

CHAP. V. behaviour of the mulattoes resident in the colony, that the general body of those people were by no means averse to conciliation with the whites, yet it was found impossible to persuade their pretended friends in Europe to leave the affairs of St. Domingo to their natural course. Barnave alone (hitherto the most formidable opponent of the prejudices and pretensions of the colonists) avowed his conviction that any further interference of the mother country in the question between the whites and the coloured people, would be productive of fatal consequences. Such an opinion was entitled to greater respect, as coming from a man who, as president of the colonial committee, must be supposed to have acquired an intimate knowledge of the subject; but he was heard without conviction. There are enthusiasts in politicks as well as in religion, and it commonly happens with fanatics in each, that the recantation of a few of their number serves only to strengthen the errors, and animate the purposes of the rest. It was now resolved by Gregoire, La Fayette, Brissot, and some other pestilent reformers, to call in the supreme legislative authority of the French government to give effect to their projects; and that the reader may clearly understand the nature and complexion of the mischief that was meditated, and of those measures to which the ruin of the French part of St. Domingo is immediately to be attributed, it is necessary, in the first place, to recal his attention to the national decree of the 8th of March 1790, of which an account was given in the second chapter.

By that decree, as the reader must have remembered, the national assembly, among other things, disclaimed all right of interference

