

# **THE GREAT REPUBLIC**

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The Great Republic by Sir Lepel Henry Griffin

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**SIR LEPEL HENRY GRIFFIN**

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REPUBLIC**



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THE  
GREAT REPUBLIC.

BY  
SIR LEPEL HENRY GRIFFIN, K.C.S.I.

"The Commonwealth of Athens is become a forest of beasts."  
TIMON OF ATHENS.

"O Liberté ! que de crimes on commet en ton nom."  
JEANNE-MARIE ROLAND.

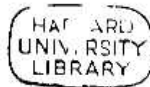
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#### PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

A FEW days ago Mr. James Russell Lowell, poet and diplomatist, was pleasantly discoursing on the charms of Democracy to an English audience. The slippery road to the abyss, over which "*Nulla vstigia retrorsum*" is engraved, was strewn with the graceful flowers of rhetoric, and if all the statements of the official representative of Democracy were correct, the English people might wisely cease a hopeless struggle with the inevitable and march joyfully into Mr. Lowell's promised land. But no one knows better than the American Minister that his syllogisms were fallacious, his axioms paradoxical, and his conclusions contradicted not only by the past history of Republicanism, but by the contemporary spectacle of the



Presidential election, the scandals of which would make Democracy herself blush, if that brazen hussy had any modesty remaining.

Of all the products of Republicanism sent by America to England, Mr. Lowell is at once the most agreeable and the most strange. Like a pearl in an oyster, we regard him with gratified surprise. His culture, modesty, and gentle breeding impart a delicate yet piquant charm to his democratic optimism, and pleasantly flavour his bad logic. But he is not the normal and typical American politician. If he were so, Englishmen might look on Democracy with more favourable eyes. But Mr. Lowell is a poet whose songs have justly won him such popular repute that the Government of the States were compelled to honour themselves by offering him a dignified exile. He would be as bewildered in the back slums of American politics as a country maiden in St. Giles. Although a violet may have sprung from a manure heap, we do not forget that the normal growth is coarse grass, the rank dock, and the stinging nettle.

The etiquette of American diplomacy is not to be measured by the Old World standard of propriety. The republican simplicity which pretends to see in a court dress a badge of servitude, will possibly find nothing astonishing in the American Minister to a Monarchical Government lecturing the subjects of the Queen on the advantages of Democracy. What would be the American comment were the British Minister at Washington to lecture the citizens of New York on the divine right of kings? With what pleasure does Mr. Lowell think the Russian Government would regard the British Ambassador addressing the merchants of Moscow on the priceless blessing of representative institutions?

But Englishmen who prefer the rule of logic to that of the mob will forgive Mr. Lowell for the impropriety of his speech in consideration of the service he has thereby rendered to the cause of freedom. It is with a secret joy that they will note the public demonstration of how poor and paltry a thing is this same Democracy, since so accomplished an advocate as Mr. Lowell can

only weave for it so poor and sophistical an apology.

In paraphrasing Napoleon's definition of the French Revolution, as "*la carrière ouverte aux talents*," Mr. Lowell called "Democracy that form of society, no matter what its political classification, in which every man had his chance and knew it. If a man can climb from a coal pit to the highest position for which he is fitted, he can well afford to be indifferent to the form of Government under which he lives." This may be true of the fortunate collier, but appears less admirable to those who deny the divine right of colliers to rule; and who, looking to the past history of France and the United States, would be disposed to define Democracy as that form of Government in which a man can climb from a coal pit to the highest position for which he is most unfit. There can, however, be little doubt that Mr. Lowell, with perhaps unconscious sarcasm, has rightly indicated a coal mine as the most appropriate school for an American politician. Thence emerging, secure in his