

[Mary Homebred, pseud.], *The Careful Parent's Gift*. 1769. 8vo, 23 woodcut ornaments and illustrations, 48 pages.

This book, as indicated by its title and preliminary message from the author “To the Tender Parents of My Little Benefactors” was intended to appeal to adults, those with the power of the purse. There are ten stories of children, some good and others bad, each followed by several relevant morals. These moral tales are succeeded by three proverbs extolling the value of religion, education, and industriousness. The work, as plainly stated on the title page was “calculated to improve and intice Children with Delight to read and understand.” Doubtless, the virtuous messages imparted within were a further attraction to parents wishing to mold the impressionable young minds of their offspring.

The publisher of this copy of *The Careful Parent's Gift* is not known, but a later (ca. 1796) edition with the same title was published by John Marshall. John Marshall (d. 1823) was a prolific producer of children's books. (His catalogues of the 1780s included approximately 100 titles for children.)

This book, which is from the Douce Collection at the Bodleian Library, is bound in plain blue paper; the inside of the front cover is inscribed “Lydia Heaton | May 7th | 1770.” Francis Douce (1757–1834), a British antiquary, was 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.

Octavo code: **heathe**