



Edward Lear's Alphabet of Nonsense

Edward Lear

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Binding	Hardback
Size	305 mm x 192 mm
Pages	60 Pages
Illustrations	26 color, b&w
Price	£10.00

- Published to mark the 200th birthday of Edward Lear
- The illustrations are facsimiles of the original 1860 document recently acquired by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
- A perfect gift for lovers of Lear's nonsense verse, adult or child

Edward Lear, born in 1812, was a British artist, illustrator, author, and poet, renowned today primarily for his literary nonsense, in poetry and prose, and especially his limericks, a form that he popularised. Lear produced the illustrated poetry collection *Book of Nonsense* (1846) for the Earl of Derby's grandchildren. His other works include *Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany and Alphabets* (1871), containing "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat", and "Laughable Lyrics" (1877). Three illustrated nonsense alphabets were published in Lear's lifetime, and a further three in the fifth, posthumous edition of *Nonsense Botany and Nonsense Alphabets* of 1889. A number survive in manuscripts. Lear seems to have begun making nonsense alphabets in the mid-1850s, usually for children of his friends and acquaintances. The present alphabet was created for Ruth Decie. Lear had met her parents, Captain Richard Decie and his wife Bella, in Corfu in the preceding winter, and later stayed with Bella's parents, William and Arabella Prescott, at their home, Clarence House, Roehampton. It was during a visit to Roehampton that Lear noted in his diary for 22 June 1862 that he had 'made an alphabet for the Decie baby', who was only a few days old at the time. It is one of the most charming of all Lear's alphabets, typically drawn on sheets of blue writing paper backed with linen. The alphabet was bequeathed to the Ashmolean by a descendant of Ruth Decie, James Farquharson, who died in December 2011. This beautiful facsimile features a short introduction about Edward Lear, written by the Ashmolean curator, Colin Harrison. Following this is a replica of each page of the original publication featuring the letters of the alphabet with the short poem underneath each drawing. This will be accompanied by each poem again, this time written in a more accessible font so that children may read this too. The Ashmolean have utilised this recent acquisition to recreate a stunning classic.