

أبن سينا | Ibn Sina

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Ibn Sina (Avicenna) was a great philosopher and physician. At the age of ten years he had completed the study of the Koran in Bukhara, where

afterwards a certain Natili became his tutor, with whom he first studied the 'Eisagoge' of Porphyry, and afterwards Euclid, and lastly the 'Almagest' of Ptolemy. Natili then departed, and an ardent desire to study medicine having taken possession of Ibn Sina, he commenced to read medical books, which not being so difficult to understand as mathematics and metaphysics, he made such rapid progress in them that he soon became an excellent physician, and cured his patients by treating them with well-approved remedies. He began also to study jurisprudence before he was thirteen. At the age of eighteen he entered the service of a prince of the Beni Saman dynasty, Nuh bin Mansur, at Bukhara, a paralytic, who entertained many physicians at his court, and Ibn Sina joined their number. There he composed his 'Collection,' in which he treated of all the sciences except mathematics, and there also he wrote his book of 'The Acquirer and the Acquired.' He then left Bukhara, and lived in various towns of Khurasan, but never went further west, spending his whole life in the countries beyond the Oxus, in Khwarizm and in Persia, although he

wrote in Arabic. It would be superfluous to follow all his changes of fortune, but it may be mentioned that when he was the first physician and vizier of Mezd-ud-daulah, a sultan of the Bowide dynasty, he was twice deposed and put in irons. He also appears to have acted treacherously towards Ala-ud-daulah, a prince of Ispahan, who was his benefactor. He was four years in prison, but at last succeeded in deceiving his guardians, and escaped. His dangerous travels, and the depression of mind inseparable from reverses of fortune, however, never interrupted his scientific pursuits. His taste for study and his activity were such that, as he himself informs us, not a single day passed in which he had not written fifty leaflets. The list of manuscripts left by him, and scattered in various libraries of Europe, is considerable, and though many of his works have been lost, some are still in existence. The fatigues of his long journeys, and the excesses of all kinds in which he indulged, abridged the life of this celebrated scholar, who died in A.D. 1037, at the age of fifty-six, at Hamadan, where the following epitaph adorns his tomb: 'The great philosopher, the great physician, Ibn Sina, is dead. His books on philosophy have not taught him the art of living well, nor his books on medicine the art of living long.'

A brief notice must be given of the celebrated physician and philosopher, Ali bin Ridhwan, who died A.D. 1067. He was such a prodigy of precocious learning that he began to lecture on medicine and philosophy at Cairo from his fourteenth year. He afterwards also taught astronomy. At the age of thirty-two he had attained a great reputation as a physician, and was a rich man at sixty. He left more than one hundred books which he had composed, and he himself says: 'I made abridgments of the chief philosophical works of the ancients, and left in this manner five books on philology; ten on law; the medical works of Hippocrates and Galen; the book of plants of Dioskorides; the books of Rufus, Paulus, Hawi, and Razi; four books on agriculture and drugs; four books for instruction in the 'Almagest' of Ptolemy, and an introduction to the study of it, and to the square of Ptolemy; as also to the works of Plato, Alexander, Themistios, and Al-Farabi. I purchased all these books, no matter what they cost, and preserved them in chests, although it would have been more profitable to have sold them again rather than have kept them.' Ibn Batlan, a clever physician, was a contemporary of Ibn Ridhwan, and travelled from Baghdad to Egypt only for the purpose of making his acquaintance, but the result does not appear to have been satisfactory to either party. He died A.D. 1063, leaving a number of works on medical and other subjects.

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