

From the *Virginia Argus.*

THE RIGHT OF VISIT. A SOLDIER'S TALE.

A well dressed fellow, who had a number of acquaintances in a country town in England, paid them occasional visits, and became quite familiar with several house keepers. Considering how he might turn his intimacy to advantage, he gave out that he had lost a great many articles, such as watches, rings, handkerchiefs, and things of that kind. Having made a deal of noise about his losses, he went leisurely round among the families of the town, and wherever he saw a watch, or a ring, or a handkerchief, he would claim it, seize it, put it in his pocket and bear it off. It was in vain that the sufferers complained of his conduct as dishonest; the fellow would smile in the very act of seizing the articles, hoped it would not interrupt the harmony subsisting between himself and those families, protested that he would restore them if they should be proved not to belong to him, but insisted peremptorily that he had a right to take what was his own. As he was a pleasant sort of a rogue at bottom, the families did not like to quarrel with him. The old ladies in particular, winked at his knavery, because they loved his scandal, for he was a perfect chronicle in that way; and he could rarely be resisted in the moment he seized the things, as he generally paid his visits for that purpose when the men were out on business, and were none at home but women and children. The fellow, however, carried his tricks so far, that the public officers having heard of them, laid their hands upon him, he was carried before a justice of the peace, committed to prison for stealing, and finally indicted for that offence at the assizes.— Being brought into court for trial, he admitted the taking the watches, rings and handkerchiefs, in the manner alledged, and rested his defence on a point of law. He was fluent of speech, and he humbly solicited to be allowed to make his own argument, which was granted—he accordingly began:

"May it please your honors, I am here arraigned for seizing certain things of value. Whether the articles are my own or not, is not so much a question; but it will be contended, that if they really belong to me, I had no right to secure them in the mode I did. This I hold to be a doctrine altogether contrary to the ancient laws of the kingdom, and the well known privileges of the subjects thereof. What, for example, can be better, or has been longer established, than the maxim, that every man is entitled to his own? If, then, I am legally entitled to what is mine, I may lawfully take it wherever I find it. Should I, peradventure, take something that is the property of another, it is a mistake, and no crime; and being ready to restore it, I cannot be convicted on that account. It is true, had I been a stranger in the families who appear against me; had I broken into their houses and forcibly carried off the goods, my conduct would have been illegal, and I should now be liable to punishment. But, may it please your honors, I was a visitor in their houses by the courtesy of acquaintance, and being there, if I perceived any thing belonging to me, I presume I had a perfect right to carry it off. Nor is this entirely a novelty that I broach.— The point of law on which I insist, is laid down by the supreme executive of this kingdom; by no less a personage than his royal highness the prince regent; in an order in council concerning the impressment of seamen. His royal highness does not in the first instance, distinctly assert a right to search neutral ships for his majestys subjects; but alleges as there is a right of entry to search for contraband of war, if an Englishman be found on board, he may be lawfully seized as the property of his sovereign. Subsequently to this order in council his royal highness has claimed, in a public declaration, more nakedly, the right of seizure; which, may it please your honors, is still more in my favor; for, if the king, beyond his own jurisdiction, and in vessels not his own or those of his subjects, may seize Englishmen, why may not I, in the street, or in the houses of others, seize what belongs, or what I think belongs to me? I flatter myself that your honors will recognize the application of the principle for which I contend and forthwith order me to be discharged from custody."

The judges stared at one another; the lawyers smiled; and every body admired the fellow's ingenuity. At length

the chief justice, adjusting his wig, and his physiognomy to the occasion said:

"Sirrah! if we were to admit that to be law which you quote, it would fill the whole kingdom with thieves. The court sentence you to be transported to Botany Bay for five years.

"If I am guilty, then, (exclaimed the fellow) how much more so is his royal highness! I have taken a few things, of no great value; but he deprives men of their freedom. The rule of action has been with both of us the same—it I am legally convicted, O Americans! your cause of war is just, and the sovereign of this kingdom merits transportation to Botany Bay more than I do."

Here the court interfered, and the culprit was hurried off to prison.

We lay before our readers to day to proclamation of admiral Cochrane, received at New London, whither it was transmitted by some passengers in a neutral vessel, who were permitted to land, announcing a general blockade of that part of our coast not before blockaded. This instrument is dated the 25th of April, at Bermuda, and was probably issued (though the fact is not material) before official knowledge of the repeal of the embargo and non importation had reached that island. The effect of this proclamation will be to render the blockade of our coast much more extensive, but perhaps less offensive than before, inasmuch as it takes away the character of discrimination which had been infused by the enemy into their measures as to the eastern and southern ports of the U. States. But, by so much more extensive as is their paper blockade, by so much more inconsistent is it with the laws of nations, and by so much more obnoxious to those neutral powers, whose good will, one would think, it is the interest of the enemy to conciliate. It is obviously impossible for the enemy to station 'off the said ports' and places a naval force adequate to maintain the said blockade in the most rigorous and effective manner, unless it be admitted that an hundred ships sailing off and on, can blockade a coast of two thousand miles in extent. It is a fact notorious to all, that not one of our vessels of war, on its

return to port, has been intercepted by the enemy, since the commencement of the war, notwithstanding the large force he has constantly maintained, at great expense and risk, along our coast; & it is verily believed from this and other circumstances, that his thousand ships of war, all devoted to that service, would be inadequate to an effectual blockade of our ports, or at least to a blockade, as the term is defined by the law of nations, and understood and recognized by the European neutrals. This measure of the enemy, therefore, be its object what it is avowed to be or be it not, can only injure his own interest: 1st. by preventing if it be effectual, or at any rate, by impeding the importation of his manufactures into this country in neutral bottoms: 2d. by irritating neutrals by a system of flagitious and illegitimate blockade, by which they will be immediately aggrieved, and cannot but resent it. As to the motive of this sweeping measure as respects ourselves, we do not consider it at all indicative of the present feeling of the British government, because adopted by one of its agents at a distance from the theatre of our negotiations with the enemy, who could not have been apprized of their progress, and probably has had no reference to their existence—the temper of the enemy can only be correctly ascertained by the first dispatches of our ministers from Gottenburgh. At least such is our impression.

Nat. Int.

STUDY.

Most vices and follies proceed from man's incapacity to entertain himself, and we are generally fools in company, because we dare not be wise alone. The study of philosophy forms the virtuous youth, delights old age, adorns prosperity, and softens and even removes adversity: entertains at home, and is no hindrance abroad; dont leave us at night, and keeps us company on the road.

Study is to the mind what exercise is to the body; neither can be active & vigorous without exertion.

FROM THE PRESS OF
E. STOUT.
PRINTER OF THE LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES.