

Don Stephano Bunyano (pseud.), *The Prettiest Book for Children; Being the history of the Enchanted Castle*. London: E. Newbery, [n.d.]. 4 3/16 inches x 2 3/4 inches (107 mm x 70 mm), 128 pages, 15 woodcuts.

This story is set in the Happy Isles, whose location is said to be 1,200 miles south of the Cape of Good Hope, which are ruled by a giant named Instruction. At the Enchanted Castle, the good giant's home, visitors are greeted by Mr. Alphabet and put through their paces identifying letters, syllables, and reading verse. Mr. Interpreter shows paintings illustrating the wisdom of forgiveness, duty, respect, honesty, and controlling anger as well as objects that teach moral lessons, such as a money cup that demonstrates the foolishness of greed. A chapter on the Giant's library mentions that most of the books can be found in Newbery's catalogue. If the giant is present when a guest enters the library, he will give them a Bible ("the very best book") and will introduce him to his wife, Lady Good-example and his five daughters: Piety, Patience, Charity, Sobriety, and Prudence before dismissing him politely and welcoming him back along with a friend. The author admonishes the reader, "If you have met with any thing in this account, which hath been the means of pointing out your duty, it will be your wisdom and your interest to pay a proper attention to it." The history of the Enchanted Castle is followed by "A Dialogue Written by Giant Instruction for the Entertainment of good Girls," a discussion between some girls and their tutor embedded with stories that point out the folly of stinginess, vanity, gluttony, "gadding about," and pursuing men as well as the wisdom of obedience to God's will. The book ends with a six-page advertisement for the publisher.

The Prettiest Book for Children was published by Elizabeth Newbery, a successor to 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. Eventually John Newbery's publications became the property of Elizabeth, while numerous publishers came to specialize in children's literature. The American Library Association's annual Newbery Medal commemorates John Newbery's contributions to the genre.

This book is from the Bodleian Library's Douce Collection. 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. This copy of *The Prettiest Book for Children* is in a contemporary binding of boards covered with Dutch floral paper, and the title page is stamped "EX DONO FR. DOUCE | BIBL. BODL." There are no other marks of ownership.

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