



*Cardano's Frank Self-Portrait – one of the Most Famous Autobiographies of All Time*



CARDANO, Girolamo. *De Propria Vita Liber Ex Bibliotheca Naudaei*. Paris, Jacob. Paris, Villery, 1643.  
£5,500

8vo, pp. [96], 374; title vignette and decorative initials; some signatures lightly browned and foxed due to paper stock; contemporary full vellum, spine lettered in manuscript; an engraved seventeenth-century portrait of Cardano has been added to front pastedown; with some early marginal annotations in ink; overall still a good copy, with the early ownership inscription and annotations by Joannis Blümigius, 1678, to front free endpaper.

First edition of one of the most famous autobiographies of all time, Cardano's frank self-portrait. One of the most remarkable men of the Renaissance, Cardano was not only a major scientist, outstanding mathematician and physicist, but also a great gambler and astrologer. Condemned by the Inquisition to house arrest in his old age, Cardano wrote *The Book of My Life*, an unvarnished and often outrageous account of his character and conduct. Whether discussing his sex life or his diet, the plots of academic rivals or meetings with supernatural beings, or his deep sorrow when his beloved son was executed for murder, Cardano displays the same unbounded curiosity that made him a scientific pioneer. At once picaresque adventure and campus comedy, curriculum vitae, and last will, *The Book of My Life* is an extraordinary Renaissance self-portrait - a book to set beside Montaigne's *Essays*, and Benvenuto Cellini's *Autobiography*.

'Cardano wrote not just because he was a scientist who had to communicate the results of his research, or a polymath bent on contributing to a universal encyclopaedia, or a compulsive scribbler obsessed with filling page after page, but also because he was a genuine writer, who tried to capture with words something that appeared to elude them.' (Italo Calvino, *Why Read the Classics?*)

The book was published many years after Cardano's death by Gabriel Naudé who added an extensive introduction to it, including much bibliographical data.

