

The following is an extract taken from the September 27, 1919 number of the Army and Navy Register :

REDUCTION OF AMERICAN CEMETERIES

American cemeteries in Europe have recently been reduced from nearly 2,400 to about 700. A large reduction in this number will probably be made during the process of concentration in which the military forces of England, France and the United States are necessarily engaged.

The graves registration service has placed most of these cemeteries in excellent condition, and is now actively engaged in an effort to perfect the appearance of every one. Considerable time will be necessary for the completion of this great task. The commanding general in France has recently cabled to the War Department that all reports of the progress of the work are favorable. Congress now has under consideration the first definite appropriation for this purpose.

The matter of placing stone markers on the graves of our dead in Europe is engaging the attention of the quartermaster general, and the advice of the national fine arts commission is being sought with reference to fitting designs and materials.

The chief of the graves registration service, who is temporarily in this country for consultation, has recently brought a carload of mortuary papers and records from France and has established a graves registration division in the office of the quartermaster general in Washington, where these records can be worked out to completion for the use of families of the dead. No effort is being spared to insure accuracy and to perfect such records as require further investigation.

So many inquiries have demanded information as to the extent of our agreements with France in relation to mortuary matters that the War Department makes the following statement :

American compacts with the French state provide :

1. That cemetery space for our dead shall be allotted within French territory without cost to the American Government or people, wherever such space may be required. No allied army or nation may procure cemetery space in France by rental, purchase or other method of independent action.

2. That bodies will be transferred from temporary resting places in French municipal cemeteries whenever definite selection of American cemeteries shall have been made by an international commission and approved by the ministry of war for assignment to American use.

3. That concentration of bodies in contiguous territory shall be made, wherever practicable now that active hostilities are ended, and that no isolated graves shall remain in France.

4. That such concentration shall be made at points which are mutually approved by French and American authorities, and that the work shall be conducted in accordance with French sanitary and mortuary regulations, whose enforcement is committed to the *etat civil*.

5. While the removal of allied dead from France to their homes has not become the subject of international agreement, such removal has been disapproved by French authorities for a certain period of time by provisional regulation which is based on sanitary and economic grounds, and is proposed as a project of law now pending to French chambers. This regulation delays removal for reasons to which the American Government must give due consideration, but no suggestion of a permanent prohibition has been made, and diplomatic efforts are being employed with a view to securing some modification of the wishes of the French government.