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Editorial...

Somewhere between the letters k and m it was, that she got lost reciting the alphabet. The Pre-school must have recommended the 'little artists' learn to memorise the sequence of the alphabet, I thought to myself as I smiled on our four and a half year old Granddaughter.

At that moment the thought flashed through my mind what a wonderful asset we have in the written word. What a difference it must have made to the lives of people 'of old', once they mastered the written word.

Isn't it hard for us, in this age of general schooling and extensive education for the masses, to imagine how restricted daily living would

have been in the days when the art of writing was reserved for the wealthy and the specially-educated only !? Don't we now take it for granted, that everyone can read and write, that we receive our daily newspaper, that we can choose from a multitude of books of all subjects, that some of us can read the computer screens all day if so desired and that most of the worlds people are literate and can put 'pen to paper' whenever they feel like it or there is a need to ? For a lot of people as for myself, and I presume for you as well, books can be treasured friends. It is good to know that despite the computer invasion, the love for all manner of books remains with people. Even after a lifetime of

reading we can remember the contents of childhood books and we stay conscious of the imagination such books created within us. Imaginations and emotions feed on books, they are the source of most films and documentaries, as biographies they describe the lives of people famous and in-famous and have done so since books became available. Science, technology, medicine, the arts as well as religion have grown and expanded with the help of the written word, the books of knowledge.

Our local Primary school held a book week recently, so was I informed by our Grandchildren attending there. At the same time the Swiss-news on short wave radio and on Internet contained a very interesting report on the recent International book fair held in Geneva.

A most popular event it must have been with thousands of local Swiss and foreign visitors attending.

It appears that this year's guest of honour was Germany and I found out that this was appropriate in more ways than one.

The radio news informed me that Germany with a potential market of 100 million readers is the biggest publisher of books in the world and that Switzerland, (sharing the same written language), receives one quarter of all books Germany exports.

This year the German nation is celebrating and remembering the birth of Johann Gutenberg around the year 1400. This most famous son of the German nation, Switzerland's neighbour to the north, became the inventor of the printing press, making use of 'movable type' to print with hand-set-type cast in molds. The first major book printed in movable type was the so called Gutenberg Bible in 1456. Gutenberg's innovations simplified book production and made it economically feasible and relatively easy. 180 Bibles were produced by the publisher Gutenberg in Mainz/Germany, and a mere 49 are known to still exist world wide. Four of these are known to be held by two libraries in Moscow and 13 in different libraries of USA. Recently a university in Tokyo/Japan has purchased a Gutenberg Bible from a vendor in California for several million Dollars.

Two years ago Switzerland was

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