

HISTORY OF IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS OF THE ETHNIC IRISH.

To what precise point in the scale of chronology we are to refer the time when Ireland first received its inhabitants, can never be determined with any degree of certainty; but it is admitted that a succession of colonists of different origin arrived at a very early period and formed settlements in the island, though it is difficult to ascertain whence they came, and the order in which they respectively appeared.

From the uniform traditions, however, of the people themselves, we learn that the principal and most important inhabitants of Ireland, in early times, were descendants of a colony from Celtic Spain; that these were either preceded, or more probably followed, by another of the Belgæ, denominated, in the early history of the country, Firbolgs, who might have come either from Britain or immediately from Gaul; that, in addition to these, the Danaans, or, as they were Latinized, the Damnonii, together with a variety of other colonists from the northern parts of Europe, who were called by various names,* settled in the island at

* The Irish called them *Fomharaigh* or foreigners, and their country *Fomoiré*. For their probable origin, see *O'Flaherty's Ogyg*, p. 303.