

diphtheria in the United States each year are by no means reliable. In one State, however, fairly accurate reports are made, and from these we may gather much of interest. This State is Pennsylvania, which has an enlightened health board, and has been distributing antitoxin, free of charge, since the fall of 1905. Diphtheria used to be a fearful scourge in rural Pennsylvania, and it was common for an epidemic to close the schools of an entire township. The number of cases ranged from three thousand to six thousand a year, and placing the death rate at the moderate average of fifty per cent., this meant the death of from 1,500 to 3,000 children every twelvemonth.

Then came the antitoxin. During its first three months of use it reduced the death rate to about fourteen per cent. During the ensuing year it worked a further reduction to about eleven per cent. During the year following, 1907, it brought the rate down to 7.13 per cent., and among the 3,304 cases—three-fourths of the total number—treated on the first day—to 4.59 per cent.! In other words, the effect of this free distribution of antitoxin has been to save the lives of from 1,200 to 2,500 Pennsylvania children a year! Isn't that cheap enough for sound human beings—boys who may live to do honor to their country, girls who may become the mothers of Lincolns, Pasteurs, and Lazears?

The returns from the country in general are wonderfully inadequate, since, in more than half of the States, infectious diseases are not reported accurately and there is no intelligent war upon epidemics. But it is safe to say, I think, that there are 100,000 cases of diphtheria in the land each year and that antitoxin is used in the treatment of half of them. This means, at a fair estimate, the saving of 25,000 young lives a year, or about five hundred a week. Without the antitoxin, these children would die.

All such figures by no means represent the entire value to the nation of the antitoxin, for, in addition to its curative powers, it is also invaluable as a preventive. In the old days, when one case of diphtheria appeared in a house, it was common for all the other children under the same roof to take it too. All that is now a thing of the past. Immediately after he finishes injecting antitoxin into the veins of his little patient, the physician of to-day proceeds to give immunizing doses to the other children, and as a result they escape entirely. This, it is plain, has the effect of greatly reducing the number of cases, and so the malady is being combated in two ways, and in each way very vigorously and efficiently. Were the use of the antitoxin made compulsory in all