

THE TRUE VINE

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The true Vine by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

THE TRUE VINE

THE TRUE VINE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

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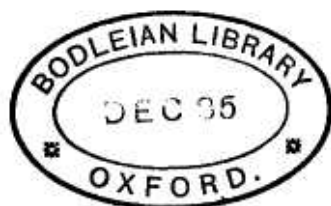
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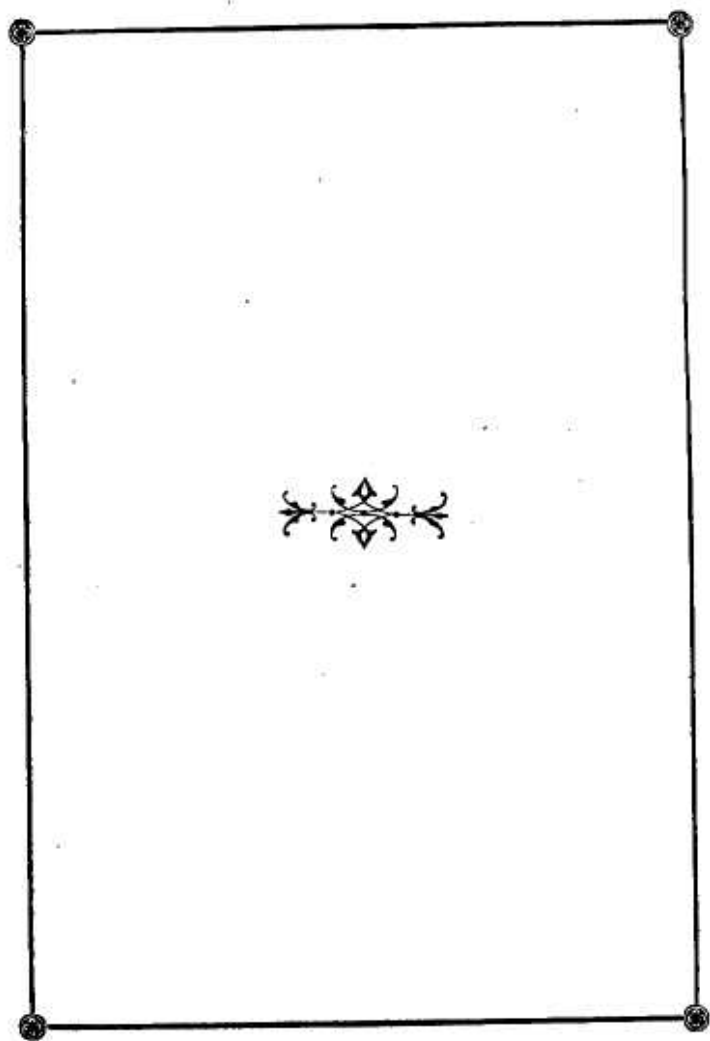
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The True Vine.

I.

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"I AM the true Vine."—ST. JOHN xv.
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THE tender sacredness of last words rests on this Parable of the True Vine, the very last our Lord gave His disciples, on the very night when He was betrayed; the very day before He died on the cross for us. Not twelve hours after these quiet words came from His lips, those lips were silent on the cross, parched with the thirst of agonising death. And as He spoke them He knew all that was before Him. Yet, on the brink of that gulf of sorrow and death, His words are not of death and sorrow, but of life, and fruitfulness, and joy. He stands on the brink of that sea of death which was so soon to overwhelm Him in its dark

tide, and proclaims Himself the Tree of Life. For this is what this wonderful parable means.

The tree of life in the midst of the first Paradise had been lost to men when they wandered from God ; and, ever since, men have been roaming hither and thither in search of it.

In the last chapters of the last book of the Bible, which take up in so many ways the broken song of the first, we find the tree of life no more guarded by the flaming sword, but open to all nations ; its fruits varied to satisfy all man's needs ; its leaves, even, fruitful for his healing. Here in the historical Gospels, the meaning of the beautiful ancient allegories flashes on us. It is Jesus the Son of God, the dying Saviour, the risen Lord, who *is* the Tree of Life Himself ; not merely any words He speaks, or any blessing He brings, but Himself, the Source of Life and the Bread of Life for all.

Usually our Lord's parables, we all know, are suggested by something actually within sight and hearing. He sees the fig-tree putting forth her first leaves and says, "Learn a parable of the fig-tree." He sits by the well in Samaria and speaks of the living water. On the last day, the great

day of the Feast of Tabernacles, when the water was brought with songs and rejoicing from the Pool of Siloam, in the golden pitcher, and poured on the brazen altar in the Temple, He stands in the courts of the Temple and says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." It was His wont not to look far for His illustrations, but glancing on the everyday things, on the sacred ceremonials, or the human festivities around Him, to show how they were all pictures and shadows of Himself, the Key and the Substance of all. What, then, suggested this parable of the vine?

Some have thought He spoke it on His way from the upper chamber (where the Passover had been kept) to the garden of Gethsemane, in the valley among the olives below the city of Jerusalem. As He went with the little company of His disciples from the city through the courts of the Temple towards the brook Kedron, it is thought they must have passed through the Temple courts. On the front of the Temple was carved the golden vine, with its clusters of precious golden grapes and its golden vine-leaves. This golden vine was meant to represent the Jewish