

INTRODUCTION.

IF not already arrived, the time is not far distant when the reproach so often flung at this country, that we have no antiquities, will lose even the appearance of truth, and the world will look with interest and awe on some of the mightiest monuments of antiquity which stand above the surface of the earth, as they are opened to view in the western country. The grandeur of Egyptian ruins and pyramidal tombs will cease to attract the undivided attention of those who look after records of the earliest times. The ruins of Nineveh and her neighboring cities will not be the only memorials of the men who lived in the age of Semiramis and her immediate successors. It can not be any longer doubted that there has been a day when this continent swarmed with millions of inhabitants, when the arts and sciences flourished, when men lived, and labored, and reigned, and fought, and were in turn conquerors and conquered, subjects and kings, where now the deep silence of the forest has overcome all such evidences of life and civilization. Nineveh, and Egypt, and Greece, have left, in almost imperishable stone, the relics of their magnificence. The American nations have left their record in the soil, and have written their history in legible and ineffaceable characters on the hills and valleys of their beautiful land, from Labrador to Patagonia.

From looking at these relics with silent wonderment, and regarding them as entirely inexplicable, antiquarians have begun to investigate more closely the plans of their formation, and gradually find evidences that indicate their design, and explain their origin. But as in the Egyptian hieroglyphics, a keystone and a Champollion were needed to open to the eyes of the world the stories of the Rameses, so there is yet needed in this country a key to the history which the mound-builders have left recorded in their works.

And from the very nature of the subject, it does not appear probable than any better key can be obtained than that afforded by tradi-