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aster. Your first shot will awaken me. Now, it is by no means certain that your first shot will send off the dynamite. You may have to fire half a dozen, and your best rifle is an old breech-loader. I use smokeless powder, and you don't. I could pepper away at you for half an hour, and you'd never know where the bullets were coming from, while the smoke from your rifle would betray your position at once. The person who sets off that dynamite is a murderer. So before you put your plan into action, Dean, consult your comrades, and explain its disadvantages."

Dean stood meditating for a few moments before he spoke.

"I'm much obliged to you," he said at last, "for telling me what you mean to do. We'll change the plan a little, and come out of the bunk house together. We'll search the country for you, and so won't need to blow up the mine."

"A much more humane expedient," commended Stranleigh, "which will prevent unnecessary loss of life. I shall be lying quiet under whatever cover I can find. Your crowd will comb the locality, and I may remind you that you are no light-footed Cinderellas. I shall see you before you see me, so I leave the result to your imagination. Your time to act was when you were snoring beside the door, and I was climbing the chimney. Once you allowed me to get my hands on my rifle, your opportunity passed. I came west to shoot. What you chaps want is an armistice, not a battle. If you remain in the bunk house, you are as safe as in a church."

Jim did not reply, but deliberated, his open palm against his bandaged ear.

"Hurt?" queried Stranleigh.

"Yes," admitted Jim, ruefully.

"Well; go to the house and see Miss Armstrong; you can reflect on the situation while she is dressing your wound. Thinking will take your mind from the pain. Then consult the boys, and let me know what they de-

cide. Meanwhile, I can guarantee that no one comes out of that bunk house without being shot at."

"I'll do what you say, Mr. Stranleigh, but I'd like to change the order. I'll warn the boys first. That's only fair, for they're watching, and if they see me going to the ranch house, they will think it's all right, and come outside."

THE wounded man made his way to the bunk house. Shortly afterwards Stranleigh saw him emerge and go towards the homestead. After a longer interval he came slowly in the direction of the fortress, his ear neatly bandaged in white linen, which showed up like a small flag of truce.

"Well, what did Miss Armstrong say about the wound?"

"It's about as serious as a bee sting, and will be cured nearly as soon."

"Good!" exclaimed Stranleigh. "That relieves my conscience. I hope you found your messmates undergoing a period of common sense."

"They agreed it wasn't healthy to take outdoor exercise," admitted Jim. "If we decide to fight again, we'll give you notice. Will that suit you?"

"I don't know that it does. You must also promise you will not break loose before Mr. Armstrong returns, or until the auction is over."

"They wouldn't agree to that last, Mr. Stranleigh; we're bound to attend that auction."

Stranleigh sighed.

"Well, good-bye! Give my love to the boys!"

Stranleigh watched the retreating figure until it disappeared into the bunk house. A moment later, when the perforated door was drawn shut, he rolled his blankets into a bundle, and deposited it at the farther end of the cavern. This done, he shouldered his rifle, crossed the barricade, and strolled down to the farm house. Miss Armstrong greeted him with astonishment.

(Concluded in the next issue of THE SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE.)

Opera Bars and Barriers

By Mary Garden

THE expansion of the field of musical effort in America has very naturally and properly turned the attention of women to the operatic stage, but the unfortunate thing is that so many persons give rein to their ambition without any rhyme or reason. Many of them have no voices whatever, neither have they dramatic talent. I have no end of young women who come to me to test their voices. I can tell in a minute by their manner, appearance, speech, by the way they present themselves, by the way they walk into my room, whether they have something to give to the public or not. I have never yet made a mistake about it.

There are very few who have anything in them that would be available at the very top of the profession. People wonderfully gifted have been for generations occupying the top and this has made it very remote. I turn them down gently. I say, "I don't think you will ever be at the top."

Now, they needn't be discouraged by that, because there are many degrees even between mediocrity and pre-eminence. But I suppose they often go away and say, "Oh, well, Mary Garden, she doesn't know what she's talking about."

Unfortunately, I DO know what I am talking about!

There are many, many young composers who come to me with their works—the Wagners of today. The trouble is that even most of them who have talent are so addicted to the habit of imitation. They don't seem to realize that what makes a composer great is the expression of himself in his own way. Most of their works are hopeless, but now and then there is some one through whom a real genius seeks expression.

I can see right away when I have anything big before me.

A YOUNG MAN in Paris came to me with one act of "Aphrodite" and I said to him, "In that one act you have written a great work." I took him to Director Carre of the Opera Comique who accepted and produced the composition, and it was one of the greatest successes I have had.

But, after all, the game is worth while! The emoluments of success are splendid. One can nowhere near indicate them in terms of money. Therefore, I warn any girl against being discouraged by what I have said of the difficulties besetting the road to success. She must not take it for granted that she has not a voice. If she have any voice at all, by all means let her have it tested by an expert. She may have a rare gem hidden in her throat. The very formidableness of the task should spur a spirited girl on to undertake it.

The salaries of opera singers have been so much exploited that one is almost ashamed to touch on them. They are very great indeed, though often exaggerated. The highest paid ones get from a thousand to fifteen hundred dollars a performance and sing two or three times a week.

Don't be afraid to lift your eyes to that dizzy height. Who knows? You may be one yourself one of these days!

If the leaves of your house plants wither, and curl at the edges, it is a sign of red-spider. Tobacco smoke or oil-of-lemon solution will kill them. Their presence is a sign that the air of your room is too dry. Evaporate water to keep the air moist.

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