CONFESSIONS of a HOUSEMAID

Social Life of San Francisco as Seen by an Intelligent, Educated Woman Who Served for Years in Many of "Our Best Families"

I TOOK a little vacation after having worked steadily for six years. I felt my nerves needed it. Then, since I had had so much of the tragedy and comedy in real life in my last places I thought I might as well accept the offer of a place with the theatrical family which needed a maid of all work. I had to make an exception to my rule of living only in the homes of the rich, but the idea of knowing something of the inside of stage life attracted me. Trained dogs and trapeze flyers were about the only branch of the profession that could have any novelty for me now, after having been through so much of the real thing on the great stage of life, but footlights and costumes and makeups had never come in my line before and here was a chance.

Miss Nellie Erickson had asked me to call at the theater for my interview while she waited for a rehearsal. But I was detained on my way, so instead of being at her dressing room at the time she appointed I was late and had to wait until after the performance. This was at the old Alcazar during the Osborne and Stockwell days, and the management was strictly business, with no interruptions while a rehearsal was going on. I was motioned into a corner and told something in an undertone that I didn't understand, but took it to mean that I was to keep out of the way and wait until I was asked to explain my business.

From where I sat I could not see the stage and caught only occasional glimpses of the actor people waiting to go on. But when I heard singing I got bold and moved my seat so I could hear better. And since that moment I couldn't, if I wanted to, doubt the existence of fairies. There was a real live one sailing through the air, for all the world as if her gauzy wings were doing the work; even at my close range I couldn't see the wires. All spangles and glitter she went making pink circles in and out among the flowers, light as a breeze and as reckless.

I was standing in the doorway, blocking the exit, my mouth wide open in wonder, when the fairy flutters up to me and says: "Are you the maid who applied for a position?"

"Huh!" I said. I had forgotten all about what had brought me there. Then quick as a flash I remembered and said, "I am waiting to see Miss Erickson." "I am Miss Erickson," said the fairy. "I will want you to do general housework and look after my baby when I have to be away. I always do the cooking myself." Then she twinkled her silver ankles in the air and went back to being a fairy until it was time for her to go home and go to cooking.

By the time we had reached her house I understood what my duties were to be and before I had fully got my bearings she had changed her dress and was tripping around quick as lightning and as springy as a kitten all over porch, pantry and kitchen at once, wearing a blue and white checked gingham apron, and cooking beans and bacon.

By the time Mr. Erickson got home the baby was awake, and they all three sat down to dinner together. The dining room had a rag carpet on the floor, and the baby ate off a tin waiter, like the most commonplace people in the town. Mr. Erickson was playing "leads," as they called it, in the same company with his wife, who, by the way, was only Miss Erickson on the billboards, and between saying "Will you pass me the bread, my dear?" and "Will you have more tea, honey?" they were doing a dying scene dialogue—gasping out sighs and choking over baked beans in the same breath.

Well, nothing is ever what it seems to be when you see it at close range, I guess. In the homes of the everyday, well to do people I had gone through common melodrama, real tragedy and light comedy, and here in this little downtown flat, with a spangled fairy and a red handed villain, I was leading the simplest, most wholesome life in all my experience.

People were sending Mrs. Erickson flowers—always directed to Miss Nellie—and writing her notes the whole time, beautiful love letters they were, too, telling her how they were dying to know her and that she was the most perfect creature they had ever seen on the stage, and inviting her to supper with them after the theater, and all sorts of things like that, and she and her husband would take it all as a matter of course, just as they took the baker's and butcher's bills. Once there was a young man who pestered her so with his love letters and expensive presents she couldn't put him off. He belonged, and does still, to one of the best known families here—he lives at Burlingame now and is fat and bald headed, but he was dapper enough in those days, I can tell you. One day after getting a box of roses so large she could hardly get it into her little parlor Mrs. Erickson came to me and said, "Norah, listen to me. You are about my complexion and not so very much taller. Now I will make it worth while to you if you will dress up in my clothes tonight and take care of this young cub for me. I just must take this evening to change the papers on those pantry shelves." I said: "I'll not do it for anything less than a dollar an hour, ma'am."

She didn't tell me what would be expected of me, nor how much I would have to give and take. The fellow was quite young and thought himself a great "lady killer," and besides he was terribly caught by Mrs. Erickson's "glorious orbs," as he called them. He must have been disappointed when he met the stage beauty at close range, but he was game enough not to show it, and when I told Mrs. Erickson the next morning about it all and told her that she owed me $3 of hard earned money she agreed that it was well deserved.

"I AM MISS ERICKSON" SAID THE FAIRY.

"And after this," she said, "you shall have the flowers he sends." But he did not send any more. He must have discovered the deception we practiced upon him.

The Ericksons didn't go out to after theater suppers because they knew they needed all the rest and sleep they could get and more time than they had to study. They just lived a quiet, plain, domestic life, and no two people I ever knew were so happy in each other's love as they were until their trouble came.

It was a terrible night when Erickson was brought home from the theater after the accidental stabbing. The papers were all full of it and I guess a good many of you old theatergoers remember it still, for he was a popular actor and a young man of more than usual promise. Mrs. Erickson was so cool and collected through it all one would have thought it was of no consequence to her that he was on his deathbed, acting her part so well as to deceive us all at first. The weeks and weeks he lay there slowly dying we all had roles to play. Jack's first thought was always for his wife and hers, of course, was for him, while everybody was keeping up for everybody else, deceiving no one but himself. With Erickson's salary stopped, Mrs. Erickson was the sole breadwinner, so she had to go on spending half her time at the theater. This was the hardest thing that could have come to either of them. He wanted her beside him every minute and when he was out of his head he wouldn't take anything from anybody else. This kept her almost frantic, knowing that he would not take his medicine when she was not there to give it to him. Still she kept up cool and collected as you please, doing her "juvenile leads," as their theatrical friends called it, and getting her showers of applause, and flowers, and flattering notes right along as if nothing had happened. The strain began to tell at last, however, and she couldn't fight off the reaction. Her work began to suffer then and I saw the end coming. At last she came home one day and said to me in a dull, heavy voice as if she hadn't quite taken it in herself yet, "Norah, I am advised by the manager to take a rest." I didn't understand at first what she meant. I couldn't believe she could ever lose her place with the company. "No," she explained with a short little laugh, "it's not that bad. The manager has merely told me he had an understudy ready to take my place until I get my nerves back." It all meant one and the same thing, however, as we both knew. She was temporarily dropped from the company because she could not put the old life and spirit into her work with her heart breaking for fear she might find her husband dead any time she went home.

"But what are you going to live on?" I couldn't help asking. She had always been so frank about money matters with me and they were both so generous I knew they hadn't much saved up. "I don't know," she said, "but I'm not going to leave Jack another moment as long as he is spared to me."

The only thing left to her to do was to take in sewing. They had both been popular with the company, so Mrs. Erickson got all the work she could do. This was the time we did the real acting. When I think about it now I don't see how we ever lived through it.

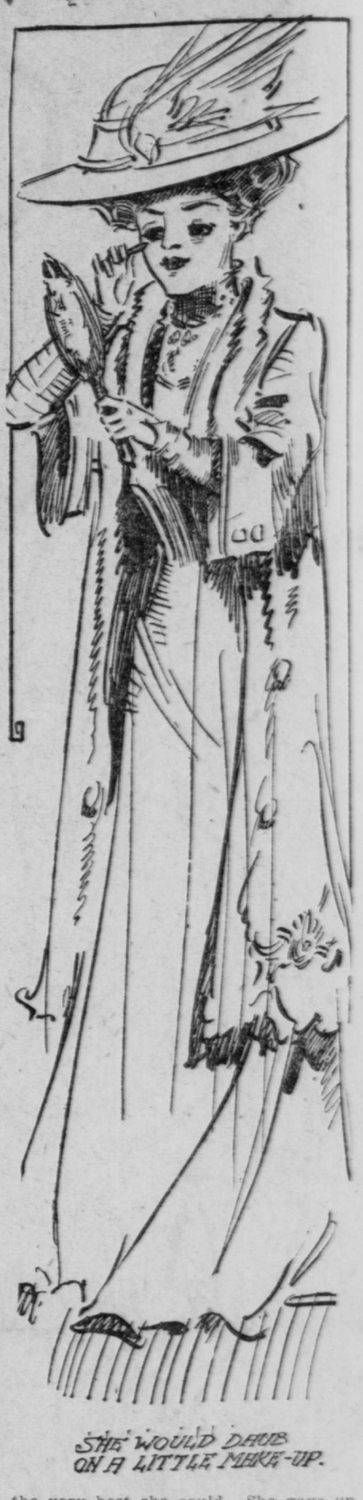
Mr. Erickson, of course, could not be told his wife had lost her place and was slaving 10 hours a day over her sewing machine. She had to keep his spirits up by telling him he would soon be well and at work again and that she had had a raise in her salary after his had been stopped. Every evening at the usual time, after she had sewed until she was ready to drop, she would kiss him goodby and say she was off to the theater. He would tell her how he hated to miss seeing her in her new parts, and give her messages for different members of the company. Then she would go and take off her hat and gloves and go back to her sewing until 10:30 or 11, and it was astonishing how inventive and artistic she was with the costumes she made. After that she would daub on a little makeup—she needed it, too, to cover up the hollow eyes and tear stains—slam the front door and dash into his room again, as if all out of breath from walking from the car, perch up on the foot of his bed and tell him a wonderful yarn about the doings at the theater that night, just what each one had done and how he did it, the applause and flowers she had received, and make up a lot of interesting messages that had been sent to him. Sometimes, tired as she was, she would sit hours with him when he was resting easily and they would laugh and carry on as they had done in the old light hearted days.

He was always hungry to hear about her successes and the compliments she received, and she could sit up and invent fibs for his sake as fast as she could tell them. For instance, once he said, "How is it you don't seem to have flowers any more?" She said, "Why, dearest, the parlor and dining room are a perfect bower of them this minute, but the doctor says their fragrance is not good for you, they might bring on a rose cold, you know." It was January at the time, but neither of them, fortunately, stopped to think of the difference between January and June. Then he took her in his arms and told her how proud he was of her and of her great talents, and that the company could never get along without her, while she would smile back into his eyes without a tremor and agree with every word he said.

He was not easily deceived either, and it required all the ingenuity we could both command to keep him in the dark. He knew pretty much all that was going on even though he was flat on his back, for when he was not suffering his mind was very clear. One night when it was raining he said to his wife when she came into his room to say goodnight, "Did you have a carriage to take you to the theater?" Quick as a wink she said, "Oh, yes, of course. Why do you ask?" "I didn't hear it drive up, and I was listening for it, too," he said. That was our cue. After that we had to hire a man whenever it rained to drive up to the house, slam the carriage door and drive away again, although every penny was blood money to us now.

That slamming of the door at 50 cents a slam however, was an added incentive to Mrs. Erickson to work in order to make up for her extravagance. Original ideas in costumes seemed hovering in the air all around her and she was soon able to raise her prices and still have all the work she could do. But she was never able to give up the farce of still keeping her place with the company. Although in the next room, during the hours she was supposed to be at the theater she was never able to go near her husband. He never forgot the time she was due at a play or rehearsal and sometimes when he got bad and his spells of smothering came on she would listen outside his door until she fell to the floor fainting with agony, but never once so far forgot herself as to rush in to him. Then she would pull herself together, take time to curl her hair and put on some pretty, fresh gown and run into his room smiling and full of enthusiasm over her part, and nobody but myself, who saw both sides, would have believed that she was not still the stage favorite on her way to win showers of applause.

When at last the end came and the curtain rang down forever on poor Jack Erickson's life his little wife went through it all as she had gone through all her other parts, doing it the very best she could. She gave up her flat and the sewing and went back to the stage, for she still had Jack Erickson's baby to support. It was all flowers and footlights and applause again, and I even saw her playing her fairy role the next season, prettier and more attractive than ever. After she went to New York I lost track of her, she must have left the stage or married or died, for I have not seen her name in theatrical notes for a long time. God rest her soul wherever she is, for in all my life of service I never saw so much grit, and while I was in the Erickson flat I was in the happiest, holiest home in this city.



SHE WOULD DAUB ON A LITTLE MAKE-UP.

ANECDOTES OF BRIDGE WHIST AND BRIDGE WHISTERS

THERE is a very broad minded Episcopal bishop who is an inveterate bridger, and has even been accused, on occasions, of neglecting, for the game, the spiritual needs of his flock.

A Mrs. N., who was herself a great lover of the game, had gone down to the bishop's country place to spend the weekend. The bishop had also invited a married couple who were adept bridgers.

On Sunday at afternoon tea time the bishop, having finished his evening service, the party were gathered around the open fire, chatting cozily over the buttered muffins. Mrs. N., who was aching for a rubber and could no longer bear the idea of "the unbridged chasm" before dinner, asked the bishop point blank if he could not, just for once, overcome the clerical prejudice against Sunday bridge. The bishop was a widower, and his two children were busily engaged on the hearth rug in reconstructing a most complicated jigsaw puzzle, while a French maid was deftly taking away the tea things. The bishop seemed much shocked by Mrs. N.'s horrifying suggestion.

"My dear Mrs. N.," he said, "if I had to consider myself alone in a matter of this sort I should perhaps feel justified, merely in order to give you pleasure, in yielding to what I am well aware is an insidious and growing evil, but you must remember that there are others whose moral welfare is perhaps at stake, and whose spiritual paths I have always, however imperfectly, endeavored to direct. The children are with us and Felise, my parlor maid. What would they think of me? How could I justify the imperiling of their moral stronghold?"

In a few minutes, when the maid had vanished with the tea tray and when the children had been cordially embraced by their father and quite as cordially sent to bed, the worthy bishop went on with his ennobling train of thoughts.

"Yes, Mrs. N., we must try in crises of this nature to think of others. However, as the children are beyond the power of disturbing us, and as Felise is doubtless in the dining room setting the dinner table, I will, if you will accept me as a partner, challenge our friends here to two rubbers. I must, however, urge you to lock this experience in your breast, and I also beg you not to find fault with me if I make it very light, and, above all, I implore you to curb your wicked propensity to revoke, particularly at points in the game where there can be no earthly advantage in it."

The bishop then proceeded to shuffle the 52 allies of Satan and to riffle the cards for the cut.

A lady from Chicago went into a dry goods shop and was vainly trying to secure the attention of two glorious beings in black princesse costumes, surmounted by gigantic and plentifully marceled pompadours. Their heads were as close together as their pompadours would permit, and their conversation was evidently fervid and engrossing.

After the lady had waited patiently for some minutes for the discussion between them to cease, so that she might modestly inquire as to the price of Copenhagen blue Amazon plumes, she was surprised to overhear the following poignant remark:

"No, dearie, positively you are wrong, from king, jack, ten, you always want to lead the jack."

This dictum, although it surprised the lady greatly, gave her a cue which she was not slow to take up.

"Excuse me," she said, "but I think you are wrong. If you will read Elwell's new book you will find that the ten is the correct lead from such a combination of honors. I am glad to see that you ladies like bridge; I am myself passionately fond of it. Oh! I wonder if you would show me, without at all troubling yourselves, that beautiful feather in the case beyond you?"

The blonde goddesses were at once propitiated and an entente cordiale was soon established.

Mr. M. is married. He is the meanest man in the entire inhabited globe. His wife is in her own right an extremely poor woman, as well as an extremely poor bridge player. She adores playing for money, but her husband, with an eye to the probable expense of such wickedness on her part, has sternly forbidden her—notwithstanding his large fortune—to play for any financial stake whatsoever.

Poor Mrs. M. one day found herself among some ladies who were playing for 5 cent points. She longed to plunge in, but her wholesome fear of her husband at first restrained her. Finally, however, her poor, weak, moral nature crumbled into bits and she announced that she wanted to play for the table stakes of 5 cents. After this cold plunge she sat down at the table in deadly earnest and fairly wallowed in the consciousness of her moral enormity. At the end of the seance, which had lasted until past her dinner hour, she found herself $24 "to the good."

Snatching up her gains she hurried to her house, where she found Mr. M. in a fine rage at having to wait 15 minutes for his dinner.

"Where have you been?" he shouted to her.

"Why, my dear, I never saw you this way before. What can be the matter with you?"

"Where have you been? Answer me!"

"I've been to Mrs. Duquesne's, playing bridge, my dear."

"Oh! You have, have you? Well! Mrs. Duquesne plays for money, as I happen to know, and so do all her friends, don't they?"

"They certainly do, my love."

"And did you play for money, too?"

"Yes, my dear; I must confess that I did."

"What stakes? Pennies?"

"Well, no. To be perfectly truthful, Henry, I played for 5 cent points."

"You know that I have absolutely forbidden it. This is a deucedly serious thing. How dare you disobey me? You must be mad! What possible justification have you got for doing it? Answer me!"

"Well, Henry, dear, the only justification that I have is that I won $24."

"You won how much?"

"Twenty-four dollars."

"Let me see it."

At this point Mrs. M. began to feel herself mistress of the situation. She took the crisp bills out of her purse and showed them to her lord and master with a sense of mingled pride and shame. He snatched the money from her hands, stuffed it into his pocket, showed her to her chair in the dining room and said, as she sat ruefully down at the table:

"Helen, you have hit upon the one and only possible justification for such shocking disobedience—so please be thundering careful never to advance any other."

Here is a famous anecdote of Lord de Ros, who some years ago, in the days of straight whist, was a redoubted player in England. Notwithstanding his skill, he simply could not play fair, and had a distressing habit of slipping an ace on the bottom of the pack—after the cut. In this way he was always sure of the ace of trumps when it was his turn to deal. He was finally detected in the fraud and left London precipitately for the continent, where, after a few years, he died. A well known wag in London suggested, as a suitable epitaph for the unfortunate nobleman, the following lines:

Here lies Lord de Ros,
In confident expectation
Of the last trump.

At the time of the De Ros scandal, Lord Hertford was asked what he would do if he saw a man cheating at cards.

"Bet on him, of course," was his lordship's reply.

Lord de Ros' system was only available once in four deals—when he dealt! At such a crisis he would palm an ace and slip it on the bottom of the pack. He somehow marked all the other aces with his fingernails so that he could note, while dealing, to whom they fell. After the exposure of the fraud there was at White's club a vulgar "outsider" whom De Ros had snubbed on one or two occasions. He remarked to one of De Ros' friends, in a very insulting tone, that he felt sorry for poor old De Ros and would certainly leave his card on him, but he was afraid that De Ros would mark it.

"I think you can safely take the risk," said his lordship's friend. "I am certain that he would not think your card a high enough honor."

This bon mot is usually attributed to Lord Alvanley.

A decided bridge innovation is the announcement by a well known magazine, devoted to women's interests, that they are ready to reply to inquiries concerning the etiquette of the game in their "department of behavior." An idle, trivial and rather slangy gentleman in New York was so delighted that he sat down and wrote in different handwriting the following queries to the etiquette editor:

(1) Is it ever good form for a gentleman to change his suit at the bridge table—in the presence of ladies?
ESTELLE.

(2) I write for advice. Have I been insulted? I called on my lady friend last night and she asked me to play bridge. I had never played before. Twice during the game she called me a dummy and once a cross rough. One hand she said she was afraid to play a heart because somebody held a major tennis over her. What kind of an instrument or weapon is this? The last hand of the game I had the ace, king, queen and jack of clubs. I led the jack and my partner—my lady friend's mother—trumped it. After the hand my partner was hopping mad and whispered to her daughter, "How was I to know that he had a quart?" Now, as a matter of fact, I had only a pint, and that was at least an hour before calling.
M. A. D.

We need hardly say that these brilliant (?) sallies of wit have remained to this day unnoticed by the overworked and presumably indignant etiquette editor.

A remarkable case of bridge under high pressure was that of Mrs. James Thompson of Fourth avenue, Detroit. This little incident found its way into the Detroit papers and was widely copied in all the press of America, and we are glad to quote it, as it shows that women sometimes possess, under trying circumstances, a truly admirable philosophical spirit as well as a lively interest in bridge.

Mrs. Thompson had gone one winter evening to dine with some neighbors and play a friendly rubber or two. The match was a close one, and she was struggling valiantly to pull out the game with a very indifferent no trumper, when some friends rushed in and, in a state of almost frenetical excitement, announced to Mrs. Thompson that her house was on fire and would soon be beyond all hope of saving. The guest flew to the windows and saw that the house was already a pillar of flame. Mrs. Thompson seemed a trifle saddened by the catastrophe which was befalling her, but quite as much vexed by the untimely interruption to the game. She soon sat down again at the table and remarked, as though nettled by the intrusion of the newcomers: "Come on; let's finish."

At this point a reporter from a local paper was admitted and asked Mrs. Thompson what she had to say about the conflagration.

"I don't know anything about it," she said, testily. "The house is on fire, as you can plainly see, but we are luckily on the outside and that is all there is to it."

With this she triumphantly played the queen of diamonds and was soon completely under the spell of the game again.

Although this is an extreme instance of women's devotion to bridge, we must admit that we have of late been surprised to see what a firm hold the game has taken on them, both on this side of the water and in England.

Sometimes we almost regret that women play bridge so much. It develops in them—even more than it does in men—trying little eccentricities and peculiarities of character. Let us consider a very few examples. To begin with there is—

(1) The lady who plays with such a professional air that we feel quite helpless and hopeless from the very start of the game. (The rapidity and precision with which she gathers and stacks her tricks is truly appalling.)

(2) The belle who only plays for amusement, "So you needn't expect me to take the game seriously—for I sha'n't."

(3) The great card holder. (The Christian fathers used to say that if one thought murder one had in sober truth committed it. Merciful heavens! How many of these women have we played against—and killed?)

(4) The postmortem lady.

(5) The creature who says: "But how was I to know that you held," etc.

(6) The fidget.

(7) The matron who remarks: "Well, Elwell says—"

(8) The chatterbox.

(9) The young lady who, after leaving it and getting the inevitable spade, pounces on all the cards, paws and pores over them—in order to see what would have happened at hearts, or no trumps, or whatever other make she may originally have had in her mind.

(10) The prosperous woman whose fingers literally swarm with rings and whose nails are so red and so polished and so shiny that they always make me think of the line in "Macbeth":

"This my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine," etc.

LIFEBUOY SOAP

Has "That Clean Smell"

which distinguishes it from ordinary soaps. The odor of Lifebuoy associates itself with utter clean-ness and wholesomeness.

For Toilet Bath and Shampoo

Lifebuoy is the most satisfactory of all soaps. Cleans and disinfects at the same time. Prevents the infection of cuts and scratches which may become poisoned.

5c At your Grocers

LEVER BROS. COMPANY Cambridge, Mass.

Stomach Troubles Vanish Like Magic

FREE to Every Man or Woman

Dr. Young's PEPTOPADS cure where medicines alone fail. They regulate the bowels, relieve soreness and strengthen the nerves and muscles of the stomach in either sex. You can eat what you want and all you want without fear of distress. The cures effected are marvelous. If you have Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Sour Stomach, Distress after Eating, Nervousness, Dizziness, Heart Fluttering, Sick Headache, etc., send 10c, to cover cost of mailing, and I will send you a $1.00 treatment absolutely free. It will relieve you immediately. Address DR. G. C. YOUNG, 111 National Bank Building, Jackson, Michigan.

That Bunion CAN BE CURED

Let us prove it to you FREE on your own bunion. Send us your name and a 2c stamp and we will mail you a trial treatment of our ANTI-BUNION PLASTERS FREE. This will prove in the unmistakable language of results that what we say is so.

So called shields, pads, etc., will never cure you. They tend to make the bunion bigger and more tender, thereby increasing instead of decreasing the deformity. Our ANTI-BUNION PLASTER works on a different principle. It does not merely protect the bunion—it does not merely afford temporary relief—it completely removes the bunion, and that for good. Our Anti-Bunion Plaster first and almost instantly takes away all the pain and soreness. Then it dissolves the enlarged growth, and the final result is a natural shaped, normal foot, such as you were intended by nature to have. All this is done painlessly, harmlessly and without the slightest inconvenience. You do not have to wear shoes two or three sizes too large while using the plaster. It takes up no room, being as thin as paper, and you can wear your tightest shoes with perfect comfort.

Let us prove all this to you free. Send now for the FREE trial treatment. FOOT REMEDY COMPANY, 3517 WEST 26TH ST., CHICAGO.

Gray Hair Restored

"WALNUTTA HAIR-STAIN"

Trade Mark

Restores Gray, Streaked or Bleached Hair or Moustache instantaneously. Gives any shade from Light Brown to Black. Does not wash or rub off. Contains no poisons and is not sticky nor greasy. Sold by all druggists, or we will send you a Trial size for 20c, postpaid; large size (eight times as much), 60c. If your druggist don't sell it send direct to us. Send the yellow wrapper from two bottles purchased from a druggist and we will give you a full-size bottle for nothing.
WALNUTTA CO., 1405 G Olive st., St. Louis, Mo.

ASTHMA CURED TO STAY CURED

No relapse. No return of choking spells or other asthmatic symptoms. Whetzel system of treatment approved by best U. S. medical authorities as the only system known to permanently cure the disease. FREE TEST TREATMENT including medicines, prepared for any one giving a full description of the case and sending names of asthmatic sufferers. Address FRANK WHETZEL, M.D., Dept. E. American Express Building, Chicago.

MORPHINE

Before you pay a cent, we will convince you that Manine permanently cures any drug habit. Guaranteed not to contain Morphine, Laudanum, Opium or any other habit forming drug. No money required in advance. A full month's treatment sent to those afflicted without one cent of deposit. Manine has cured thousands, it will cure you. Give it a free trial. You are to be the sole judge. Address
Manine Medicine Co., 3299 Locust St., St. Louis, Mo.
FREE ON APPROVAL

ASTHMA CURE sent by express to any sufferer. If it cures send $1.00, if not, it's FREE. Give express office. Write today. National Chemical Co., 706 Ohio Ave., Sidney, O.