

12 JAN 1987
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Books, Books, Books.

The reading habit is, we feel, something that can never entirely die out, despite all the modern electro appurtenances of other forms of entertainment and instruction. It has sustained scholars throughout the centuries and given us classics that will last, as long as this planet lasts. Samuel Johnson, the great Cham of literature, could skim through a book and quote the contents almost at a moment's notice. He didn't need a dictaphone or video cassette for the assimilation of knowledge. Neither did Montaigne whose informative essays have delighted generations of readers since the early sixteenth century, and whose humble code was 'Que sais-je'—What do I know? Francis Bacon, another essayist just as enduring, tells us he writes for man's business and bosom, and that he had taken all knowledge to be his province.

Learning produced men of such calibre as these and it was the reading of books that supplied them with the knowledge. Their books are still on our shelves to be pulled down and read with pleasure and profit. What they have to say never dates. No scholar worthy of his salt can dispense with books. The need of reading book was specifically stressed at the opening of the National Book Fair for 1987 at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka recently. We shouldn't need this reminder but it is sometimes necessary when too much time is spent by the younger generation in front of television screens. This medium also has its value and serves a purpose since it introduces scenes from foreign countries which pictorially can help a student to envisage their geography and social customs the better. But all this should not be at the price of stunting one's own imaginative processes. It should encourage further research, which only books can supply.

We should like to see books circulating among the public more freely and qualitatively better than at present produced. Concentration on this publishing aspect might be given, with clearer type, better paper and binding. Good literature is needed and good production, so that books can be handled without undue deterioration, preserved, and their contents read with profit. There are far too many cheap publications on the market today which do not satisfy any of these demands.