with etched signature, 1614.
3) Another of the same series, Burchard no. 34g, 1614.
4) Another of the same series, Burchard no. 34l, dated 1614.
5) Last of the series of „Ten Small Landscapes“, Burchard no. 17, certainly before 1618, probably ca. 1615–1616.

The „late“ signature occurs first in 1618 (no work dated 1617 being known); examples from that year are the *Winter* in Munich, and the *View of Wesel* in Berlin.

This proves that our pictures were done at the beginning of van de Velde's artistic career. An analysis of their style bears out this assumption and suggests a very early place even within that first group.

The subject of the staffage of the *Summer, Euntes in Emmaüs*, was a favorite of Flemish draughtsmen and engravers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as well as of their Dutch followers. Examples,