



The Iliad & The Odyssey

Homer

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The history of Homer and his works is lost in doubtful obscurity, as is the history of many of the first minds who have done honor to humanity because they rose amidst darkness. The majestic stream of his song, blessing and fertilizing, flows like a river through many lands and nations. The creations of genius always seem like miracles, because they are, for the most part, created far out of the reach of observation. If we were in possession of all the historical testimonies, we never could wholly explain the origin of the Iliad and the Odyssey. But it must be noted that Homer's great epic poems hold a singular place in literature. Within the knowledge of all of history that has been passed down to us, there is no known predecessor that could lay claim to be the progenitor or equal to these great works. It was Homer who formed the character of the Greek nation. No poet has ever, as a poet, exercised a similar influence over his countrymen. Prophets, lawgivers, and sages have formed the character of other nations; it was reserved to a poet to form that of the Greeks. When lawgivers and sages appeared in Greece, the work of the poet had already been accomplished; and they paid homage to his superior genius. He held up before his nation the mirror, in which they were to behold the world of gods and heroes no less than of feeble mortals, and to behold them reflected with purity and truth. His poems are founded on the first feeling of human nature; on the love of children, wife, and country; on that passion which outweighs all others, the love of glory. His songs were poured forth from a breast which sympathized with all the feelings of man; and therefore they enter, and will continue to enter, every breast which cherishes the same sympathies. The table of contents of this special edition begins with the first line of the text for each chapter and verse.

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