

# A CENSUS OF THE DEAD.

The Minneapolis Cemeteries Have a Population of About 44,000.

What is the dead population of Minneapolis? How many men, women and children are sleeping in the last sleep in the cemeteries of the city? These are questions easy to ask and hard to answer. To approximate them with even tolerable accuracy would take months of delving in old records. To obtain the calculation given herewith has taken many hours of record-hunting, cemetery superintendent chasing and record examining. Here is the table by cemeteries:

Layman's, estimated	15,000
Lakewood	3,400
St. Anthony, estimated	1,800
Maple Hill, estimated	1,200
St. Mary's	1,200
Hillside	1,200
Crystal Lake	1,200
City cemetery	1,200
Montefiore	1,200
O. B. A.	120
Adath Jeshurun	120
Richfield cemetery	100

Total graveyard population 44,000. To make a striking comparison, there are substantially as many dead people in the cemeteries of Minneapolis to-day as there were living here in 1850. The dead population increases slowly, but it has this advantage over the living population, that it is always sure of an increase. Minneapolisians are now dying off at the rate of about 2,000 a year. This makes the growth of the dead city much slower than it is in other cities. Nevertheless, there is many a pretentious town in Minnesota that does not number as many living people as Minneapolis sends dead to its cemeteries each year. There have been years when the city contributed nearly 2,000 souls to the hereafter; but the older Minneapolisites feel the fonder people become of living in it. So, with a population border-

ing by means of a number of comparisons with accurate data. For instance, the superintendent of Layman's cemetery, C. Layman, estimated that there were 11,000 bodies in that cemetery. Estimates based on the death rate and the proportion of bodies buried at Layman's, forces the writer to reduce this number to 10,000. Again, John Moran, the superintendent of St. Anthony's cemetery, estimated that there were 11,000 bodies buried in the fifteen acres that make up that cemetery. This is a Catholic cemetery, and the proportion of Catholics to the whole population does not admit of any such number. Comparisons on this basis and on the others, such as the known fact that St. Mary's—the other Catholic cemetery—has only 1,700, make it probable that there are about 3,500 in St. Anthony's.

An even more baffling state of affairs exists at the old Maple Hill cemetery, where burials have not been permitted since 1890. This cemetery is the oldest existing cemetery in Minneapolis, and was the second instituted. So far as known, the first cemetery was in old St. Anthony, on a little knob, which is now covered by a lumber yard, and may be located as being between Eighth and Ninth streets and Fifth and Sixth avenues SE. Most of the bodies from this cemetery were moved to Maple Hill cemetery, when it was opened early in the fifties. Old settlers estimate that there were about fifty bodies buried in the first graveyard.

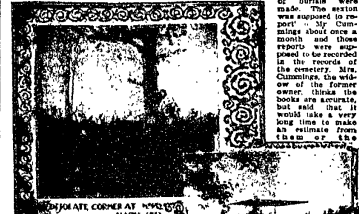
Maple Hill cemetery—North East Minneapolis—was owned by the late Robert Cummings, who in his lifetime never gave it very close personal attention. It depended largely upon the energy of the sexton whether or not accurate reports of burials were made. The sexton was supposed to report to Mr. Cummings about once a month and those reports were supposed to be recorded in the records of the cemetery. Mrs. Cummings, the widow of the former owner, thinks the books are accurate, but said that it would take a very long time to make an estimate from them or the

opening the graves in Maple Hill. The confusion of bones that resulted when these remains were reinterred was often such as to form a tough judgment day problem for the Angel Gabriel. It is well-suggested fact that three and four bodies were thrown in the same box and transported to the City cemetery. The city has built a wire fence around the old graveyard, but since the park board has never seen fit to condemn it for a park, it has become a wilderness within the city. Graves are overgrown with bushes and weeds and often with trees of considerable size. Monuments have fallen down, fences have been carried away, hundreds of graves are indistinguishable and empty ones gap gloomily on all sides. It is altogether the most sordid place in Minneapolis, and if ghosts do not walk at night through its tangled lanes and uncared-for shrubbery, there are no ghosts.

St. Anthony cemetery, located on Central avenue and Twenty-seventh avenue SE, and comprising about sixteen acres, is now being gradually reduced from the list of open burying grounds. Since January, 1905, it has been closed to all except the owners of lots. Last year, there were only sixteen burials there, as compared with 18 in 1904. St. Mary's, the other Catholic cemetery, which is on Chicago avenue and Forty-sixth street S, has, in consequence of the closing of St. Anthony, increased its annual burials from 27 in 1905, to 39 in 1906, and has now a total of 4,700. This cemetery, with the Hillside cemetery, the East Side burying ground, which was established in 1890, on the St. Paul & Duluth tracks; between Sixteenth and Twenty-second avenues NE, beautiful Lakewood, and Layman's, are now the chief cemeteries of Minneapolis, and received approximately the same number of bodies each month from twenty-six to thirty-five.

In point of ghoulish interest, the City cemetery is next in importance to Maple Hill. The park's field is on Lake street, just outside the city limits. It was established there, where the quarantine hospital is located, about 1864. When it was opened, about 200 bodies were moved to it from a graveyard near Shingle Creek, which the city had to abandon after a brief use because there was only three feet of earth above bed rock. In the first two or three years' inaccurate records were kept, and further complications were added when 200 boxes of remains, with an uncertain average to each box, were brought from Maple Hill. The number given in the table is, however, sufficiently accurate. Superintendent Boyer, who is now in charge, keeps an accurate record, by means of which, though the bodies of the poor are laid side by side, any one can be located easily. The poor are buried such as are soldiers killed in battle, except that the former are furnished with cheap coffins. Whenever a body is received it is lowered next to the last body into a long trench, which runs the whole length of the yard, and is about seven feet wide. As the bodies are placed in the trench, it is slowly filled with earth. When it is full, another trench is opened parallel to the first. The only tombstones to be seen in the City cemetery are those which were removed from Maple Hill.

Under one of these transplanted stones there lies a wag of the kind, whose grave is as accurately known by dog-



CORNER AT MAPLE HILL

ing on 22,000, Minneapolis is not losing as many people by death each year as it sometimes did when it had only 150,000 people. One year, when there were not more than 75,000 people in the city, the number of deaths ran up to 1,700.

If all cemetery records were carefully and systematically kept, if there were never incomplete city records of deaths and burials, and if there were never changes in the city organization, reorganization of the health department and other changes that upset statistics relating to mortality and burial, there would be no trouble in telling just how many people are under ground in this city. The writer of this article has not been able to find any statistics in the city archives covering the matter of deaths prior to 1874 and it was not until 1893 that reorganization of the health department led to the adoption of a somewhat imperfect system of keeping account of burials. Burial permits are now issued and numbered consecutively, so that after a certain date it is possible to tell how many people have been buried in the city. But to find exactly how many of these have been claimed by the different cemeteries, it would be necessary to consult every stub and by examining the death certificates one by one it would be possible to tell exactly what disposition had been made of every body since 1892. Before 1892 the records of deaths were kept in the city clerk's office. They do not indicate the disposition made of the body, and are sometimes not even totalized by years.

If the city records are dismaying to one looking for mortality and burial statistics, the cemetery records are even more uninteresting. In some of the older cemeteries there is no way even of forming an estimate except by going through a mass of indifferent kept books, which may and may not be right, and which never pretend to show totals. Where it would have required hours of labor to gain even an approximate idea from the books, the superintendent of the cemetery was asked to make an estimate. These estimates are invariably too high when compared with the maximum burials that the death rate would permit. In such cases the compiler has been compelled to scale the figures down



PRELIMINARY GRAVE AT ADATH JESHURUN CEMETERY

total number of burials in Maple Hill cemetery. There being no income from the cemetery after it was closed for further burials, it has been abandoned so far as regular burials are concerned. The legislature passed an act permitting the city to open streets around the four sides of the cemetery, and further permitting the city or the park board to condemn the whole cemetery for a public park. It was provided, however, that while there should be no additional burials the bodies already buried should not be disturbed, with the exception of those which would have to be moved to make way for the street opening. For the next three or four years, before the city took advantage of this act in respect to opening the streets, the cemetery was utterly abandoned and cattle roamed through it at will. In 1894 the streets were opened. From the records and examination of the marked graves, the engineers estimate that there were 900 bodies in the peripheral strip reserved for streets. When these streets—Broadway, Summer, Polk and Fillmore—were finally put through, it was necessary to take up 1,221 bodies which were distributed to all parts of the country for re-interment, though most of them were sent to the City cemetery and to Hillside; about 225 to the former and 315 to the latter. To further complicate the situation at that time and since an unknown number of bodies has been moved from the remainder of the old cemetery. Sometimes as many as three bodies, one on top of



THE OLDEST TOMB IN MINNEAPOLIS

several epitaphs in old English graveyards. On the headstone of his grave are inscribed the following touching lines: Behold, dear friends, as you pass by. As you are now, so once we must be. Prepare for death and follow me. Of the three Jewish cemeteries two are outside the city limits. Montefiore, the most pretentious and oldest, being established in 1875, is on Forty-second street and Third avenue S. The burying ground of the Order B'nai Abraham, or O. B. A., as it is abbreviated, is in Richfield township. Adath Jeshurun, the cemetery of a disbanded Jewish congregation of that name, is a small God's acre on the border of the city limits beyond Lake Harriet. The Richfield Christian cemetery has also taken a number of bodies from the city. The more modern cemeteries, including the three Jewish cemeteries, St. Mary's, Lakewood, Crystal Lake—the North Side cemetery—Hillside, and now the City cemetery, have instituted a system of record keeping which will make it an easy matter to take a graveyard census hereafter. Some of them number each body in record in its order of reception, so that by deducting the removals from the last recorded number the population of the cemetery can be accurately ascertained.