

*The Mother's Gift: or, a Present for All Little Children Who Are Good.* London: Carnan and Newbery, 1769. 3 11/16 inches x 2 7/16 inches (93 x 62 mm), 80 pages, 14 woodcuts.

This book contains six stories of good boys and bad, which are illustrative of their titles: “The Preference of Goodness to Riches,” “The Contrast between Inhumanity and Compassion,” “The Exaltation of Humility, and the Abasement of Pride,” “The Necessity of Correction for Idleness and Perverseness,” “The good and naughty Boy,” and “The fatal Effects of Mistaken Fondness.” In these tales, the well-behaved are universally admired and loved, and those who are ill-behaved are shunned.

The stories are followed by nine pages of advertisements for other books by the publishers, descendants of John Newbery (1713–1767), the Englishman considered by some to be the inventor of children’s literature and by others to have been the first to recognize its commercial potential. After Newbery’s death in 1767, the publishing business was conducted by two separate firms, one headed by Newbery’s son Francis and stepson Thomas Carnan, and the other by Newbery’s nephew Francis and Francis’ wife Elizabeth. *The Mother’s Gift* was issued in 1769 by the former firm, Newbery and Carnan.

This eighteenth-century children’s book is from the Douce Collection at Oxford’s Bodleian Library. Francis Douce (1757–1834) was 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. The book is in a contemporary binding of boards covered with Dutch floral paper. “Lydia Heaton | her Book | February 6<sup>th</sup> | 1770” is written on the front free endpaper; the title page bears the stamp “EX DONO FR. DOUCE | BIBL. BODL.”

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