

**DANTE,
PHYSICIAN**

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Dante, Physician by A. G. Drury

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A. G. DRURY

**DANTE,
PHYSICIAN**



DANTE.

Considered by a commission of the Italian
Government the most authentic like-
ness of Dante.

The Dante Society.
Compliments by
A. G. Drury

Dante: Physician

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CINCINNATI:
THE LANCET-CLINIC,
1908.

"As if the doctor should give to a knight
the written aphorisms of Hippocrates, or rather
the technics of Galen."—*Convito 1, Canto 1.*

Chap

INTRODUCTION.

The constant occurrence in the works of the poet, of medical terms and phrases; the many descriptions of diseases and injuries; the evident knowledge of the uses of remedies; the positive statements in regard to medical and surgical practice, and the great familiarity with the collateral sciences displayed by him, have suggested this compilation.

The fact that he was a politician, a poet, and a learned theologian, in no way contradicts the statement that he was also a learned physician, for many of the priesthood, even in the higher ranks, practiced medicine in the Middle Ages.

That he was at any time a practitioner in a strict sense is not intimated or believed, but that he was thoroughly prepared for the practice of medicine has more and more impressed me as the work has progressed.

Quotations from the *Vita Nuova* are from Rosetti's translation, unless other-

wise stated; those from the *Convito* are from the translation of Elizabeth Price Sayer; and those of the *Divine Comedy* from Longfellow's or Cary's versions.

DANTE: PHYSICIAN.

YOUTH.

When we consider the volumes that have been written on the life of Dante, some of them by his contemporaries, and many by his countrymen in the centuries following his death, the wonder ever grows that we have so little positive knowledge of his birth, family, youth and education.

We know that he was born in 1265, because he states positively that he was nine years old when he went with his father to the May-day reception at the house of Folco Portinari, the father of Beatrice, in 1274.¹

We know that his birth occurred between the 18th of May and the 17th of June, because he says, in the twenty-second canto of the *Paradise*, that he was born when the sun was in Gemini, which

1. Boccaccio, *Life of Dante*.

occurred at that time in the year 1265. Of his mother we know nothing more than her name—Donna Bella. His father, a learned counsellor-at-law, died when he was ten years old.

EDUCATION.

Of his early education we have no exact knowledge. He is silent on this subject, and his biographers uncertain and somewhat contradictory. The studies then taught in the lower schools were: Grammar, Latin (not that of the language of the day), rhetoric, and dialectics, called the *trivium*; and arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music, called the *quadrivium*.

Leonardo Bruni, born in 1370,² says: "In his childhood, being liberally nurtured, and entrusted to teachers of letters, he very soon gave evidence of extraordinary powers, wonderfully adapted to excellent things." Bruni further says: "By study of philosophy, theology, astrology, arithmetic, geometry, history, and by the turn-

2. *Vita di Dante*.