

Tom Thumb's Folio; or, a New Penny Play-thing for Little Giants. London: Newbery and Carnan, 1768. 3.5 inches x 2 3/8 inches (88 mm x 61 mm), 31 pages, 9 woodcuts.

This eighteenth-century children's book tells the story of tiny Tom Thumb's birth, accidental abduction by a raven, and travels. In the land of Cuckow, Tom tames Grumbo the giant, making him a benevolent ruler of his people. Tom becomes a judge, marries Grumbo's daughter, and—of course—lives happily ever after. Appended are the lessons with which Tom taught Grumbo to read (containing a plug for Newbery's spelling books), lessons for goodness (piety, charity, sobriety, honesty, and obedience to parents). Also included are the fables the "Fox and the Crow" and "The Dog and the Bee." A two-page advertisement for the publisher is followed by a verse about Tommy Tag, whose virtues made him "wealthy, and happy, and wise."

This book was originally published in 1767 by 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. Newbery's publishing career began in 1730 when he was hired by William Carnan, printer of the *Reading Mercury*. Newbery must have pleased his employer, as he inherited a portion of Carnan's estate in 1737 and married his widow Mary two years later. By 1740 Newbery had begun publishing books in Reading, and he relocated his business to London in either late 1743 or early 1744. His 1744 *Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, often referred to as the first children's book, was intended to "make Tommy a good Boy, and Polly a good Girl," as stated by the publisher on the title page. A motto in the book, "Instruction with Delight" neatly sums up Newbery's approach to children's literature, which underpinned his success. Perhaps a reflection on Newbery's own history, the children who peopled his tales succeeded or failed according to their virtues. The most noteworthy example can be found in *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765), believed to have been authored by Oliver Goldsmith. Newbery also issued books for adults, among them works by Samuel Johnson and the poet Christopher Smart, who wed Newbery's stepdaughter Anna Maria. Newbery supplemented his publishing business by selling patent remedies, as indicated in advertisements that appeared in certain of his books.

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. This edition of *Tom Thumb's Folio* was issued in 1768 by the former firm, Newbery and Carnan.

This book is part of 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. This copy of *Tom Thumb's Folio* is in a contemporary binding of boards covered with Dutch floral paper. The frontispiece is inscribed "Lydia Heaton 1770 | February 1th"; the verso of A2 is stamped "EX DONO FR. DOUCE | BIBL. BODL."

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