

vade one's thinking without setting up any unnatural resistance to what he has to say. He does not scold the social scientists for their infatuation with statistics and polls; he pats them on the head with a witty essay entitled "Through Happiness with Slide Rule and Calipers," and they visibly diminish. In "Whom Do We Picket Tonight?" he deflates those who feel called to mind other folk's business by observing that it is "sometimes easier to head an institute for the study of child guidance than it is to turn one brat into a decent human being." Dealing with those who disparage market competition, he writes: "When men cannot compete for wealth they compete for position, for authority, for influence in the right places. When they cannot own a palace, four automobiles, and ten servants, they manage to get themselves appointed to jobs in connection with which these things are assigned them. More dreadfully still, when these same men find themselves no longer required to pay the common man to do their work for them, they quickly discover that when the profit motive has been abolished, the fear motive affords a very handy substitute."

The things that people of a given period take for granted are answers supplied to them by

thinkers whom they might not even know. It is the task of social criticism to confront us with the men we permit to do our thinking for us, to make us aware of our assumptions. Here is Mr Krutch's thumbnail analysis:

"The fundamental answers which we have on the whole made, and which we continue to accept, were first given in the seventeenth century by Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, and Rene Descartes, and were later elaborated and modernized by Marx and the Darwinians. These basic tenets of our civilization (in chronological but not quite logical order) are: (1) the most important task to which the human mind may devote itself is the 'control of nature' through technology (Bacon); (2) man may be completely understood if he is considered to be an animal, making predictable reactions to that desire for pleasure and power to which all his other desires may by analysis be reduced (Hobbes); (3) all animals (man excepted) are pure machines (Descartes); (4) man, Descartes notwithstanding, is also an animal and therefore also a machine (Darwin); (5) the human condition is not determined by philosophy, religion, or moral ideas because all of these are actually only by-products of social and technological developments which take place in-

dependent of man's will and uninfluenced by the 'ideologies' which they generate (Marx)."

Krutch jokingly asserts that his claim to fame is that he knows more about plant life than any other drama critic, and more about the theater than any botanist! Essays in both fields are here, plus pieces on Johnson, Thoreau, and Mencken — whom Krutch regards as the best prose writer of the twentieth century.

Thoreau wrote that he came into the world, not to make it better, but to live in it good or bad. Similarly, Mr. Krutch, who turns a skeptical eye on many of the reforms currently proposed to improve the lot of mankind. He believes that society can be improved only by improving individual men and women and that "saving the world" is, perhaps, a task beyond man's capacity.

Krutch is proud of having never been taken in by communism, as were so many intellectuals during the past half century. Nor has he worshiped the other false gods of our time — Rationalism, Relativism, Progress, Equality, Science, and Democracy. He discusses attempts to cure educational ills by pouring money into school plant; he shows the fallacies in pacifism, and in the sociology which exhibits a more tender concern for the criminal than for his victim; he

is critical of those who would make poverty the scapegoat for all social problems, and who then look to government to rid us of poverty. Mr Krutch distrusts all panaceas, for his faith is placed on the responsible individual. He argues cogently that there is discoverable meaning and purpose in human existence, and that man is a unique creation gifted with the will and the imagination to *make* a world, not merely submit to one. "Man's most important characteristic and that which bestows upon him his dignity is his freedom to choose."

Who says a book of essays has to be dull? ♦

► THE AMERICAN COLONIAL MIND AND THE CLASSICAL TRADITION by Richard H. Gummere, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 228 pp., \$5.25.

Reviewed by Robert M. Thornton

MANY EARLY SETTLERS in America, and especially the intellectual and political leaders of colonial and revolutionary days, were college men, but mastery of the classics was by no means limited to those who had attended institutions of higher learning. The rate of literacy in settled regions was remarkably high, and the wisdom of Greece and Rome was continuously brought to bear on the prob-