

PREFACE.

THE character of the teaching done in our schools is determined, to a considerable extent, by the character of the examinations for which the pupils are preparing. It is, therefore, gratifying to observe the improvement in the papers set at the Entrance Examination, especially in the English subjects.

Our own language is now taking its proper place, in the Public and High Schools at least, as the most important subject of study, and it is evident that English Literature is no longer to be regarded merely as a convenient subject upon which to base a series of questions in parsing, analysis, and derivation.

The *object* of these NOTES is to help the students of Literature in the Fourth Class of our Public Schools to a clearer understanding and a higher appreciation of the selections studied by them; and it is believed that the lines of investigation here followed out will be found the most suitable for them, and, perhaps, too, for students "of a larger growth."

The *use* of these NOTES may be hurtful or beneficial, according as the student depends upon them entirely, or merely regards them as a sign-board pointing out the way in which he can investigate, examine, and compare for himself. In their preparation, care has been taken to avoid the introduction of any class of notes that might direct the pupils' study into unprofitable channels. *Suggestive* notes have been preferred to *explanatory* notes, except in cases where explanations really seemed to be needed. The original plan was to have them almost entirely of a suggestive character, but more explanation was subsequently introduced at the request of some who thought the notes should explain everything beyond the easy attainment of Fourth Class pupils. Wherever the meanings of words have been given, they will generally be found to express in simple language the idea intended to be conveyed by the author; they are not mere synonyms of a general character.

The teacher is the best annotator of the lessons he teaches, and neither notes nor suggestions of any kind can supply his place; but few teachers have at hand such sources of information as will enable them to explain everything that may arise in the course of their teaching.