



The Goodman of Paris (Le Ménagier de Paris)

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The Goodman of Paris (Le Ménagier de Paris) wrote this book for the instruction of his young wife around 1393. He was a wealthy and learned man, a member of that enlightened haute bourgeoisie upon which the French monarchy was coming to lean with increasing confidence. When he wrote his Treatise he was at least sixty but had recently married a young wife some forty years his junior. It fell to her to make his declining years comfortable, but it was his task to make it easy for her to do so. The first part deals with her religious and moral duties: as well as giving a unique picture of the medieval view of wifely behaviour it is illustrated by a series of stories drawn from the Goodman's extensive reading and personal experience. In the second part he turns from theory to practice and from soul to body, compiling the most exhaustive treatise on household management which has come down to us from the middle ages. Gardening, hiring of servants, the purchase and preparation of food are all covered, culminating in a detailed and elaborate cookery book. Sadly the author died before he could complete the third section on hawking, games and riddles. This unique glimpse of medieval domestic life presents a worldly, dignified and compelling picture in the words of a man of sensibility and substance.

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