

VIII.

COURIER SERVICE.

The principal necessity for a courier service, now that the war is over, is to maintain an inviolable means of communication between the Department of State and the various missions and between one mission and another for the transmission of important confidential matter. This applies especially to the transmission of codes and ciphers which must be preserved inviolate and changed frequently to be of any value.

A courier service should be maintained in all countries where political conditions are so unsettled that there is a possibility of diplomatic mail being lost or tampered with. For example, since the armistice there have been serious strikes of the postal and telegraph employees in Italy during which large numbers of letters, packages, etc., entrusted to the mail were never delivered. Under such conditions the authorities in countries not absolutely scrupulous as to methods employed might easily make away with diplomatic pouches and obtain information the possession of which could seriously embarrass the United States. Or if, for example, a diplomatic bag containing a new code should go astray, that code would immediately be regarded as compromised and another have to be prepared at a cost perhaps exceeding the total cost of a courier service for a year. Another point to be considered in this regard is that instances are liable to arise, and frequently do arise, where extremely confidential material is obtained,

and

and because without a courier service the transmission of diplomatic pouches by the mails cannot be regarded as absolutely safe, must either be held until advantage can be taken of an officer's proceeding to the United States, or transmitted by telegraph in cipher at great cost.

Diplomatic mail between the Department and this mission (Copenhagen) is now invariably sent either in a diplomatic pouch transmitted through the regular mails, or else by an officer of the Diplomatic or Consular Service who happens to be passing through this city, which occurs but seldom.

The discontinuance of the pouch service between the Scandinavian countries and London and Paris, which formerly were connected by a pouch service with other posts in central and eastern Europe, thus forming a network between most of the European capitals, has proved a distinct and noticable handicap to this mission, since it can no longer correspond and exchange views and information on confidential matters with other missions in the service. Such cooperation between missions is often of great value and sometimes absolutely essential to understand and to act intelligently on a given situation. Its necessary discontinuance through the termination of the European pouch service is severely felt.