Title: The Odyssey

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Author: Homer

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Translator: Samuel Butler

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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ODYSSEY ***

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Produced by Jim Tinsley

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THE ODYSSEY

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rendered into English

prose for the use of

those who cannot

read the original

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By Samuel Butler

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

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This translation is intended to supplement a work entitled "The

Authoress of the Odyssey", which I published in 1897. I could not give

the whole "Odyssey" in that book without making it unwieldy, I therefore

epitomised my translation, which was already completed and which I now

publish in full.

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I shall not here argue the two main points dealt with in the work just

mentioned; I have nothing either to add to, or to withdraw from, what I

have there written. The points in question are:

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(1) that the "Odyssey" was written entirely at, and drawn entirely

from, the place now called Trapani on the West Coast of Sicily, alike

as regards the Phaeacian and the Ithaca scenes; while the voyages of

Ulysses, when once he is within easy reach of Sicily, solve themselves

into a periplus of the island, practically from Trapani back to Trapani,

via the Lipari islands, the Straits of Messina, and the island of

Pantellaria.

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(2) That the poem was entirely written by a very young woman, who lived at the place now called Trapani, and introduced herself into her work under the name of Nausicaa.

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The main arguments on which I base the first of these somewhat startling contentions, have been prominently and repeatedly before the English and Italian public ever since they appeared (without rejoinder) in the "Athenaeum" for January 30 and February 20, 1892. Both contentions were urged (also without rejoinder) in the Johnian "Eagle" for the Lent and October terms of the same year. Nothing to which I should reply has reached me from any quarter, and knowing how anxiously I have endeavoured to learn the existence of any flaws in my argument, I begin to feel some confidence that, did such flaws exist, I should have heard, at any rate about some of them, before now. Without, therefore, for a moment pretending to think that scholars generally acquiesce in my conclusions, I shall act as thinking them little likely so to gainsay me as that it will be incumbent upon me to reply, and shall confine myself to translating the "Odyssey" for English readers, with such notes as I think will be found useful. Among these I would especially call attention to one on xxii. 465-473 which Lord Grimthorpe has kindly allowed me to make public.

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I have repeated several of the illustrations used in "The Authoress of the Odyssey", and have added two which I hope may bring the outer court of Ulysses' house more vividly before the reader. I should like to explain that the presence of a man and a dog in one illustration is accidental, and was not observed by me till I developed the negative. In an appendix I have also reprinted the paragraphs explanatory of the plan of Ulysses' house, together with the plan itself. The reader is recommended to study this plan with some attention.

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In the preface to my translation of the "Iliad" I have given my views as to the main principles by which a translator should be guided, and need not repeat them here, beyond pointing out that the initial liberty of translating poetry into prose involves the continual taking of more or less liberty throughout the translation; for much that is right in poetry is wrong in prose, and the exigencies of readable prose are the first things to be considered in a prose translation. That