THE BLUE CLOAK.

"Reuben," said my mother, as she lay in her last illness, "there was one thing which your father impressed upon me before he died: "Never let Reuben put foot in Sicily'l "

"Why, mother?" I asked.

"I know not, my son," she replied. "But I always understood that some great danger awaited your father if he returned to Sicily, and those were almost his last words to me."

My father, Rubino Vincetti, who had died in my very early infancy, had been of Sicilian birth, but my mother was English. I had always resided in England and was a thorough Englishman in my habits, although I took after my father in features, and, as I could speak Italian like a native, I was often taken for one. For a young man of 23 to be told that he is not to go to a certain place is rather likely to send him there,as it is "daring" him to do so, and had I any desire to go to Sicily I fear that even then my mother's repetition of my father's warning would not have prevented me. However, I had nothing to call me from England until nearly four years afterward,when I visited Italy for the purpose of studying painting, to which art I had devoted myself, and whatever impression the warning had made upon me at the time it was spoken had then faded from my memory.

An English friend, Arthur Attwood, a fellow artist was staying with me at Naples, and he expressed a wish to see Mount Aetna, and I consented to accompany him. We arrived at Messina in due course, and enjoyed the beauties of the island in the orthodox fashion. On the day of our visit to Aetna we were prevented from returning to our hotel at Catania as soon as we expected, owing to a violent thunderstorm,during which we took shelter in a Sicilian cottage, the only occupants of which were an old wrinkled, gypsy-looking woman, who seemed to be any age between 80 and 100,and her granddaughter, who was a beautiful specimen of southern girlhood, not more than 17 years of age.

The old woman, bent with age, her dark face wrinkled and crossed with lines in all directions, but with eyes almost as bright as the girl's looked the very picture of an old witch, and at my request she sat while I sketched her. I gave her a small piece of money in return for her shelter and the willingness with which she had posed for me, at which she was highly delighted, expressing her gratitude in overwhelming thanks. She insisted upon telling me my fortune and entering into the joke as I thought it, I held out my hand for her examination.

"Signor Vincetti," she began, "you—"

"Hold hard, old lady," I interrupted. "How do you know my name?"

"I know what I know," she replied, with a cunning smile that gave her ancient features an expression which was weird in the extreme. "Signor Vincetti, you will live long and have much happiness and prosperity, if you succeed in escaping a great peril which will cross your path on the eve of the ne wmoon next after your 27th birthday. Beware of two men, who will seek your life."

My curiosity was excited, but do all that I could, I was unable to obtain anything more from the old crone. She refused to utter another syllable except to repeat her warning.

"Beware of the eve of the new moon next after your 27th birthday!"

The storm having abated we took our departure and returned to Catania with our guide, who had been sojourning in an adjacent hovel. The next day was Friday, and we made up our minds to return to Messina and take leave of the island on Saturday. I could not quite shake off the old gypsy's words, although I tried my best to dismiss them from my mind, and in thinking of them a fact occurred to me which I had overlooked; I was 27 years old on the previous day, Thursday.

Thinking of my birthday led me to think of my mother, and brought back her repetition of my father's warning, "that I was never to put my foot in Sicily." Yet there I was, in direct defiance of it. I turned to my pocket almanac, and found that it was a new moon on the following morning at 5 o'clock, so that according to the old dame's prophecy, that (Friday) evening was my time of peril. I am not a nervous man, but I must confess that when I put all the incidents together I felt a bit creepy.

I had never told Attwood of my mothers words; in fact, I had almost forgotten them until the thought of my birthday recalled them to me. Now, as we sauntered along under the shade of some trees and inhaled the perfume of the growing lemons, mixed with the smoke of some vile Italian cigars we were puffing, I related the incident to him, and told him that it had been my twenty-seventh birthday yesterday, and that to-night was the eve of the new moon. If anything, my friend Arthur was less nervous and more phlegmatic than myself, but he seemed strangely agitated.

"Let us leave here at once, old fellow," he cried, "I don't like it."

"Pshaw!" I returned. "What can there be in it at all? The old woman had heard my name, I suppose, and anyone could make up a few enigmatical words about a new moon and danger."

We were, of course, talking in English. Arthur understood enough Italian to catch the meaning of anyone speaking it, but he could hardly utter a word correctly himself,and he always relied upon me as his interpreter, so that strangers thought he was totally unacquainted with the language.

"But—" he began, when two Italian gentlemen who were staying at the same hotel passed us, conversing as they did so in low tones.

Arthur bent his head and reduced his speech to a whisper.

"But 'the two men!'" he said. "I did not think anything of it at the time, but those two fellows who are now in front were talking last night. Nobody things that I understand the lingo, and they took no notice of me. I saw they were throwing dice. They had no stakes,but the winner said to the loser: "Then you must do it!" "Verily, I will," replied the loser, "but it will not be safe in the daytime—the consul will be on the track."

"Now. what were they referring to?" asked Arthur. "Depend upon it there"s more in the old woman's warning than you think. Why should they mind a consul? Because you are a British subject! They are your enemies. Let us be gone at once!"

We returned to the hotel, engaged a conveyance to take us to Messina,paid our reckoning and started off. Just as we were driving away, two Italians (whose names we had ascertained from the hotel book where Giuseppe and Guillemo Ferrari) strolled up. It may have been our fancy, but they looked surprised at seeing us going away, and they immediately began to talk and gesticulate one to the other. As we drove through the town the old fortune teller's pretty granddaughter sprang out from somewhere suddenly and hailed the coachman who pulled up. Running to the side of the carriage,she whispered to me:

"Grandmother says 'your enemies are upon you. Beware!'"

And she flew off and disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as she had come upon the scene.

"It is an enigma!" I cried. "Why should these men wish to do me harm? They don't know me."

"I'll tell you what it is," said Attwood. "I've heard of Sicilian vendettas, and I'll bet any money this is one."

Several blood curdling tales I had read upon the subject occurred to me.

"My mother said that some great danger awaited my father if he returned here. Perhaps he killed a relation of these fellows at some time or the other, and they are seeking my life in turn," I said.

"That's just about it, I expect," he replied. "I shall be glad when we're well out of it."

When we reached Messina we were half famished,and at once went to the hotel at which we had previously stayed and had some dinner. Then we went down in the harbor to see about getting to the mainland, but there was no boat which could take us to be had for an hour.

Leaving our portmanteaus in the care of the officer at the pier, we strolled back toward the town. The evening was closing in, and as we wended our way up the narrow, irregular street my companion clutched me tightly by the arm. Coming toward us were the two Ferraris. They must have followed us from Catania, and they no doubt caught sight of us, for they turned into a little wine shop. Acting on a common impulse we followed them and took our seats at another table. They conversed together under their breaths for awhile, and then Giuseppe, whom Attwood recognized as the loser at dice, got up and came toward us as if to leave the place. It was very dim inside the shop and probably they had not seen us, for as soon as he came nearer us he went back, and, after whispering a few words to his companion, turned again and took his departure.

It was clear they had been drinking, as she reeled perceptibly when he passed us. Presently Guillemo rose from his chair and crossed the room to the landlord, whom he evidently knew, and they retired to an inner room. Both the Ferraris were wearing black coats and soft felt hats. We were similarly dressed,except that my cloak was rather a stylish one, being of a blue color and Attwood's was a brown one. The place was now almost in darkness, as the landlord,who had been preparing to light the lamps had been interrupted by Guillemo.

"The villain who has gone out will try to stab you, or something, as you go down to the boat," said Attwood, "I have an ideal Change cloaks with me; the other fellow's left his cloak hanging over the back of his chair, and I'll swop with him."

"What good will that do?" I asked

"If Giuseppe really meant mischief he will go for a man in a blue cloak," he erplied, "don't you see?"

"Y-a-s," I said, " and kill his own brother or whatever he is. It's worth trying, though if he notices it there will be a row."

"He could not see the difference in this darkness, even i fhe were sober," Attwood returned. "He's half drunk and will never notice it."

Arthur handed me his cloak and silently slipped to the other seat and laid mine on the Italian's chair, taking the other one and putting it on himself. When Guillemo came out with the landlord again he appeared in a hurry, for he flung my coat over his shoulders and walked quickly, although unsteadily out of the shop. We followed in a trice, walked one behind the other down the hill toward the boat.

It was so dark now we could only distinguish Guillemo's form without seeing the color of his clothes, but as he neared a lamp which hung dangling from the door of another shop we could see the blue color of the cloak. He had just passed under the lamp when a man darted across the street from a recess in which he had been concealed, and we could see the gleam of steel in his hand. He ran behind the blue cloak, and striking with all his force, plunged the stiletto in the back of its wearer's neck, the man falling forward on his face without a groan, so skillfully had the blow been planted.

The murderer never turned, but crossing the road diagonally, disappeared up a dark passage and we passed the body and went on to our boat as if nothing had occurred.

"It is not the first man that fellow's killed," said Attwood. "He must have severed the spinal cord at a blow. It was neatly done, wasn't it?"

"God bless you Arthur," I cried. "You have saved my life."

. . . . . .

I should never have heard any more of the matter, but, being somewhat curious to know the rights of the thing, I wrote to the British consul, explaining all I knew about it, and asking him privately if he had heard anything as to the death of Guillemo Ferrari.

He replied that the man had been found dead—stabbed in the back. That Giuseppe, who was his brother, was so heartstricken at what he had done that he gave himself up to the authorities. He stated before the judge that their father had been killed in a duel many years ago by Rubino Vincetti, that a vendetta had been sworn, and that recognizing me by my name and my features as the son of their father's slayer, they had determined to take my life; that Giuseppe had been cast to wreak vengeance upon me, but that by some means, which he could not explain, his brother had been wearing my cloak and he had killed him by mistake. Giuseppe expressed a desire to retire to a monastry, so he was released, and was then in a religious house, which the consul named. I need hardly add that,although there would now probably be no danger in it,I have since paid heed to my father's last wish, and have never "put my foot in Sicily" again.

But how about the old fortune teller, you ask?

Ah! I cannot explain that. She, perhaps, recognized me as Vincetti by my features, and may have even been consulted by the brothers Ferrari before attempting my life, but I have stated the facts as they occurred, and I know no more.

IMPORTANT PAPERS.

An Instance of Queen Victoria's Respect for the Sabbath.

Queen Victoria has given so many proofs of the possession of sterling virtues that no one ever expects her to swerve from the path approved by her judgment and her conscience. When she first became queen, however, the world had yet to learn how determined the young ruler could be.

Lord Melbourne, her prime minister, is said to have declared that he would rather have ten kings to manage than one queen.

On one occasion, he arrived at Windsor late on Saturday night, and informed his youthful sovereign that he had brought for her inspection some papers of importance. "But," said he, "as they must be gone into at length, I will not trouble your majesty with them to-night, but will request your attention to them to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning?" replied the queen. "To-morrow is Sunday, my lord."

"But business of state, please your majesty."

"Must be attended to, I know," replied the queen, "and as, of course, you could not get down earlier to-night, I will, if these papers are of such vital importance, attend to them after we come from church to-morrow."

In the morning the royal party went to church, and the noble statesman was not absent. Much to his surprise, the sermon was on the duties of the Sabbath.

"How did your lordship like the sermon?" asked the queen.

"Very much, your majesty," he replied.

"I will not conceal from you," said the queen, "that last night I sent the clergyman the text from which to preach. I hope we shall all be the better for his words."

It is presumable that they were better for the day passed, and no word was heard of the papers. At night, when her majesty was about to withdraw, she said. "To-morrow morning, my lord, at any hour you please, we will go into those papers—at seven o'clock, if you like."

But the papers had suddenly grown less pressing, for the prime minister, found that nine o'clock would be quite early enough to attend to them.

BUILT TO BAR OUT MICROBES.

Noted Scientists Put Up at Yokohama One of the Oddest Structures on Earth.

One of the oldest domiciles on earth is that recently erected at Yokohama by Dr. W. Van der Heyden, the noted bacteriologist, of Utrecht, and Japan. The doctor's house is a dust-poof, air-proof, microbe-proof, building of glass. It stands on the open, unshaded grounds of the hospital of Yokohama. The house is 44 feet long, 23 feet wide,and 17 feet high. Large panes of glass, one-half inch thick, and about four inches apart are set in iron frames, so as to form the sides of a cellular building block. Of these blocks the walls are constructed. There are no window sashes, the air escape being through several small openings, around the upper part of the second storey, but through which no air from the outside is admitted. The air supply is obtained from a considerable distance, forced through a pipe and carefully filtered through cotton wool to cleanse it of bacteria. To insure further sterilization the air is driven against a glyerine coated plate of glass, which captures all the microbes the wool spares. The few microbes brought into the house in the clothes of the visitors soon die in the warm sunlight with which the house is flooded. The space between the glasses of the building blocks is filled with a solution of salts, which absorbs the heat of the sun, so that the rooms of this house are much cooler than those protected by the thickest shades. In the evening the interior is heated by the salts radiating the heat they have absorbed during the day. So effective is the system of regulating the temperature, that a few hours of sunlight even in freezing weather, render the house habitable. It is only when several cloudy days follow in succession that artificial heat is needed. Then it is supplied by pumping in hot air. Dr. Van de Heyden, thinks he has solved the problem of a complete germicide upon a big scale.

WHAT TWO DOLLARS WILL DO.

Tramp—Please, sir, a couple of dollars would give me a nice, comfortable home for the winter.

Benevolent Party—It would? Well, no man shall suffer all winter long for the sake of two dollars. Here is the money.

Thankee, sir.

But stop. How is that amount to give you a home?

It'll get me howlin' drunk, sir, an' then the perlice an' the jedge will retire me to winter quarters, sir.

LOOK OUT FOR BAD BILLS

HERE IS A LIST OF SOME COUNTERFEIT BANK NOTES.

Directions by Which You May Detect Them—Read and Profit by the Knowledge You Shall Have Gained.

There is in circulation a one dollar Dominion of Canada bill of the new issue which is a very poor counterfeit, and has the appearance of having been printed from a wood cut. A more dangerous counterfeit is that of the old Government issue dated Ottawa, July 1, 1870, and payable at Toronto, This has an indifferent portrait of Jacques Cartier on the upper left end of the note, a white streak extending from the ear to the chin which is not fom the ear to the chin which is not found on the genuine, while the lathe work around the figure 1 on the right of the note is irregular. A photographic counterfeit is in circulation on the Union Bank of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, numbered No. 30,252,and dated January 1, 8112.

TWO DOLLAR COUNTERFEITS.

A very deceptive bill is a Dominion of Canada counterfeit of the new issue dated June 1st, 1878, and payable at Toronto. Lord Dufferin's portrait in the centre of the note is very badly engraved, and there are no dots over the i's in the words "British American Bank Note Company, Montreal," on the lower edge of the note. The ink in which the numbers are printed, is brick red, while the genuine bills are numbered in bright carmine. The shading of the words "Dominion of Canada," is coarse, and the notes are of different numbers.

Another counterfeit Dominion of Canada $2 bill is better engraved, but the paper has a yellowish tint, and the final "e" in the word "Finance" is larger than the other letters. Still another is dated Ottawa, July 2, 1887. The words "To Bearer" are omitted, as also are the words "for Minister of Finance" under J. M. Courtney's signature.

A brownish photographic counterfeit is dated January 1, 1872, and is on the Union Bank of Prince Edward Island. Another on the same bank is coarse and too short, and bears date March ,1 1875. The lathe work is poor and the stamp of British American Bank Note Company is omitted.

A Bank of Toronto two-dollar bill is an alteration from the notes of the failed International Bank of Canada. The title "Bank of Toronto" is pasted over the title of the failed bank, and in some instances the signatures are erased and others are substituted. The altered note is dated September 15,1858, and can readily be detected when held up to the light. A strip of paper is frequently pasted on the back of the note to conceal the alteration.

FOUR DOLLAR BILLS.

There are five kinds of counterfeit four dollar notes floating about. One is of the old Dominion Bank issue of February 1, 1871. The cashier's signature is engraved, while in the genuine note it is written. A white line separates Prince Arthur's picture from the background and the letter work is very irregular.

A poor photographic counterfeit is numbered 74,981 and purports to be on the Bank of British North America, St. John, N.B. Another poor conterfeit is on the City Bank, Montreal, P.Q. The ink and lathe work on this latter bill being very defective, while the bank is not in existence. A bill of the defunct Bank of Western Canada has been altered by acids and pasting to a four dollar bill of the Bank of Upper Canada, and a bill of the one time Colonial Bank of Canada has been changed to a four dollar Bank of Toronto bill.

FIVE DOLLAR COUNTERFEITS.

Five dollar bills are many and have been widely circulated. A pen and ink counterfeit with poor portraits and poor letterwork is issued against the Banque Du Peuple of Montreal, Another is of the old issue of the Canadian Bank of Commerce dated May 1, 1871. The engraving is coarse, particularly the portrait, and the cashier's signature is witten on it instead of being engraved. The paper is also very poor. A badly photographic counterfeit on the Bank of British North America, Quebec, is dated November 22, 1871, and numbered 44,490.

Perhaps the most extensively circulated counterfeit five-dollar bill is on the Bank of British North America, Kingston, Ont., and dated May 1st, 1875. The shading in the scroll work of this bill is omitted, while in the genuine bill it is fine and clear. Genuine notes of this issue are numbered from 30,001 to 36,000, inclusive, while the counterfeits bear other numbers. The lathe work is very good. It should be remembered that very few genuine notes of this date and issue are now in circulation.

There is a third note, on the Bank of British North America, Montreal, P. Q. It is a counterfeit of the old issue, and the date of the month is omitted, genuine notes being dated 3rd July, 1877. The imprint, "British American Bank Note Company, Montreal," in the upper left corner of the note is poorly engraved, and the vignettes are also poor. Another counterfeit is dated 5th July, 1877, and is evidently made from the same plate, as in other ways it answers to the note just described.

A counterfeit on the Bank of Montreal is of the old issue and dated 1858, September 1. It bears in a large panel in the centre of the note the inscription "TWENTY-FIVE SHILLINGS CY.," while a small panel in the lower left corner of the note is stamped "FIVE DOLLARS." The date and numbers are printed in blue, and in the upper right and upper left are two small vignettes. The word "Quebeck," appears in three places printed in blue ink in the counterfeit. There is a counterfeit on the Ottawa branch, and its date and numbers are printed in red ink.

A photographic counterfeit of the Port Hope issue on the Bank of Toronto is very poor. It is signed "Wm. Gooderham, President," and there is a similar counterfeit on the Peterboro' issue. There are several other photographed counterfeit five dollar bills. One is on the Union Bank of Charlottetown, P.E.I., and is faded in appearance; another is a photographic pen and ink note numbered 126,304 and dated Halifax, N.S., Julv 5, 1887; and a bill of the old Maritime Bank of St. John, N. B., was counterfeited clumsily, so that its general appearance easily betrays it.

LOOK OUT FOR THESE TENS.

A very dangerous counterfeit is that of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, dated May 1st, 1871, and signed "Wm. McMaster, President," and "W. Cooke, Cashier." The colour of the blue numbers is a trifle light and the vignette is coarse, especially the head of the lion. The bases of the Letter A. in the word "dollar" are connected by a line in the counterfeit while in the genuine the line is broken. The perpendicular line of the letter P in the word "President" extends below the line, while in the genuine it does not. Under the words Ten Dollars there are five shaded lines, where the genuine bill has but four. The shading of the title "Bank of Commerce" is coarse and scratchy and the lathe work presents several defects. The green ink on the back of the note is lighter coloured than the genuine and the paper is a trifle thinner. The counterfeit is of an issue that has been for several years withdrawn from circulation and there are very few notes of it now outstanding.

The counterfeit ten dollar bill of the Ontario Bank of Bowmanville, dated November 1, 1870, is a trifle shorter than the genuine note, and the vignette of Woodman is poorly engraved. Some of these bills have not the imprint of the British American Bank Note Company, and where it is present it is very irregular. The general appearance of this counterfeit is very bad. A photo-lithographic counterfeit on the Merchants' Bank of Halifax is dated January 1, 1874, and when a little used is very blurred.

The counterfeit on La Banque Nationale, Quebec, is dated April 28, 1860, and is very poor. The P of the word "President" is over the IX of the word "Dix," just below, while in the genuine note it comes over the D. The counterfeit on the City Bank of Montreal has the word "Parliament" spelled "Parliment." There is a poor photographic counterfeit on the People's Bank of New Brunswick, and another on the defunct Maritime Bank, of St. John, N.B., dated October 5, 1881.

Dominion of Canada ten dollar counterfeits are one dollar bills, and have been raised by careful scraping with a knife and a little artistic pen and in kwork. The border of the note has not been altered except that lines have been added to make the bill indistinct. There are no $10 Dominion of Canada notes. There is a ten dollar counterfeit bill of the Bank of British North America at Ottawa. It is made by the photographic process, and is rather interior. It is numbered 16,279.

JUST FOR FUN.

He (telling a hair-breadth adventure): "And in the bright moonlight we could see the dark muzzles of the wolves." She (breathlessly): "Oh, how glad you must have been that they had the muzzles on!"

Miss Elderly (taking politely proffered seat in crowded tramcar): Thank you, my little man. You have been taught to be polite, I am glad to see. Did your mother tell you to always give up your seat to ladies? Polite boy: No'm; not all ladies—only old ladies.

Willie: Mamma, they say history repeats itself, don't they? Mother: Yes, dear. Willie: Well, why don't it repeat itself when I'm trying to learn it?

Father (trying to read a newspaper): What was that racket in the hall just now? Mother: One of the children fell downstairs. Father: Well, tell them that if they can't fall downstairs quietly, I won't let them fall down at all.

Bobby: Popper, what is a mutual friend? Mr. Ferry: He is generally one who makes it his business to see that you don't miss hearing the mean things your friends say about you.

Inquisitive Boy: Say, pop, what does the boa constrictor tie himself up in a hard knot like that for? Pop: Oh, that's to remind himself of something when he wakes up.

"What's the matter now?" asked the milkman when the pretty young housewife said she must quit him. "The milk seems nice and white when you deliver it, but if I let it stand for a few hours it turn an ugly yellow."

A WANDERING LAKE.

The Swedish explorer of Central Asia, Sven Hedin, gives the latest information concerning the "wandering" of Lake Nor in the Gobi Desert, a phenomenon about which contradictory views have been entertained. He says that the Tarim River, entering the lake from the west, brings down, during the period of high water late in summer, a great quantity of silt, which has the effect of driving the lake, lying on the level floor of the desert, toward the southeast. But the summer wind,drifting the surface sand and darkening the heavens with dust, blows generally from the northeast, and it, too, tends to drive the lake before it. The combined effect of the urging by the wind, and the river is to force the lake southward. Yet Sven Hedin thinks, the migration of the lake is not constant in direction, but it shifts back and forth intermittently, according as the circumstances change.

HE SOMETIMES ESCAPES.

Preacher—And do you always say your prayers at night?

Johnny—Not allwus. When pa don't come home to supper ma gets so excited and tears around so that she forgits, and I sneak off to bed without saying 'em.