

**DE REPUBLICA  
ANGLORUM; A DISCOURSE  
ON THE COMMONWEALTH  
OF ENGLAND**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649008124

De republica Anglorum; a discourse on the Commonwealth of England by T. Smith & L. Alston  
& F. W. Maitland

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**T. SMITH & L. ALSTON & F. W. MAITLAND**

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE,  
C. F. CLAY, MANAGER.  
London: FETTER LANE, E.C.  
Glasgow: 50, WELLINGTON STREET,



Leipzig: F. A. BROCKHAUS.  
New York: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS.  
Bombay and Calcutta: MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.

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# DE REPUBLICA ANGLORUM

A DISCOURSE ON THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF  
ENGLAND

BY

SIR THOMAS SMITH

EDITED BY

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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DOWNING PROFESSOR OF THE LAWS OF ENGLAND

Cambridge

at the University Press

1906

**Cambridge:**

PRINTED BY JOHN CLAY, M.A.  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

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## PREFACE.

SIR THOMAS SMITH'S discourse on the Commonwealth of England is a famous and in some sort a well-known book. No one would think of writing about the England of Elizabeth's day without paying heed to what was written about that matter by her learned and accomplished Secretary of State. His little treatise comprises some sentences touching the powers of Parliament which have been quoted and transcribed times without number, and which will be quoted and transcribed so long as men take any interest in the history of the English constitution. But if in this sense it has been a well-known book, we cannot say that it has been exactly and accurately known. It has been possible, even for learned men, to mistake a Latin translation for the original text, and the copies of the English text which have been in the market differ materially from each other. Those of the oldest editions have commanded a somewhat high price, while those of later editions give us a good deal of matter which we cannot with any confidence ascribe to the pen of Sir Thomas.

## PREFACE

It seemed then that the time had come when a new edition would be welcome. Also it seemed fit and proper that the new edition should proceed from the Press of that University of which Sir Thomas Smith was in his day one of the most illustrious sons. Mr Alston has kindly taken off my hands a piece of work that I was unable to bring to an end, and, though this is not the place in which I may praise him, I may even here be allowed to say that he has spared no pains in his endeavour to set before the public a good text of a good book.

His Introduction leaves me nothing to do save to call to remembrance the main facts of our author's life. It will not be forgotten that Sir Thomas found a biographer in John Strype, nor that in more recent times Professor A. F. Pollard has written an excellent article about him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Mr Mullinger also in his *History of the University of Cambridge* has spoken at some length of Smith's academic career. This being so, but very little need here be said.

Thomas Smith was born at Saffron Walden in 1513. In 1526 he entered Queens' College, Cambridge. At the beginning of 1530 he was elected a fellow of that college, being then B.A. He graduated M.A. in 1533 and shortly afterwards began to lecture on Greek. In 1538 he became public orator of the University. It was at this time that he won the honourable place that he holds in the history of scholar-

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