

**THE FATHERS FOR ENGLISH
READERS. CLEMENT OF
ALEXANDRIA**

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The Fathers for English Readers. Clement of Alexandria by F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock

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F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK

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○
The Fathers for English Readers.

Clement of Alexandria

Francis Ryan

BY

F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK, B.D.

EX-SCHOLAR AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT, T.C.D.; FELLOWSHIP PRIZEMAN; FIRST SENIOR MODERATOR AND LARGE GOLD MEDALLIST IN CLASSICS; SENIOR MODERATOR AND GOLD MEDALLIST IN MODERN LITERATURE; FIRST BERKELEY MEDALLIST; FIRST VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MEDALLIST; VICE-CHANCELLOR'S PRIZEMAN IN GREEK AND LATIN VERSE, ETC., ETC., ST. MARY'S, NENAGH.

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CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

PART I

CHAPTER I

CLEMENT'S HOME ; THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, AND ITS PRINCIPAL FEATURES

“ Nam tibi, quo die
Portus Alexandria supplex
Et vacuum patefecit aulam,
Fortuna lustris prospera tertio
Belli secundos reddidit exitus,
Laudemque et optatum peractis
Imperiis decus arrogavit.”

HOR., *Od.*, iv. 14.

THE life and work of Clement of Alexandria could not, perhaps, be more favourably introduced to the notice of our readers than by a brief account of the historic city in which that life was lived and that work was done, and a general summary of the various influences that helped to mould and develop the character and genius of the man.

The city was founded by the great Alexander whose name it bore. Having crushed the Persian power

for ever on the plains of Issus, 333 B.C., the Macedonian conqueror had paused for a short breathing-space in his career of victory to settle affairs in Palestine and Egypt. During this period of rest he founded Alexandria, an extensive and regular city, built on a beautiful and commodious site, and destined to become the great emporium of the East.

On the north side its walls were washed by the blue waves of the Mediterranean, while the fine lake Mareotis formed its boundary on the south. The city, moreover, had the advantage of possessing two harbours, one facing the north-east and the other the south-west, so that it was possible for ships to sail in and out in all weathers, and was also connected with the interior of the country by a large canal.

Thus Alexandria was admirably situated for commerce; and as a large proportion of its inhabitants consisted of enterprising Jews and Greeks, it soon came to the front in the trade of the world. It has been said that the East and West met together in this centre to buy and sell and get gain. It was no wonder then, considering its great natural advantages, that the city very rapidly assumed vast proportions, covering in its prosperous days as much ground as modern Paris, registering nearly half-a-million free citizens,¹ and having at its disposal more capital even than Rome.

¹ Diodorus, who visited the city 60 A.D., informs us that the registers showed a population of 300,000 free citizens, and that there were as many slaves.

In the days of the Empire, it was the corn-export from this great sea-port that supplied the Roman granaries; so much so, that many a time the Imperial city lay at the mercy of the Prefect of Egypt, who might easily have starved it out, by detaining the corn-fleet in the harbours of Alexandria; a fact which helps us to appreciate the charge so frequently made against Athanasius of conspiring to delay the corn from Africa.

In spite of all this wealth and influence, Alexandria could not have been called a beautiful city. The climate was mild, being tempered by the fresh Etesian breezes from the sea. And the buildings were handsome and massive, conspicuous among them being the synagogue of the Jews, the colossal Temple of Serapis, the extensive museum containing the famous library founded by Ptolemy Philadelphus, with adjacent parks for foreign animals, the Botanical Gardens, and the Observatory, from which the great Eratosthenes calculated the orbits of the planets. But there was little variety of shadow and sunlight, and there were no mountains to relieve the dull monotony of the unchanging coast-line. The city itself, however, was nobly planned. As one approached its southern gate, which was called the Moon Gate,¹ there was a fine view of the limpid lake Mareotis, with its ferry-boats, barges,

¹ A fine description of Alexandria in the second century A.D. is to be found in the love story *Clitipho and Leucippe* of Achilles Tatius, in which the splendour, extent, and population of the city are described in glowing language.

and winged Egyptian craft plying backwards and forwards between the city and the interior of the country; while the busy scene on the quays, where the stately Roman galleys were being laden with corn by a motley crowd of Copts, Nubians, Greeks, and Jews, lent a certain interest and animation to the outlook.

Leaving behind him this Babel of tongues and bustling confusion, the visitor would arrive at the Moon Gate, and passing beneath its noble portal would enter the spacious streets of this great world-city. For, indeed, it was a world in miniature, being cosmopolitan in every respect. Men and women of every colour, condition, religion, and phase of thought might be seen on each side—a pleasing contrast to the uniformity of the city.

One great street ran from the south gate to the northern, flanked on either side by spacious colonnades—a special feature of this town—which afforded a pleasant promenade to the citizens in the hot weather, when they could enjoy the pleasure of a country stroll in the very heart of the city.¹ It were easy to imagine the picturesque effect of the scene at night in those broad porticoes, when the torches carried hither and thither by the votaries of religion or pleasure flashed in the darkness like broken gleams of another sun, as their own poet has described it,² and made the lofty arches yet more vast; while on either

¹ Ἐνθῆμος ἀποθῆμια (Achilles Tatius, Book V.).

² Ἥλιος κατακερματίζων (*ibid.*).