The following authentic and interesting communication, which we promised our readers in the December number of this magazine, will prove the reality of the existence of the contested 4 reales brown, and the falsity of the 4 and 5 pesos blue and brown so generally admitted into catalogues; and also unceremoniously overturn the till lately universally received impression of the value of the commonest of the blue ‘ships’ of Buenos Ayres.

The decree creating the postage stamps of that country is as follows:

‘Buenos Ayres, April 9, 1858.

‘Considering the necessity of establishing a system of stamps for postal correspondence, and conformably to the proposition of the postmaster-general, the government grants and decree:

‘1. That letters shall be franked by means of postage stamps, and that the post-office shall not take charge of letters unprovided with such.

‘2. Supplementary to the decree* of June 27, 1857, the value of these stamps shall be 2, 3, 4, and 5 pesos, according to the weight of the letters. A single letter shall bear a 2p. stamp on one of the corners of the envelope, a double shall have a 3p., a triple 4p., and a heavier letter a 5p. stamp.

‘3. [This article settles the weight of letters under an ounce.]

‘4. [Provides for those weighing above one ounce.]

‘5. The sale of these postage stamps shall take place at the principal post-office and in other places appointed for the purpose.

‘6. Whoever shall employ a stamp that has already been used shall be fined 5 pesos, in addition to the postage, the first offence; and 200 for the second, 300 for the third, and so on in proportion.

‘7. When the guilty party shall be unable or unwilling to pay the penalty, he shall be transferred to the proper official tribunal, for the infliction of whatever punishment may be judged commensurate with the offence.

‘8. The stamps shall be fabricated at the Bank or the Mint, in presence of a commission appointed for that end. The manager shall register the number of sheets printed.

‘9. The forgers of postage stamps and their accomplices shall be liable to all the penalties fixed by the law.

‘10. Both stamps and plates shall remain deposited at the bank, under the same restrictions as the plates of bank notes.

‘11. This decree shall be put in force a week after issue in the city, and a month in the provinces.

‘12. [Provides for the circulation of the decree.]

‘JOSE BARROS PAZOS.’

*What was this decree? Was it one approving the gaucho series, which the writer seems to ignore? – ED.

This decree did not provide for the colours of the stamps, but the following were those adopted:
Dos pesos azul or 2 p. blue.
Tres pesos verde or 3 p. green.
Cuatro pesos colorado or 4 p. vermilion.
Cinco pesos amarillo or 5 p. orange.

They were put in circulation April 29, 1858.

In consequence of a reduction in the charge, conformably to a decree of October 2, 1858, the postal authorities on the 26th day of that month emitted two new values, similar to the type in use. These two values were—

:IN PS. coffee-coloured, or 1 peso dark brown, for letters weighing an ounce.
CUAT° RS. chestnut, or 4 reales bright yellow-brown, for letters weighing half an ounce.

There are, moreover, the following varieties met with among these stamps.
:IN PS. bright yellow-brown, - same shade as the 4r. above.
CUAT° RS brown.
CUAT° RS very dark brown.

On the 1st of January, 1858, the shade of the 1 peso was changed, and in lieu thereof was issued
:IN PS. azul or 1 peso light blue.
variety or 1 peso dark blue.

These are all the different values or shades that have appeared of the first or ‘ship’ type; as for the 4 and 5 pesos blue and the same values brown, they have never existed, but this is what induces the prevalent error respecting them, viz., the postal authorities emitting two new values, cancelled the preceding ones, but made use of the die of the 4 and 5 pesos for the 1 peso and 4 reales.

The CUAT° RS (4 pesos) thus became CUAT° RS (4 reales), by forming an R out of the P of PS. This change having been badly executed, the major part of the stamps bear the form of the letter P.

The CINCO PS. (5 pesos) was in like manner transformed into :IN PS. (1 peso), all the left-hand part of the initial letter C of CINCO being scratched out, as also the last two letters of the word. The letter S of PESOS, owing to some misadventure, remained; so that :IN PS. has been erroneously taken by collectors as the CIN PS., the abbreviation of CINCO PS. (5 pesos).

The impression of these stamps having been ever ill-executed, especially after the alterations in the plates, it sometimes happened that the 1 peso blue exhibited nothing but the last stroke of the N an a small blot, giving it somewhat the appearance of a T. This anomaly suggested to some individual the idea of filling in the empty space by means of the lettering CUA, inserted before the suppositious T. Unfortunately (I am speaking of the type under my inspection), instead of terminating the word with an O, an S was put; a very grave error, making the word a contraction of cuatros, in lieu of cuatro. If any stamps exist orthographically correct, they are in no way genuine on that account.
In pursuance of a fresh change the postage was fixed henceforth at 1 peso, 2 pesos, and 4 reales. This opportunity was taken to replace the primitive type for the effigy of Liberty. These stamps were circulated September 3, 1859. They were –

4 reales green on tinted paper.
1 peso blue on white paper.
2 peso vermilion on white paper.

The green stamp was used in conjunction with the 1 peso for letters of a certain weight, or singly for local postage.

On September 20, 1862, the colours of the 1 and 2 pesos were changed, to make them accord with the corresponding values employed in the Argentine Republic; in consequence of which, the blue 1 peso was printed in pink, like the 5 centavos Argentine Republic of equivalent value. The vermilion 2 pesos then became blue, like the 10 c. Argentine, and the green 4 r. was suppressed. A franc is worth 4 pesos, more or less, and 8 reales makes a peso.

On the 21st of October, 1862, the post-office authorities proposed the adoption of a uniform type for all the republic to the minister of the interior, D. Guillermo Rawson. This proposition being agreed to, the type of the effigy of Liberty was suppressed, and the 5, 10, and 15 centavos stamps used by the Argentine Republic were provisionally employed.

The type that had been proposed in 1862 was put into circulation on the 17th of April, 1864. It bears the representation of Don Bernardino Rivadavia, and is of three values – 5 c. pink; 10 c. green; and 15 c. blue. They are now perforated; those first issued to the public had not that improvement.

G.A.

Supplementary to this valuable communication we may append the translation of an article taken from the first number of our ‘youngest brother’ on the mooted question of the gaucho stamps. We do not consider the non-mention of them by the writer on the Buenos Ayres stamps a positive proof of their non-existence. The gentleman may not have been in the country at the time of their introduction, or may not have then felt sufficient interest in stamps to let the fact be impressed on his memory. We are not so young as we were, and have yet met with many of our seniors who had not the slightest recollection of our black Victoria label or either of the Mulready envelopes. We mentioned in a former article having ourselves seen one of these gauchos postmarked two or three years since, and during our recent continental visit saw others. The following is the extract in question:

‘We feel it incumbent on us to say a few words on these poor stamps [the gauchos] that have given rise to so much discussion, and by some have been refused the right of entrée into collections, under colour of their having been either essays or mere speculative impressions.

‘For our own part, we can confidently assure our readers that these stamps really were in circulation; for a short time, it is true – ten or twelve days only, - after the “ships” but before the “head of Liberty” stamps. The reason of their remaining so long unknown is this, - at the time of their emission the
business houses of Buenos Ayres were all more or less provided with the “ships,” as merchants usually
lay in a stock of stamps in advance. They consequently used up all the superseded stamps before
providing themselves with the new issue;

“But ah! too brief a life it shows,
And withers like the fading rose.”

In plain prose, it lasted scarcely a fortnight. Thus it happened that the stock on hand was not
exhausted, and the stamps impressed with the cavalier scarcely saw the light. Some few of them,
nevertheless, had the honour of being employed, and to our own immediate knowledge two of our largest
customers are each in possession of one of these stamps cancelled, and that thoroughly. There cannot be
the shadow of a doubt about the matter: they were, in verity, neither inventions nor essays, but handsome
and authentic stamps, whose sole defect is their remarkable rarity.’

Mons. Mahé has written to one of his friends in Buenos Ayres, requesting to be furnished with
the necessary proofs for the legal demonstration of the birth and death of the stamps under discussion: on
obtaining which he promises to impart the same immediately to the readers of his magazine, and, with his
kind permission, our own shall be made partakers of the advantage.