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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR,
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS,

SIR:

I have the honor to transmit herewith a report presenting mortality statistics of registration states and cities, compiled under authority of section 8 of the act of Congress of March 6, 1902, which provides for the annual collection of these statistics.

This report covers the five calendar years 1900 to 1904. The complete series of general tables adopted is given for each year, separately, but in the analytical tables and the text relating thereto the results are brought together.

The statistics have been compiled in accordance with the International Classification of Causes of Death, which was adopted by the Bureau of the Census as a feature of the movement for the extension of the registration area and the improvement of the mortality data available for statistical purposes. It is gratifying to note that the "standard certificate of death," which was recommended by this Bureau, has been generally adopted by registration officials, and its use has resulted in greater uniformity in the details recorded and greater precision in the statement of causes of death—the two factors upon which accurate classification depends.

A number of states recently have enacted adequate laws providing for the systematic registration of births and deaths, in the formulation and application of which this Bureau has assisted the local authorities in every way possible. As soon as it is demonstrated that the systems thus introduced are being successfully administered, the registration area will be largely increased. There can be no accurate and complete vital statistics for the United States until adequate registration laws are enacted and effectively enforced in every state.

The report herewith submitted was prepared under the supervision of the late William A. King, chief statistician for vital statistics. Shortly after completing the text and tables of this report, Mr. King was taken ill, and he died on April 27. It seems proper that a brief sketch of his official services should be incorporated in the letter transmitting the volume which represents his last and in some respects his best work in the service of the Census.

Mr. King first became associated with census work at the Tenth Census. He returned to it at the organization of the Eleventh Census, and remained in this branch of public service from that time until his death, or almost seventeen years—probably the longest term of continuous service in this field of Government work. At the Eleventh Census Mr. King worked in close association with Dr. John S. Billings, obtaining a thorough training in the subject of vital statistics. He was the ad interim clerk in charge of the census work and records in the period between the disbandment of the Eleventh Census and the organization of the Twelfth, and rendered invaluable service to the committees of both houses of Congress when the act for the taking of the Twelfth and subsequent censuses was under consideration. Immediately upon the organization of the Twelfth Census he was appointed chief statistician for vital statistics, and upon the organization of the permanent Census Office he was reappointed to that position.

Mr. King was the originator of the standard certificate of death now in use in practically all the registration states and cities; and his untiring zeal in the great work of standardizing vital statistics and in extending the registration areas entitles him to a rank among the very foremost of the comparatively few men in this country who have devoted their lives to the development of this important branch of statistical science.

Very respectfully,

[Signature]

Director.

Hon. Victor H. Metcalf,
Secretary of Commerce and Labor.
Mortality Statistics
1900 to 1904