

CRITICISM.

The student will notice that in the notes the more important passages are criticised. For further information of this nature the following extracts are reprinted.

I. A condensation of Lord Jeffrey's article in the *Edinburgh Review* (Aug., 1810).

After considerable space devoted to the discussion of the difference between the *quality* and the *quantity* of popularity, and of the actual and the popular merit of a work of fine art, more especially of a poem, he proceeds:—

"The beautiful but minute delineations of such admirable observers as Crabbe or Cowper are apt to appear tedious to those who take little interest in their subjects, and have no concern about their art;—and the refined, deep and sustained pathetic of Campbell is still more apt to be mistaken for monotony and languor by those who are either devoid of sensibility or impatient of quiet reflection. The most popular style, undoubtedly, is that which has great variety and brilliancy, rather than exquisite finish in its images and descriptions, and which touches lightly on many passions, without raising any so high as to transcend the comprehension of ordinary mortals, or dwelling on it so long as to exhaust their patience.

"That Mr. Scott has actually made use of all our recipes for popularity, we think very evident. Confident in the force and originality of his own genius, he has not been afraid to avail himself of the commonplaces, both of diction and of sentiment, whenever they appeared to be beautiful or impressive; he has made use of that great treasury of characters, images and expressions, which have been accumulated by the most celebrated of his predecessors. The great secret of his popularity, however, and the leading characteristic of his poetry, appear to us to consist evidently in this: that he has made more use of common topics, images and expressions than any original poet of later times; and, at the same time, displayed more genius and originality than any recent author who has worked in the same materials.

"In the choice of his subjects, for example, he does not attempt to interest merely by fine observation or pathetic sentiment, but takes the assistance of a story, and enlists the reader's curiosity among his motives for attention. Then his characters are all selected from the most common *dramatis personæ* of poetry: kings, warriors, knights, outlaws, nuns, minstrels, secluded damsels, wizards, and true lovers. He never ventures to carry us into the cottage of the modern peasant, like Crabbe or Cowper; nor into the bosom of domestic privacy, like Campbell; nor among creatures of the imagination, like Southey or Darwin. Such personages, we readily admit, are not in themselves so interesting or striking as those to whom Mr. Scott has devoted himself, but they are far less familiar in poetry, and are, therefore, more likely, perhaps, to engage the attention of those to whom poetry is familiar.

In the management of his passions, again, Mr. Scott appears to us to have pursued the same popular and comparatively easy course. He has raised all the most familiar and poetical emotions by the most obvious aggravations. He has dazzled the reader with the splendour, and even warmed him with the