

A. CORNELIUS CELSUS  
OF  
M E D I C I N E,  
IN EIGHT BOOKS,

Translated,  
WITH NOTES, CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY,  
BY JAMES GREIVE, M.D.

CAREFULLY REVISED, WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES,  
BY GEORGE FUTVOYE.

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## EDITOR'S NOTICE.

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In this edition, where any reference is made to the original Latin, the pages are to be understood to refer to the 18mo. Edition, lately published under the superintendence of the Editor of this translation.

The additional notes will be found necessary to elucidate certain obscure passages, in which the Editor has to acknowledge the assistance he has derived from the notes of the late Dr. Milligan.



# P R E F A C E

TO FIRST EDITION.

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It has been a question much debated, whether, and how far the writings of the ancient physicians are of service to direct our practice in the cure of diseases ; but without repeating what has been already said on this point, I imagine their usefulness may be inferred from this single consideration, that the mechanism of the human body being always and every where the same, a faithful history of diseases must necessarily be one of the surest guides to the application of proper remedies. Moreover, if the diagnostics and prognostics be of the greatest moment in physic, and are only to be collected from long and accurate observation, then the records left us by the ancients, who were so assiduous in their observations, so clear and exact in their descriptions, must be allowed to contain a valuable treasure of medical knowledge.

We have seen in the present age many learned physicians, who, though they readily admit the improvements of the moderns, nevertheless apply themselves with great industry to the study of the ancients ; and indeed, to say nothing of the superiority of some of the ancients in style and composition, as a matter of taste, I think it can hardly be denied, that a man, capable of making proper allowances for the variations in respect of climate and manner of living, may receive great benefit from the materials left us by these ingenious writers of antiquity, and find many hints, which, pursued with diligence, and applied with caution, may both correct and enlarge his practice.

CELSUS is justly esteemed one of the most valuable amongst the ancients. He is so often quoted with approbation by our best writers on physic, and so much admired by the learned world for propriety, ease, and elegance, that it is a

needless attempt in these days to draw his character. However he is so little mentioned by the ancients, that our curiosity cannot be gratified with any particulars of his life; nor can we even determine what was his profession, if it does not appear from his writings.

Quintilian often mentions a treatise of his upon rhetoric, which, though he hardly ever quotes, but where he differs from him, he allows to be composed with accuracy. But whatever he thought of his oratory, he gives an honourable testimony to the extent of his learning. For, to persuade his student of eloquence to make himself master of all the sciences, after mentioning the greatest geniuses that ever appeared in Greece or Rome, as Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Cato the censor, Varro, and Cicero, he adds, "Why should I name any more instances? when even Cornelius Celsus, a man of a moderate share of genius, has not only composed treatises on all these arts, but has also left precepts of the military art, agriculture, and medicine. The bare attempt requires us to believe he understood all these subjects; but to give perfection to so great a work is a difficult task, to which no man was ever found equal."\*

Some have complained of the partiality or jealousy of the rhetorician, who allows Celsus only a moderate share of genius. Others esteem it no diminution to be placed in a rank below the writers above named. Without doubt, this would do him very great honour; but if we even take the character literally, still we are to consider Quintilian as having every where in view the perfection of oratory. Now this it should appear Celsus hardly affected, by his confining the orator to questions in dispute;† which in a great measure excludes the descriptive and moving parts of the art; therefore Quintilian's man of middling genius may be a perfect writer in the instructive manner, though he want the qualifications for the bar or the forum. But to do Celsus some farther honour, may it not be supposed, that had Quintilian been as competent a judge of his medical, as of his rhetorical writings, he would not have styled him, *Vir mediocri ingenio*? I have made bold to hazard this observation from an opinion, that none but a physician can form a just idea of the

\* Fab. Quintilian. lib. xii. c. 11.

† Id. lib. iii. c. 5.

excellence of this work ; much less could any but a physician be the author of it. Celsus the physician might very well write on agriculture, &c., but it by no means follows, that Celsus, not versed in the practice of physic, could have written accurately on diseases. If then this notion be just, it may reasonably be concluded, that his medical writings were the most perfect, as being the fruit of his principal and particular studies.

Columella (*De re rustica*) often quotes him with great deference to his authority ; he equals him to the most learned writers on husbandry ; and when he is correcting a vulgar error, expresses his surprise, that Cornelius Celsus could be misled, “ who was not only skilled in agriculture, but took in the whole compass of natural knowledge.”\* I shall not recite all the passages, where he mentions Celsus, but cannot help transcribing one, it is so expressive of our author’s manner. It is on the article of bees, “ concerning which (says he) it is impossible to surpass the diligence of Hyginus, the profusion of ornaments in Virgil, and the *elegance* of Celsus. Hyginus has with great industry collected the precepts, which lay scattered in the ancients ; Virgil has adorned the subject with poetic flowers ; and in Celsus we find a judicious mixture of both these manners.”†

From Columella’s mentioning Celsus as a contemporary, but not as a living writer,‡ and our author’s speaking of Themison in the same manner,§ Le Clerc infers with great probability, that Celsus wrote towards the latter end of the reign of Augustus, or at the latest in the beginning of Tiberius ; in which last period he is placed by Fabricius.|| And that he cannot have been later, appears not only from these authorities, but almost undeniably from the purity and elegance of his style, more nearly allied to the Augustan, than any of the succeeding ages.

Both Columella and Quintilian seem to speak of him as a Roman, and indeed our author himself, when he is giving the Greek name for any distemper, and is to add the Roman, frequently uses this phrase, *nostrī vocant*, *our countrymen call it*, or some other expression of the same nature.¶

\* Columell. lib. ii. c. 2.      † Id. lib. ix. c. 2.      ‡ Id. lib. i. c. 1.

§ Celsi præfat. lib. i.      || Biblioth. Latin. lib. ii. c. 4.

¶ *Nostri anginam vocant*, lib. iv. c. 4.—*Apud nos indecorum, sed commune*

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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