

The Origin of the "Union Postale Universelle."

Up to the middle of last century, the postal arrangements between the several countries of the civilized world were carried out under a series of agreements. The outside tariffs differed very much by reason of the numerous and different interests, and consequently the postal arrangements were much complicated. These special difficulties were still further increased by the larger Customs charges which had to be paid for postal matter. The first international postal meeting was held in 1850, and was organized by the German-Austrian Postal Union. This marked the beginning of the "Union Postale Universelle."

In 1863, on the suggestion of the United States of America, a Postal Congress was held in Paris, at which the German-Austrian opening of Post Offices to the public was discussed.

The first International Postal Congress was held in Berne, at which the "Union Postale Universelle" was inaugurated. The decisions agreed to at this Congress were put into force on the 1st of July, 1875. All the European States joined the "Union," together with Turkey in Asia, Siberia, Egypt, the United States of America, and several of the States on the north coast of Africa. The principal items decided on by the "Union" were:—1, That all the countries mentioned form a Postal Union; 2, The said countries to give facilities for postal matter between the various countries forming the Union; 3, The transmission by land or sea to be arranged at low rates; 4, Special cheap tariffs to be created for the different kinds of letters sent by post; 5, Every State to retain the postage arranged by itself.

A second Postal Congress was

held in Paris in 1878, attended by the delegates of the different countries which had joined after the first Congress. The name, "Union Postale Universelle," was maintained, and the new agreements were called "world-contracts." This Congress decided specially: 1, an arrangement for registered letters; and 2, the circulation of postal money orders. These two contracts were agreed to by all the delegates constituting the Union.

At the Congress held in Paris in 1880, the first contract regarding postal parcels was instituted.

At the third Congress, held at Lisbon in 1885, it was decided that express letters might be sent as well as telegraphic money orders, and State books;—this latter point was not agreed to by Germany.

The fourth International Congress, held in 1897 at Vienna, signed the contract for sending by post parcels of special value, and also came to an arrangement regarding newspapers and periodicals.

The fifth Congress was held at Washington, when it was decided that the weight of parcels be put at from 2 to 5 kilograms, and that of samples of no value from 250 to 350 grams.

Very interesting resolutions were discussed by the sixth Congress, held in Rome on May 26th, 1906, and which were put in force on October 1st, 1907. Among these resolutions might be mentioned the following:—1, The weight of international letters was increased from 15 to 20 grams; 2, The postage of money orders in the "Union Postale Universelle"; 3, A general postage for registered letters; 4, The issue of tickets for paid answer, etc.

The next Congress will be held in Madrid in 1912.