

purpose" he expresses himself finely, and touches a momentous truth. As regards Goethe, Mr. Buchanan at once ranks himself with the Philistines. "The TITANIC TUTOR of modern literature" is his phrase for the author of *Faust*, whose life he remorselessly dissects. This is rank heresy, of course, but no doubt there are here and there a few thoughtful souls who will secretly agree with Mr. Buchanan:

I rather prefer to believe that Goethe was the greatest *Stage Manager* of the literary sort that ever lived; a man whose worldly knowledge was wonderful, whose sagacity was endless, whose power of taking pains has scarcely ever been equaled, but whose chief claim to distinction was his power of grouping his company of performers and economizing, as Novalis would say, the resources of his establishment.

One chapter in Mr. Buchanan's book is devoted to "Free Thought in America," of which, with a curious obliquity of vision, he takes Robert Ingersoll as the leading exponent, but aptly likens him to "the boy in the gallery, cracking nuts and making precocious comments during the performance of the tragedy of life." Of O. B. Frothingham the assertion is made that his message "lacks the fertilizing energy and superb bigotry of a logical belief." Against M. Zola Mr. Buchanan brings the charge, often reiterated in the columns of the *Literary World*, that it is not so much his fondness for the pathology of sensualism as his deliberate misrepresentation of humanity, in a word his unmitigated pessimism, which deforms and sterilizes his art. But we cannot now follow Mr. Buchanan further. He says some hard things of America and of American literature; they must not be taken too seriously, and they hold perhaps a few grains of truth. At any rate, we can commend this book as a wholesome stimulus to thought.

MR. BUCHANAN'S LOOK ROUND LITERATURE.*

MR. ROBERT BUCHANAN is known here in America as a novelist of strong but uneven talent; as a versifier of significant merit; and, to some few, as a manufacturer of commonplace melodramas; in the matter of criticism he is also known for his virulent attack upon "the fleshly school" as represented chiefly by Rossetti. In all departments of literature, with the possible exception of his stage plays (which, properly speaking, are not literature at all), Mr. Buchanan has displayed a certain wholesome zest of living; an intense sympathy with and a remarkable skill in interpreting nature; a sincere if sometimes erratic enthusiasm for the amplest expression of man's aspiration toward the ideal of universal brotherhood; and a fine scorn for dilettantism, cultivated conventionality, and the exaggerated graces of literary form as distinguished from or superior to thought.

When such a mind enters the field of criticism and surveys the literary product of the ages from Æschylus to Walt Whitman, we know pretty much what to expect. Mr. Buchanan carries no keen-edged rapier; he wields a sledge hammer and with it deals titanic blows—some of them into the air, some of them on images of straw set up by his own fancy, some of them on foemen worthy of his weapon, and then he makes the bones crack and knocks down his victims with a fine show of indifference which adds vastly to the pleasure of the spectacle. For ourselves, while we find much in Mr. Buchanan's book that seems ill considered, distorted in view, and crude of utterance, we also find much with which we can heartily agree. It is refreshing to get the impressions of one who has escaped the enervating influences of current hot-bed theories regarding literature, and who can look at things at a broad range, free from hackneyed prejudices if not free from personal caprice and self-contradiction.

Mr. Buchanan begins his volume with an elaborate comparison between Æschylus and Victor Hugo. The latter he celebrates as "the Frankenstein of the Democratic Idea," and as without a rival "for producing in colossal cipher the abstract forms of masculine forces." And when he says that in Hugo he "misses the benediction of divine

* A Look Round Literature. By Robert Buchanan. Scribner & Welford. \$2.25.