

SHAKESPEAR.—A CRITIQUE.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

WE have entitled this paper a Critique, because we know of no better term for our purpose, not that it is altogether suitable, or that we intend to attempt dry criticisms on the great English Dramatist.—We propose to open our copy of Shakespear occasionally, to take a drama of his, analyse its plot, venture a few remarks on its characters, and brilliant passages, and publish the fruits of those meditations—or *conversations* with the great Bard—in this Periodical.

Why write a critique on productions so old and so well known? Our reasons are as follow—we have excellent examples of the pleasure and use of such colloquy with the long departed,—we imagine Shakespear to be in reality but little known, though greatly spoken of,—even those who study him, seldom have a strong perception of his plots and minor characters,—we believe that a *brief* of each play would be pleasing to all, would refresh the memory of his acquaintances, and would greatly facilitate the reading of others,—his best passages are worthy of multiplication and remark, as their tendency is to encrease the strength and beauty of the intellectual part of man,—and, at least, the attempt now commenced, will make the writer intimately acquainted with this goliath of English literature, a pleasure which he has often desired, and long postponed.

We open with the Merry Wives of Windsor, because it stands the first in our copy, and because, in such cases, selections of themes generally embarrass, occasion delay and vagueness, and not unfrequently exhaust the energy which is wanted for execution.

Welcome then Messdames Page and Ford, comely are ye, joyously discreet, and though cross'd a little, happy at length in your households as patriarchal Matrons. Thus ye continue, never dying, companions, counsellors and examplers, from age to age.

“The merry wives?” is a tale of middle life, with some shades but no sorrows; its scene is laid in merry England, and in a gay and courtly part of the Island, Windsor, and its neighbourhood. The plot is simple, and the Play seems a vivid and humorous picture of several incidents and groups of characters, but slightly connected, rather than the result of a deeply connected plan.—Sir John Falstaff, a fat, poor, witty and wicked follower of the Court, is sojourning at the Garter Inn, Windsor; with him are three roughish serving men, and an imp of a page. The Knight's purse being exhausted, he turns to his usual occupations, swindling and intrigue. Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford, the wives of two men of