

spoliators and intriguers, who so confounded the law, or so misinterpreted its meanings, that the innocent suffered whilst the guilty escaped. As to redress it was impossible to obtain it, for the victim of bribery and false witnesses very well knew that ruin stared him in the face if he attempted to expose the expounders of the LAW !

" To remedy the danger that threatened the tranquillity of the island and reform the abuses which became intolerable from the reiterated complaints of the respectable portion of the inhabitants, it became necessary to appoint a dictator. Spain, under such difficult circumstances, could not have had recourse to other measures. She must either have made up her mind to lose so valuable a Colony, or else adopt the course she resorted to by appointing a man capable of reforming so much evil. It was necessary that that man be well acquainted with the interests of the Colony, it was imperative to invest that man with unlimited power, that under such difficult circumstances and so much danger, he might fearlessly reform such signal abuses.

" The Spanish Government unhesitatingly appointed Don Miguel Tacon to fill so difficult a post, well aware that no man was more capable of carrying out their views than this celebrated general.

" Tacon was born in Carthagena in the year 1777. His father, Don Miguel Tacon y Foxa, a brigadier in the navy, gave him an excellent education. Don Miguel served in the navy up to 1806 ; was present at the siege of Oran, when attacked by the Moors in 1791, and assisted at several engagements. He commanded the *Vigilante*, and was severely wounded when that vessel was run foul of by the *San Carlos*. In 1806 he was appointed Lieutenant-Colonel and Military Governor of the Province of Popayan, in South America, where he distinguished himself during nine years by numerous acts of valour. For a long time he kept the rebels under subjection, but lacking money and men, he was forced to return to Guayaquil. I will, however, not tire your patience with an account of his doings in Lima, Buenos Ayres, and other places ; suffice it to say that he distinguished himself on every occasion by his firmness, justice, and benevolence.

" I shall endeavour to be as impartial as possible in narrating the doings of this Captain-General. Who is the public man that has not his admirers or his enemies ? Tacon, like other rulers, had defamers and supporters. Those whom he visited with the utmost severity of the law, proclaimed him a tyrant ; those whom he freed from bands of assassins, who admired his energy, his perseverance and courage, proclaimed him a hero, a benefactor. You shall judge for yourselves when I have brought his history to a close.

" When General Tacon arrived here he was shocked to find that rumour had not exaggerated the real state of affairs. Having gained every information as to the political, financial, and commercial state of the island, he sent a faithful account to Madrid, proposing remedies which he deemed indispensable. He organised a body of police. He advised Government not to extend those reforms tolerated in the Peninsula to Cuba, on the plea that the majority of the population being slaves, it was imperative to exercise more stringent authority in the Colony than