

NOTES

ON THE

LITERATURE SELECTIONS

FOR THE NON-PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS FOR THIRD
CLASS TEACHERS' CERTIFICATES, 1888.

NO. III.—THE TRIAL SCENE IN THE “MERCHANT OF VENICE.”

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

William Shakespeare, or Shakspeare, or Shakespear, or Shakspere, “the most illustrious . . . the sons of men,” was born at Stratford-on-Avon, in Warwickshire, Eng., in 1564. His father seems to have combined the business of a glover with that of a farmer and stock-raiser. His mother was of a good old Warwickshire family. William’s whole education, so far as appears, was gained at the Stratford free grammar school. As to the kind and amount of this education there is much difference of opinion. Widely varying conclusions on the question have been formed by critics from the study of his works, some urging that none but a classical scholar of high attainments could have written those works ; others drawing an almost opposite conclusion. It would be easy for a disputant to quote plausibly and extensively in support of either view, but on the whole it is pretty clear that his scholarship must have been at least respectable. In consequence of business reverses which visited his father, William was withdrawn from school at the age of fourteen and compelled to do something for his living. It seems impossible to determine what was his chief occupation during the ensuing eight years. According to one account he served for some time as apprentice