



The Instruction of a Christen Woman

Juan Luis Vives

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This edition of "The Instruction of a Christen Woman" is the first to provide the modern reader with the complete text of the single most influential book in Tudor England concerning women and how they should live their lives. "The Instruction of a Christen Woman", Richard Hyrde's translation of the seminal pedagogical treatise by the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives, was first published circa 1529. An animated text, by turns cajoling, serene, and enraged, "The Instruction of a Christen Woman" presents a systematic discussion of the behavior, dress, speech, diet, movement, and reading materials appropriate to a woman at various stages of her life, as maid, wife, and widow. Capturing the era's conflicted ideas about women and perhaps reflecting Vives' own discomfort as a converted Jew within European Christianity, the English version of the treatise is an essential document for the study of women in Tudor England. In April 1523 Vives dedicated his Latin handbook of "rules and preceptes to lyve by" to his countrywoman Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII, presenting it as a model for the education of her daughter, the Princess Mary. Coming to England soon after Vives was offered a post at Oxford by Cardinal Wolsey. Soon a favorite at the court of Henry and Catherine, Vives established a strong friendship with Thomas More, in whose household he may have met Richard Hyrde, translator of the work. This old-spelling edition of "The Instruction of a Christen Woman" includes a substantial introduction that sets the book within its biographical and a historical contexts and establishing its history as a printed text in eight succeeding sixteenth-century editions that reflect the social, religious, and political changes of that age.

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