

## Recent Children's Literature in the Arab World

Books written for children in the Arab World have undergone a good deal of change since the thirties and forties, when Kamel Kaylani produced his pioneer works which achieved a large degree of success at the time.

The style of the more modern productions for children has evolved in the following ways:

1. The sentence is less burdened than before with connective words and emphatic clauses. It has become simpler, shorter and nearer to the child's understanding.
2. The sentence is equally freed from superfluous synonyms, unnecessary repetitions and other forms of verbosity.
3. Concrete expression has replaced abstract forms; traditional, stereotyped sentences have given way to new, original, modern ones.
4. The written language has become nearer to the colloquial. It has assimilated a number of words and expressions used only in informal conversation or common speech, such as arabized foreign words, and expressions derived from the new environment and the modern way of life.
5. Simplification of the language has led to the simplification of illustrations, which show more emphasis on color and a certain stylization in line. The pictures are more lively and more representative of the child's imagination.
6. Though Kaylani's books present a good deal of variety, today's output contains stories taken from real life, from our present environment, while all of his stories were taken from Arab or world classical and folkloric heritage.
7. Our recent production classifies children's books into three stages while his classification was vague or in-existent.

Against these evidently beneficial changes, the recent works for children still present a good many defects:

1. Some stories are too short to sustain the interest of the child or to satisfy his liking for a developed topic or chained events. Other stories relate an insignificant event, or adhere to the traditional expression which has become obsolete.

2. Among the unsuccessful stories we may mention those that have no plot leading to a climax and denouement; those that contain a series of confused events which baffle the child's thought: those that depend on tedious description and neglect vivid action.
3. There are also the stories that fail to consider the facts in depicting animal behavior. The modern trend in children's literature tries to inculcate in them a love for nature in all its forms. It advocates telling them the truth about animals, plants and other living creatures. Defects should not be exaggerated and be made an object of scorn. Qualities should be brought out as well as the possibilities for improvement and change. In this way, we lead the child to adopt a positive, optimistic attitude toward nature and society.
4. There is also a type of story that distorts reality by presenting only the rich and prosperous class of society. The characters, young or old, are represented as wearing rich, ornamented clothes, indulging in delicious foods, living in luxurious surroundings, the children having at their disposal heaps of toys and playthings. Such stories do not faithfully reproduce life when they neglect the toiling class which plays an important role in society.
5. In the category of unsuccessful stories we may range those quoted from the folkloric heritage and related without any modification which may seem necessary for the improvement of the story or for the eradication of the elements of terror that it may contain, such as the ogre slaying his daughters or the ending that makes the evil triumph over the good.
6. In some of the new story books, the illustrations have been given the form of caricatures or of surrealistic pictures. In other cases, the colors have been heaped in a way that overshadow the content or wipe it out.

Finally we note that this production in spite of its large size, lacks variety. Stories dealing with history, biography, science and daily life are few or lacking. Equally lacking are the works treating other literary arts than fiction: plays, poems and songs for children. These works are neglected, probably for financial reasons, though badly needed.

## Book Exhibition for Children

Within the activities connected with the International Year of the Child, a joint committee made up of the "Child Welfare Association" in Lebanon, Beirut University College and the International College, presented at B.U.C.'s Sheikh Zayed Hall an exhibit of reading books for children and young people, which lasted from March 24 to March 30.



The picture above represents a section of the exhibit.