

# Georgette de Montenay's Emblems

Georgette de Montenay was a French Huguenot (Protestant) writer who turned to the secular emblem tradition to express her religious feelings. In the “Letter to readers,” that prefaces the emblems, she says that she writes of the true love of God rather than the fickle love of Cupid.



Emblem I: *Sapiens Mulier Aedificat Domum* (Every wise woman buildeth her house. Proverbs 14:1)

Emblem I depicts Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre (and daughter of Marguerite de Navarre) who was a leader in the French Protestant movement. Montenay dedicated the whole book to her. The queen is shown building a strong house out of bricks, with the builder's tools—compasses, rule, and framing square—on the right. This task symbolizes the support she has given to building the Protestant church.

Each of the emblems is composed of a motto, a picture, and a poem. Montenay worked with the talented engraver Pierre Woëriot, and her emblem book was the first to use engravings rather than woodcut illustrations. It was first published in French in 1567, then in a number of other languages.



Emblem LI: *Vigilate* (Keep watch.)

Emblem LI relates to the stories of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and servants in Matthew 25. The woman in the center holds candles in both hands. She is watching and waiting for the coming of Christ, unlike the foolish people asleep behind the walls on either side.