

**THE LEGEND OF FAIR
HELEN AS TOLD
BY HOMER, GOETHE
AND OTHERS: A STUDY**

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The Legend of Fair Helen as Told by Homer, Goethe and Others: A Study by Eugene Oswald

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EUGENE OSWALD

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The First Engraving of the London

Helen of Troy.
After the picture by P. G. Rosselli.

English Goethe Society

**THE LEGEND OF
FAIR HELEN**

**AS TOLD BY HOMER, GOETHE,
AND OTHERS**

A STUDY BY

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1905

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PRELUDE

‘Bewundert viel und viel gescholten, Helena.’

GOETHE: *Faust*.

‘A daughter of the Gods, divinely tall,
And most divinely fair.’

TENNYSON: *A Dream of Fair Women*.

‘Die ewig blühende Helena von Sparta.’

HEINE: *Elementargeister und Dämonen*.

‘Fayre Helen, floure of beauty excellent.’

SPENSER: *Faërie Queene*, book iii., ch. 9.

‘Her whom, we know well,
The world’s large spaces cannot parallel.’

SHAKESPEARE: *Troilus and Cressida*, II. ii.

‘The fairest woman that the poet’s dream
Or artist hand has fashioned.’

SIR LEWIS MORRIS: *Epic of Hades*.

‘Unendlich bedeutungsvoll ist die Erscheinung der
schönen Helena in der Sage vom Doctor Faust.’

HEINE: *Der Doktor Faust*.

‘And from his lips broke forth a mighty cry of “Helen!
Helen! Helen!”’

WILLIAM MORRIS: *The Death of Paris*.

‘Death ends all tales, but this he endeth not.’

ANDREW LANG: *Helen of Troy*.

PROLOGUE

DEDICATED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ENGLISH
GOETHE SOCIETY

IN Goethe's *Helena*—which Heine called 'the most splendid statue that ever left the sculptor Goethe's studio'—the poet handles a treasury of old, partly contradictory fables, adding some of his own more modern fancies and thoughts. The magician may be said to play with the whole inventory, bringing before us the old as well as the new precious things in rapid and unexpected intermingling, and with a total disregard of time and place, but striking out from the combination new sparks of light and beauty in a phantasmagoria—that is his own expression—of infinite enjoyment for those of us who are not bound in pedantry or party spirit, who can free themselves from the fetters of the antique and from the new fetters of the modern so-called realism.

Does Goethe's second *Faust* allegorize his hero's excursion into the passion of the Renais-