

*Elmina; or the Flower that never Fades*. London: E. Newbery, 1791. 8vo, 9 full-page woodcuts (after Bewick), 4 inches x 2 7/16 inches (101 mm x 62 mm), 63 pages.

In this charming story, Elmina—a beautiful and modest orphaned princess raised by a fairy—is given a gift by “Verdurina,” in truth Lidoriana, her guardian. Lidoriana’s gift to Elmina is “the flower that never fades,” a plant with one flower of vermillion (modesty), one white (virtue), one yellow (beneficence), one blue (gentleness) that act as barometers of their respective traits in Elmina’s character. The plant also has one bud (mind) that blows open as learning is enlarged, and another bud (graces) opens unselfconsciously and beautifies the other flowers. Elmina pays heed to the flowers’ condition, her plant flourishes, and she becomes a young woman of great moral integrity. Elmina’s reward is betrothal to a fetching young prince who, like Elmina, is a virtuous person.

The tale is followed by an advertisement for the publisher’s children’s titles. This book was issued by Elizabeth Newbery, the widow of Francis Newbery (d. 1780), who was a nephew of the famed children’s book publisher John Newbery (1713–1767). The elder Newbery’s publications eventually came to be owned by Elizabeth.

This children’s book is from the Bodleian Library’s Douce Collection, named for Francis Douce (1757–1834), a British antiquary and the Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum from 1807 to 1811. His bequest of more than 19,000 volumes contained printed books from various periods, including nearly 500 incunables, as well as roughly 425 manuscripts. Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century children’s books numbered among Douce’s wide range of collecting specialties. This copy of *Elmina* is in orange-red wrappers with a brown woodcut design; an inscription “Thomas Haskoll | T Haskoll” appears on the title page along with the Douce stamp (“EX DONO FR. DOUCE | BIBL. BODL.”).

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