

BEHIND MOROCCAN WALLS by *Henriette Celarié* (MACMILLAN. \$5.00)

THE elements of tale, sketch, and travel diary are so commingled in this book that it defies classification. Its substance, however, is "rigorously true", according to Mme Celarié, who is the wife of a French colonial officer and the author of *Amour marocaine* and *La Vie mystérieuse des harems*, two volumes from which the eighteen "chapters" of the present translation have been selected and adapted by Constance Lily Morris.

The French titles are indicative of the somewhat sensational and erotic subjects represented: maternity without benefit of clergy opens the book in the story of *The Girl Possessed of a Djinn*; there follow next easy divorces, abductions or escapes of slave-girls, the deceiving and poisoning of husbands, court procedure against light women, and kindred scenes from Moroccan life. Most of these stories are told by native women, who are allowed to speak their own pieces within the frame of visits (at tea-time, and once at dinner) which the author pays to their respective houses. A number of the confessions heard and retold by Mme Celarié bear the marks of a natural narrative gift, notably one story told by an old negress, of her early kidnapping and induction into slavery: this story was written down "just as she spoke . . . without altering a word". One frequently glimpses the author sitting thus in the circle of her characters, pencil in hand; and such dictated passages are enlivened by the native imagery of proverbial allusion which especially characterizes Islamic peoples. The description of a pretty young girl as one whom "a flock of sheep would stop eating to look at" might figure in Dr. Westermarck's recently translated compendium of Moroccan "wit and wisdom".

Physically, the book is a very handsome one. It includes twenty drawings by Boris Artzybasheff, which the artist made in Morocco, though for the most part on the outer side of Mme Celarié's harem walls.

HANSELL BAUGH

LAUGHING IN THE JUNGLE by *Louis Adamic* (HARPERS. \$3.00)

THIS is the type of autobiography that proves interesting rather for its material than for its style. The book is given no particular form, directed toward no obvious purpose, the writing is not sensational, neither is it particularly fine. The power of the book lies in the fact that it is an account of the experiences of an intelligent man of action, a man who has seen things in great variety, a man who has studied many kinds of people, has travelled over all of this country, has made observations on almost every phase of the American scene.

Louis Adamic, born in the Slovenian duchy of Austria, came to America at the age of sixteen. When he closed his story he was thirty. Possessed of great physical vitality, a natural zest for life, and a keen mind, he has studied and recorded carefully the lives of immigrants in this country; he gives us his personal autobiography which is, as he says, not an "up from the slums" success story. There is no direct propaganda in his tale unless one wishes to draw rather obvious deductions; there is no rancour, no prejudice against America. Mr. Adamic has a strong and racy sense of humour, a feeling for the dramatic and for local colour. He presents a cross-section of the American "Jungle"—a title he took from the first book he read in English which thrilled him.

Arriving in New York on New Year's Eve, Adamic saw America first in holiday

mood. He went to live on the East Side and saw the confusions of ideals for which the country stood in the minds of the newcomers there. He became a worker on a paper before he could read with any ease. He travelled through settlements of industrial workers and found the peasants there. Along came the war and he went. In training and in the trenches he came to know intimately some of the most amazing characters. His sketches of these men are among the best things in the book. Returning from the war, Adamic found himself no hero but a man out of work. He began to travel at random and came finally to Los Angeles, one of the most chaotic cities in this country. He helped to organize the I. W. W. demonstration against Wilson in 1919. And the account of Wilson's passage through Seattle, of his entering the street of silent men, thousands of them, standing and staring at him, a mute condemnation of his policies, is some-

thing one can never forget. This is the most dramatic chapter in the book. Adamic is sometimes called, even today, the man who killed Wilson, for the wobblies believe they killed him with that protest; and, indeed, Wilson had crumpled there in his car into the old and feeble man who died, not so long thereafter, disillusioned and tragic. This is, of course, the same material used by Dos Passos in *1919*. Adamic writes of it more vividly, it seems to me.

Other chapters are on the lives of his own people in this country and their simple tragedies. When the book closes we have a vivid study of America, of its absurd contrasts, its economic, religious and political fanaticisms. It might have been better written; it might have had more purpose; but in that event it would have lost the effect of the utter realism which is now its chief power.

EDA LOU WALTON