THE ROYAL PICTURES.

THE STORM.

W. Van der Velde, the Younger, Painter.
W. Miller, Engraver.
Size of the Picture, 3 ft. by 1 ft. 10 in.

VAN DER VELDE is among the number of foreign painters whom England patronized when she had few artists of her own to whom she could extend her fostering care. Both he and his father, who was also distinguished as a marine-painter, resided for a considerable time in this country, and, it is believed, both died here: the elder Van der Velde was buried in St. James's Church: his tombstone bore the following inscription:—"Mr. William Van de Velde, Senior, late painter of sea-fights to their Majesties, King Charles II. and King James: died in 1693."

The younger Van der Velde was born at Amsterdam, in 1633: his first instructor was his father, his second Simon de Vlieger, an eminent marine-painter, whose works were held in great estimation, though now they are comparatively little known. Under his instruction the pupil made so great progress as to eclipse the talents of his master, and also of all his contemporaries. When the elder Van der Velde was firmly established in London, he invited his son to join him: his talents soon brought him into notice, and recommended him to the notice of the king, who settled on him a salary equal to that which the father received.

From a document found among the papers of Pepys, secretary to Charles II., and which afterwards came into the hands of Dr. Rawlinson, the antiquarian, it appears that the younger Van der Velde was employed to paint, or colour, the pictures designed by his father. It runs thus:—

"Charles the Second, by the Grace of God, &c., to our dear cousin, Prince Rupert, and the rest of our commissioners for executing the place of Lord High Admiral of England, greeting.

"Whereas we have thought fit to allow the salary of one hundred pounds per annum unto William van de Velde the elder, for taking and making draughts of sea-fights, and the like salary of one hundred pounds per annum unto William van de Velde the younger, for putting the said draughts into colours, for our particular use: our will and pleasure is, and we do hereby authorize and require you to issue your orders for the present and future establishment of the said salaries to the aforesaid William van de Velde the elder, and William van de Velde the younger, to be paid unto them, or either of them, during our pleasure; and for so doing these our letters shall be your sufficient warrant and discharge.

"Given under our privy seal, at our Palace of Westminster, the 20th day of February, in the 26th year of our reign."

A recent biographer, Mr. Stanley, considers that the majority of the best cabinet pictures of this artist were painted before he came to England, from the fact that they represent Dutch scenes almost invariably; but such evidence is by no means conclusive: the fact is, Van der Velde painted little else at any time; his coasts, his ships, and his sailors, are, so far as our own observation has extended, all of his own country, with very few exceptions: and the probability is, that Van der Velde was accustomed to make sketching excursions to the Dutch coast from his residence at Greenwich. Moreover, it is well known that he brought over to England a very large number of sketches and drawings, from which, it may be presumed, he painted many pictures while residing here. These works have found their way into every good collection of foreign Art in the country; they are justly esteemed for their truth of nature and for excellence of composition, and, generally, they realize large prices when offered for sale. As an example of the increased value of his pictures, we may instance the "View of the entrance to the Texel," in the Ellesmere Collection, which is now valued at 1000 guineas: in 1766 it was sold for £80.

The picture in the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace, entitled "The Storm," is, we believe, one of those painted by Van der Velde for his royal patron: the view is taken from the beach, looking seaward: the effect of the heavy clouds throwing their dark shadows on the quiet waters is admirably shown. In colour this work is beautifully clear and transparent.

ARSENIC IN PAPER-HANGINGS.

CONSIDERABLE attention has been directed to the use of arsenic in paper-hangings—especially in the very beautiful flock papers which are much used for dining-rooms—from the evidence given by Dr. A. S. Taylor before the select committee of the House of Lords on the Sale of Poisons Bill. Dr. Taylor stated that the largest quantity of arsenic used in this country is employed in the manufacture of paper for covering walls. He considered it very injurious both to those living in a house papered with this article, as well to those employed in its manufacture. This evidence, when published, brought forth a reply from Mr. Alfred E. Fletcher to the following effect:—

"The colour principally referred to is the aceto-arsenite of copper, commercially known as emerald green. The chief advantage which the colour possesses over others of a similar tint is that, besides having greater brilliancy, it is quite permanent. The colour, when exposed to the air for any length of time, does not fade in tint or lessen in intensity, which would necessarily be the case did any evaporation of its constituent parts take place, though in the smallest degree, especially as the layer of colour exposed is often very thin. Were it true that such evaporation or dissemination went on, it would indeed afford just cause for alarm, when we reflect that on the walls of houses in this country are displayed some hundred millions of square yards of paper, most of which carries on its surface a portion of arsenical colouring matter: our books are bound with paper or cloth so coloured; cottons and silks, woollen fabrics and leather, are alike loaded with it. Now, it is stated by Dr. Taylor, that in a medical work an instance is noted in which injury has been received by those living in rooms decorated with these colours: surely, were the proximity of those colours injurious, it would not be necessary to search in recondite books for the registry of isolated cases. The fact of the large extent to which such materials have always been employed is a sufficient proof that there is no danger attending their use; moreover, workmen, who have been daily employed for many years in manufacturing large quantities of these colours, under the necessity of constantly handling them, are in the regular enjoyment of perfect health, though exposed also to the general influences of a chemical factory. Let blame be laid at the right door, and let the public be assured that it is not the looking at cheerful walls, the fingering of brightly ornamented books, nor the wearing of tastefully coloured clothing, that will hurt them, but the dwelling in ill-ventilated rooms, and a continual dread of pure water, will."

Dr. Halley, of Harley Street, replied to Mr. Fletcher, by stating that he had himself suffered in health from sitting five or six hours every evening in a study papered with a newly-made rich emerald-green flock paper. Dr. Halley states some experiments instituted by him to determine the question of the volatilization of arsenic from the paper, but these are sufficiently in error, as the following quotation will prove, to destroy his evidence as an authority on the subject:—"The air of the room was next carefully tested (by means of sheets of paper soaked in a solution of the ammonio-nitrate of silver, a very delicate test for arsenic), and distinct crystals of arsenious acid" were obtained. Now, every chemist knows that the ammonio-nitrate of silver test is the so-called *Hume's test* for arsenic, and that had arsenic been present Dr. Halley would not have obtained *crystals of arsenious acid*, which are white, but the *yellow diarsenite of silver*. We know from experience, that workmen are employed for years in the manufacture of *Scheele's green*, and other arsenical colours, without suffering in health. Yet it was thought possible, if we employ, for purposes of illumination, gas in a room papered with the arsenical green paper, that the products of combustion, especially if the gas is not very pure, may act upon the paper, and remove some arsenic, in a vaporiform state from it. This is by no means an ascertained fact; but the evidence that for years we have been employing such paper-hangings without having discovered that any injurious effects resulted from their use, rather tends to prove that more alarm than is necessary has been excited by Dr. Taylor.

The discussion of this question has been taken up by some of our most experienced analytical chemists,—namely, by Dr. Paul, by Mr. Dugald Campbell, and by Mr. Abel, director of the chemical establishment of the War Department. The result of careful investigations instituted by those gentlemen proves, beyond dispute, that the arsenical green does not evaporate from the surface of the ornamental paper.

Without detailing the experimental investigations of Dr. Paul and Mr. Dugald Campbell, it will be sufficiently satisfactory to quote one experiment by Mr. Abel, and the remarks of that chemist thereon.

"In order to furnish indisputable proof that the green arsenical colour employed in the manufacture of paper hangings is not affected by air, even when in a finely divided and perfectly unprotected condition, 600 grains of finely powdered emerald green were uniformly dispersed through a quantity of cotton-wool, sufficient to fill compactly a tall jar of about a half-gallon capacity. A tube, connected with the test apparatus, and plugged with cotton-wool, was passed to the bottom of the jar, and *air was drawn through the apparatus continuously for one week*, the jar which contained the emerald green being maintained at 90 F. during a portion of the time. Not a trace of arsenic was found to have been volatilized at the conclusion of the experiment. It may, I think, be very safely concluded from the experiments detailed, added to those performed by Mr. Campbell, that the possibility of injurious consequences resulting from the employment of paper hangings coloured with arsenical pigments has been disproved: and that the symptoms which have been described, as exhibited by persons who happen to occupy rooms hung with such paper hangings, can only be regarded as accidentally connected with that circumstance, and are ascribable to other causes."

Dr. A. S. Taylor appeals to the regulations of the Prussian government, in proof of the correctness of his conclusions; one regulation is to this effect:—"Green copper colours containing arsenic are not allowed to be sold as water or oil colours for painting indoor work or printing paper hangings. If found on the premises of dealers in the latter articles, they are confiscated, and the owner punished with fine or imprisonment." Beyond this, Dr. Taylor brings forward several cases in which the *dust* arising from these and similar papers—as in hanging them, and in cutting up green papers for surrounding night-lights—are known to produce unpleasant symptoms. It appears, therefore, that the emerald green, which is placed upon the paper-hangings as a water-colour, may, when dry, be brushed off, or removed from the paper by merely mechanical means; but that the statement of the volatilization of arsenic, or of arsenite of copper, is quite unfounded. In several trials, involving nice chemical questions, which have lately taken place, the public have remarked the conflicting evidence of the scientific witnesses: men, whose profession is the elucidation of truth, have assumed the position of special pleaders—and they have darkened knowledge rather than enlightened those who have sought their aid. The discussion of this arsenic question is another example of the same want of honest purpose. The question was—Can arsenite of copper be removed from paper hangings, so as to exert an injurious effect on the animal economy? In reply, we are told that air will not remove it, that it will not volatilize—which is not answering the question. Although the emerald green will not volatilize under ordinary circumstances, it may be removed from the paper in the state of fine dust; and in this state it may exert the injurious effects which have been attributed to it by Drs. Taylor and Halley. At the same time it cannot be denied that those gentlemen made their first statements so loosely as to lay themselves open to the charges of scientific inaccuracy. The facts appear to be as follows:—

1. The green arsenite of copper will not escape from the paper by volatilization, or by solution in the air of rooms.

2. This poisonous colour is very liable to be removed in the state of fine powder; which, floating in the air, may exert a most injurious influence on the animal economy.

ROBERT HUNT.