Postal Convention between Belgium and Great Britain, signed at London, 19 October 1844

THIS Convention was supplemented by the Articles of 6/27 November 1844, the Additional Articles of 6/18 June 1845 and the Conventions of 8 January 1857 and 5 July 1862. It was further modified by the Convention of 27 November 1849 and was ultimately terminated by the Convention of 17 February 1876. It is here reproduced along with the Articles of 6/27 November 1844 from *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. XXXII, p. 66, being printed also in *Parliamentary Papers, 1845*, vol. LII, p. 1; *Hertslet's Commercial Treaties*, vol. VII, p. 86, and by Garcia de la Vega, *Traités etc. concernant le Royaume de Belgique*, vol. I, p. 397.

ENGLISH TEXT

HER Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and His Majesty the King of the Belgians, being desirous to promote the friendly relations existing between the 2 countries, and to regulate, by means of a new Convention, the communication by post between their respective dominions, upon a more liberal and advantageous basis, have named as their Plenipotentiaries for this purpose, namely:

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Right Honourable George Earl of Aberdeen, Viscount Gordon, Viscount Formartine, Lord Haddo, Methlick, Tarvis and Kellie, a Peer of the United Kingdom, a Member of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, and Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and the Right Honourable William Earl of Lonsdale, Viscount Lowther, a Peer of the United Kingdom, Lord Lieutenant of the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, a Member of Her Britannic Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, and Her Postmaster-General;

And His Majesty the King of the Belgians, the Sieur Sylvain Van de Weyer, Commander of the Order of Leopold, decorated with the Iron Cross, Grand Cross of the Orders of the Tower and Sword, of the Ernestine Branch of Saxony, and of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, Commander of the Order of the Legion of Honour, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of His Majesty the King of the Belgians to Her Britannic Majesty;

Who, after having communicated to each other their respective Full Powers, found to be in good and due form, have agreed upon the following Articles:

CHAPTER I.—*General Arrangements.*

ART. I. There shall be a periodical and regular exchange of correspondence between Great Britain and Belgium, at the times and by the means of communication and conveyance hereinafter described, as well for letters, patterns of goods, newspapers, courses of exchange, prices current, and other printed papers which, in the United Kingdom, are allowed to pass by post at reduced rates, originating within the territories of either State, as for objects of a similar nature originating in, or addressed to, the countries the correspondence of which shall be transmitted through the said States.

II. The exchange of correspondence between the 2 offices shall be effected through the following post-offices, namely:

On the part of Great Britain.—1. Dover. 2. London.

On the part of Belgium.—1. Ostend. 2. Antwerp.

III. Independently of the offices of exchange named in the preceding Article, others may be established at any other places on the coast or in the interior of each of the 2 countries, between which direct communications may hereafter be deemed necessary.

CHAPTER II.—*Exchange of Correspondence.*

IV. The principal exchange of the mails composed of the international or transit correspondence specified in Article I, shall take place at Dover and Ostend.

The Post Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland shall continue to convey by its steam-packets, in both directions, the despatches exchanged with the Belgian Post Office by way of Dover and Ostend, 4 times a-week, on the conditions stipulated in the Convention concluded between the British and Belgian Post Offices, in October, 1834.

The ordinary departures from Dover to Ostend shall take place on

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays; and those from Ostend to Dover, on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

V. It is nevertheless understood that the Belgian Government shall be at liberty to establish, or cause to be established, at its own expense, a service of steam-boats to convey letters, despatches, and passengers, between the above-mentioned towns, twice a-week, or daily, should the Belgian Government think it necessary; and the Belgian Government reserves to itself the power of coming to an understanding, in either case, with the British Government, in order to be liberated from the obligation of paying to the British Post Office, the sum of 1,000 pounds sterling annually stipulated in the Convention of October, 1834, mentioned in the preceding Article.

VI. The captains of the packets of the respective offices shall receive from the agent of the Postmaster-General at Dover, and from the Director of the Post Office at Ostend, the mail-bags, closed and sealed.

The number of these bags, and the time of their delivery, shall be noted on a bill, which the said captains, or the officers entrusted under their orders with the care of the mails, shall deliver on their arrival to the office for which they are destined.

They shall bring back to the dispatching office a certificate of the due delivery of the said mails, from the agent who shall have received them.

VII. The packets employed by the 2 offices for the ordinary conveyance of the correspondence between Dover and Ostend, shall be steam-boats of sufficient power and size for the service in which they are to be engaged. They shall be vessels belonging to Government, or freighted by order of Government.

These vessels shall be considered and treated, in the 2 ports above mentioned, and in all other ports of the 2 countries at which they may accidentally touch, as vessels of war, and be there entitled to all the honours and privileges which the interest and importance of their service demand.

They shall be exempted in those ports, as well upon their entrance as their departure, from all tonnage, navigation, and port dues, excepting, however, the vessels freighted by order of Government which must pay such dues in those ports where they are levied on behalf of corporations, private companies, or individuals. They shall not be diverted from their especial duty—that is to say, the conveyance of the mails—by any authority whatever, or be liable to seizure, detention, embargo, or *arrêt de prince*.

VIII. In case of war between the 2 nations, the mail packets of the 2 offices shall continue their navigation without impediment or molestation, until a notification is made on the part of either of the 2 Governments, that the service is to be discontinued; in which case they shall be permitted to return freely, and under special protection, to their respective ports.

IX. The packets of the 2 offices shall be at liberty to take on board or land, both at Dover and Ostend, as well as in other ports of the 2 countries where they may be obliged to put in, any passengers, of whatever nation they may be, with their wearing-apparel and luggage, and also with their horses and carriages, on condition that the captains of the said packets shall submit to the regulations of the respective Governments, concerning the arrival and departure of travellers.

They shall be prohibited from conveying goods or merchandize on freight.

X. The captains of the packets engaged in carrying the mails between Dover and Ostend, shall, in all practicable cases, proceed directly to their respective destinations.

If, in consequence of stress of weather or damage, they should be compelled to alter their course, and to put into any other port than Dover or Ostend, according to their destination, they shall be called upon to account for the deviation, in such manner as their respective offices shall deem advisable.

Whenever a packet conveying mails shall be compelled to put into any other than its destined port, the office of the place where the said mails shall be landed shall use the most expeditious means of forwarding them to their destination.

XI. The captains of the packets specially engaged in the conveyance of the respective mails of the 2 offices, are forbidden to take charge of any letter not included in their mail-bags, except, however, despatches of their Governments.

They must take care that no letters are conveyed illegally by their crews or passengers, and must give information, in the proper quarter, of any breach of the laws which may be committed in that respect.

XII. If there should be no Government vessels specially appointed for the direct conveyance of the correspondence between the British Office of London on the one part, and the Belgian Office of Antwerp on the other, the exchange of mails between the said offices shall take place by means of private steam-packets plying between the above ports.

XIII. In addition to the ordinary mails, which shall be exchanged conformably to the IVth and following Articles of the present Convention, between the British Offices of London and Dover on the one part, and the Belgian Office of Ostend on the other, by vessels belonging to Government, or freighted by order of Government, the said offices may have recourse to private steam-packets plying between those ports, to forward mutually to each other, by supple-

mentary mails, such letters as may be advantageously transmitted by these means.

XIV. The ordinary or supplementary mails which the offices of exchange mentioned in the 2 preceding Articles are authorized to forward to each other reciprocally, by means of private packets, may contain, independently of the correspondence coming from, or addressed to, the said offices, the transit correspondence from or to any country whatever, which the 2 offices may think it advisable to forward through those offices.

CHAPTER III.—*Postage of International Letters.*

XV. Persons desirous of sending ordinary letters, either from Belgium to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and those British colonies and possessions where the Post Office of Great Britain maintains post offices, or from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the British colonies and possessions, to Belgium, shall have the option,—

1st. Of leaving the whole postage of such letters to be paid by the receiver;

2ndly. Of paying the said postage to the place of destination.

Prepayment for a part of the distance shall not be permitted.

XVI. The inhabitants of both countries may send registered letters from one country to the other; and, as far as it shall be found practicable, to the countries the correspondence of which shall be transmitted through the respective offices.

The postage on such letters shall be fixed according to the combined rates of the 2 countries; it must in all cases be paid to the place of destination.

XVII. The option of forwarding letters, either paid or unpaid, specified in Article XV preceding, in favour of ordinary letters from the 2 countries, shall be applicable to letters and packets containing patterns of goods.

XVIII. Letters and packets containing patterns of goods, forwarded from one country to the other, either paid or unpaid, shall be conveyed at such reduced rates of postage as are allowed for such articles by the laws and regulations of each country.

XIX. Letters, either paid or unpaid, originating in any place of the Kingdom of Belgium, and addressed to any place in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; and reciprocally, letters, either paid or unpaid, sent from any place in the said United Kingdom to any place in Belgium, shall be charged in the 2 countries with an uniform postage of 12 décimes, or 1 shilling, per single letter, of which 4 décimes, or pence, shall be considered as representing the postage due to the Belgian Office, and 8 pence, or décimes, that due to the British Office.

Each of those 2 rates of 4 and 8 pence, or décimes, shall increase according to the weight of letters, in conformity with the scale of progression respectively established in the 2 countries.

It is understood, nevertheless, that the British Office shall charge for every quarter of an ounce one whole rate, on paid letters delivered to Belgium, as well as unpaid letters coming from Belgium, for that portion of postage representing the sum to be accounted for to the Belgian Office.

XX. The 2 offices shall mutually account to each other for the portion of the postage of the correspondence exchanged between them, which is due to each.

In order, however, to simplify this operation, all letters contained in one and the same mail, and belonging to the same class, shall be weighed in bulk, and delivered at the following rates:

The British Post Office shall pay to the Post Office of Belgium, for all unpaid letters originating in Belgium, and addressed to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and those British colonies and possessions where the British Office maintains post offices, and also for all letters paid in the United Kingdom, and in the said British colonies and possessions, and addressed to Belgium, at the rate of 1 franc and 60 centimes, for every 30 grammes net weight.

The Belgian Post Office shall, on its part, pay to the British Post Office, for all unpaid letters originating in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and addressed to Belgium, and also for letters paid in Belgium, and addressed to the United Kingdom, at the rate of 1 shilling and 4 pence per ounce British, net weight.

XXI. The stipulations of the preceding Articles are applicable not only to the letters composing the ordinary mails, but also to those forwarded by the special opportunities mentioned in Article XIII.

CHAPTER IV.—*Transit of Foreign Correspondence.*

§ 1.—*Ordinary Transit Correspondence.*

XXII. The Belgian Post Office shall continue to convey, without charge to the British Post Office, all the letters which the said office shall transmit to it, to be forwarded to other States of the Continent, in transit through Belgium; and also those originating in the said States, and intended for Great Britain, that may be sent by the same route.

These letters shall be forwarded by the British Office to that of Belgium, and by this latter office to that of Great Britain, without any charge or expense. The Belgian Office, however, reserves to itself the right to levy upon the other offices concerned a transit rate, the amount of which shall not exceed 1 franc for every 30 grammes, net weight.

XXIII. The Government of His Majesty the King of the Belgians promises to use its good offices with the Governments of the countries the post offices of which are in relation with the Belgian Post Office, in order to procure for the correspondence originating in the said countries, and addressed to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or to the British colonies and possessions, and *vice versâ*, the same facilities which are now, or may hereafter be, secured to the inhabitants of Belgium, with respect to such countries, in accordance with present or future Conventions.

XXIV. The Belgian Post Office shall pay to the Post Office of Great Britain and Ireland, for paid letters originating in Belgium, or in the States of the Continent the correspondence of which shall be transmitted through Belgium, and addressed to the colonies and countries beyond sea, and also for unpaid letters originating in the colonies and countries beyond sea, and addressed to Belgium, and to the States of the Continent the correspondence of which shall be transmitted through Belgium, namely:

1. 8 pence per single letter, for the transit through the territory of the United Kingdom.

2. The packet-rate which the inhabitants of Great Britain have to pay on letters coming from and addressed to the colonies and countries beyond sea.

The Post Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, shall, on its part, pay to the Post Office of Belgium, for postage of letters originating in the United Kingdom, and addressed to colonies and countries beyond sea, and of those coming from the colonies and countries beyond sea, and addressed to the United Kingdom, namely:

1. 1 franc and 60 centimes for every 30 grammes, net weight, for the transit through the Belgian territory.

2. 2 francs for every 30 grammes, net weight, for sea-conveyance; making in all, 3 francs and 60 centimes for every 30 grammes, net weight.

§ 2.—*Transit in closed Mails.*

XXV. The Belgian Government engages to grant to the British Government the transit in closed mails, through its territory, of the correspondence from the United Kingdom, the British colonies and possessions, and other places where the British Office maintains post offices, to the various continental States the correspondence of which shall be transmitted through Belgium, and from those States to the United Kingdom, the British colonies and possessions, and other places where the British Office maintains post offices, at the rate of 1 franc for every 30 grammes, net weight, for letters, and 5 centimes for every newspaper or other printed paper.

XXVI. Should the British Post Office deem it advisable to transmit through Belgium closed mails containing the correspondence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the British colonies and possessions, to the East Indies, and other countries the correspondence of which shall be transmitted by way of the East Indies, and *vice versâ*, the Belgian Post Office engages to effect the conveyance of the said correspondence through its territory, at the transit rates fixed by the preceding Article XXV.

XXVII. The Belgian Government further engages to convey, also in closed mails, at the rates respectively fixed by Article XXIV, and by Article XXXIV following, letters, newspapers, and printed papers, from the United Kingdom, and the British colonies and possessions, to the several States of the 2 continents of America, and *vice versâ*, the correspondence of which may be forwarded at the expense of the Belgian Post Office, either by private ships, by Government vessels, or by vessels freighted by order of Government, dispatched from, or bound to, the ports of Belgium, or the ports of destination of such vessels in transatlantic countries.

XXVIII. The British Government engages, on its part, to grant the transit in closed mails, at the rates respectively fixed on behalf of the British Post Office, by Articles XXIV and XXXIV already referred to, for the conveyance in ordinary mails, of letters, newspapers, and printed papers, addressed from Belgium to the several States of America and other foreign countries, and *vice versâ*, which may be conveyed either by private ships, by Government vessels, or by vessels freighted by order of Government, dispatched from, or bound to, the ports of the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER V.—*Newspapers and Printed Papers.*

§ 1.—*International Newspapers and Printed Papers.*

XXIX. Newspapers published in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and addressed to persons residing in Belgium, shall be forwarded unpaid to the Belgian Office, and they shall be subject to a rate of only 5 centimes each, to be paid by the receiver.

Reciprocally, Belgian newspapers addressed to persons residing in the United Kingdom, shall be forwarded unpaid to the British Office, and they shall be subject to a rate of only 1 halfpenny each, to be paid likewise by the receiver.

In order to enjoy the reduction of postage above mentioned, the newspapers must not contain any writing, and they must be sent in bands or covers open at the sides, so that they may be easily examined.

Newspapers which are not sent in conformity with the conditions above mentioned, shall be considered as letters.

It is fully understood that the preceding stipulations do not in any

way invalidate the right of either of the said offices to refuse conveying or distributing on its own territory, newspapers, in any cases where the laws and regulations concerning their publication and circulation have not been duly complied with.

XXX. Periodical works, not of daily publication, issued in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and in Belgium, in the shape of pamphlets, may be forwarded from one country to the other, by means of the 2 offices, under the following conditions, namely:

1. The postage on such works must be paid, but only to the frontier of the territories of the respective States.

2. They must be sent in bands or covers open at the sides, so that they may be easily examined.

3. They must be printed in the language of the kingdom in which they are published; and they shall be in every respect subject to the conditions prescribed by the laws, rules and regulations of both countries, with regard to the circulation of daily newspapers, and other publications of the nature in question.

The rate to be levied in Belgium on the above-mentioned works addressed from the United Kingdom to Belgium, or from Belgium to the United Kingdom, is fixed at 5 centimes for each printed sheet under 30 décimètres square.

The rate to be levied by the Post Office of Great Britain on similar works addressed to, or coming from, Belgium, shall be as follows:

1. For every work not exceeding 2 ounces in weight, 1 penny.

2. For every work above 2 ounces in weight, and not exceeding 3 ounces, 6 pence.

3. For every work above 3 ounces in weight, and not exceeding 4 ounces, 8 pence.

4. And for every ounce above 4, up to 16 ounces (the limit imposed on the transmission of such articles by the British Office), 2 pence additional, every fraction of an ounce being reckoned as a full ounce.

XXXI. The inhabitants of both countries may send from one country to the other, courses of exchange, prices current, and such other printed papers as are allowed in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland to pass by post at a reduced rate, under the following conditions, namely:

1. The said printed papers must be sent in bands, and must not contain any writing, figures, or manual mark whatsoever. The courses of exchange and prices current shall merely give the name and prices of goods, without any mention of the name and residence of the vendors.

2. The postage of such papers is fixed at 5 centimes each, for conveyance on the Belgian territory, and at 1 penny, or 10 centimes each, for conveyance on the territory of the United Kingdom.

3. They shall not be sent either way, except paid to the territorial limit of the 2 respective offices.

XXXII. No accounts shall be required between the 2 offices for the mutual transmission of newspapers, periodical works, and other printed papers, from one country to the other. Each office shall retain on its own account the postages it shall have charged, according to the stipulations in the preceding Articles XXIX, XXX, and XXXI.

§ 2.—*Newspapers and Printed Papers in transit.*

XXXIII. Newspapers published in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and addressed to persons residing in the several States of the Continent the correspondence of which shall be transmitted through Belgium, and also newspapers coming from the said States to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, shall continue to be forwarded from both sides free from any charge for postage. The Belgian Post Office reserves to itself, however, the right to levy upon the above-mentioned States for the conveyance of the newspapers through the Belgian territory, a transit rate of 5 centimes for every newspaper.

XXXIV. The Belgian Post Office shall pay to the British Post Office the sum of 1 penny for every newspaper, for transit postage through the territory of the United Kingdom, and for sea-conveyance of newspapers addressed to the colonies and all countries beyond sea without distinction, sent by the Belgian Office to the British Office, to be conveyed either by private ships, by Government vessels, or by vessels freighted by order of Government.

The same sum of 1 penny for every newspaper shall be paid by the Belgian Post Office to the British Post Office, for transit postage through the territory of the United Kingdom, and for sea-conveyance of foreign newspapers addressed to Belgium, or to those countries the correspondence of which shall be transmitted through Belgium, brought in any manner whatsoever into the United Kingdom.

Reciprocally, the British Post Office shall pay to the Belgian Post Office, for transit postage through Belgium, and for sea-conveyance, of newspapers sent by the British Office to the Belgian Office, to be forwarded in any manner whatsoever to the colonies and countries beyond sea, a rate of 10 centimes for every newspaper.

The same rate of 10 centimes for every newspaper shall be paid by the British Post Office to the Belgian Post Office, for transit postage through Belgium, and for sea-conveyance, of newspapers coming from the colonies or countries beyond sea, and addressed to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, brought into Belgium in any manner whatsoever.

CHAPTER VI.—*Various Regulations.*

XXXV. The Post Offices of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of Belgium, shall make out monthly their accounts for the mutual transmission, or conveyance in closed mails, of correspondence; and those accounts, after having been examined, compared, and settled by the 2 offices, shall be paid at the expiration of every quarter, by that office which shall be found to be in debt to the other.

XXXVI. The balance of the above-mentioned accounts shall be stated in Belgian money; and for this purpose, the sums carried to the credit of the Post Office of Great Britain in British money, shall be brought into francs, at the rate of 10 centimes for a penny, 1 franc and 20 centimes for a shilling, and 24 francs for a pound sterling.

XXXVII. Dead letters and newspapers which cannot be delivered, from whatever cause, shall be mutually returned at the expiration of every month, or oftener if possible. Such of those letters as shall have been charged in the account, shall be returned for the same weight and amount of postage which was originally charged by the sending office.

XXXVIII. Dead letters which cannot be delivered, from whatever cause, and which have been conveyed in transit, either in ordinary or in closed mails, by either of the 2 offices, on account of the other, shall be admitted for the same weight and amount of postage which was charged in the transit accounts of the respective offices, on a simple declaration, or on nominal lists, vouching for the amount of postage demanded, when the letters themselves cannot be produced by the office which has to claim the amount of the postage from the other office.

XXXIX. Letters mis-directed or mis-sent shall be reciprocally returned without delay, through the respective offices of exchange, for the same weight and amount of postage at which they were charged by the dispatching office to the other office.

With regard to letters addressed to persons who have changed their residence, whatever be the origin of such letters, they shall be mutually returned, charged with the rate that should have been paid by the receiver.

XL. In order reciprocally to secure the postage on the whole correspondence from one country to the other, the British and Belgian Governments engage to prevent, by all the means in their power, the transmission of the said correspondence through any other channel than their respective post offices.

Nevertheless, it is understood that couriers sent by commercial firms, or by other persons, to convey occasionally a single letter, or one or more newspapers, may pass unmolested through the respective territories of both Powers; provided the said couriers exhibit, on the

Belgian territory, the letter or newspapers which they convey, to the first post office on their road, which office shall tax the said letter or newspaper with the rates prescribed by the laws and regulations of the country.

The said letter or newspapers shall be marked with the date and charge stamps of the office at which the postage shall have been paid, and a certificate thereof shall be delivered to the courier, and annexed to his passport.

XLI. The form in which the accounts mentioned in Article XXXV preceding are to be made up, the direction to be given to the correspondence, and all other matters of detail and regulation which are to be arranged by mutual consent, for ensuring the execution of the stipulations contained in the present Convention, shall be settled between the Post Offices of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of Belgium, as soon as possible after the exchange of the Ratifications of the said Convention.

It is also agreed that the measures of detail and regulation mentioned in the present Article, may be modified by the 2 post offices, whenever, by mutual consent, those offices shall have decided that such modifications would be beneficial to the post office service of the 2 countries.

XLII. The present Convention is concluded for an indefinite period. It cannot be annulled by either of the 2 Governments, except after notice given to the other Government at least 6 months previously.

XLIII. The provisions of former Conventions which have been concluded between the respective post offices, are maintained where they are not contrary to the stipulations of the present Convention.

XLIV. The present Convention shall be ratified, and the Ratifications exchanged at London, within 1 month, or sooner if possible; and it shall come into operation on the 1st day of December, 1844.

In witness whereof, the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Convention, and have affixed thereto the seal of their arms.

Done in duplicate, at London, the 19th day of October, in the year of our Lord 1844.

(L.S.) ABERDEEN. (L.S.) SYLVAIN VAN DE WEYER.
(L.S.) LONSDALE.