

DISCOURSE.

THERE are certain epochs in the history of nations, which always attract to themselves a lasting interest. They constitute steps in the progress or decline of empire, at which we involuntarily pause to look back upon the past, or to spell out the fortunes of the future. They become associated with our inmost feelings and profoundest reflections. Our imaginations embody the time, the place, and the circumstances. We drop the intermediate distances of space and years, which divide us from them. We breathe the very air and spirit of the age itself. We gather up the fragments of broken facts, as history or tradition has scattered them around us. We arrange them with a fond solicitude; and having dressed them out in all the pride and pomp of fair array, our hearts kindle at the contemplation; and we exult or mourn, glow with confidence, or bow with humiliation, as they pass before us, and we realize their connexion with ourselves, the glory of our country, or the fate of the world.