

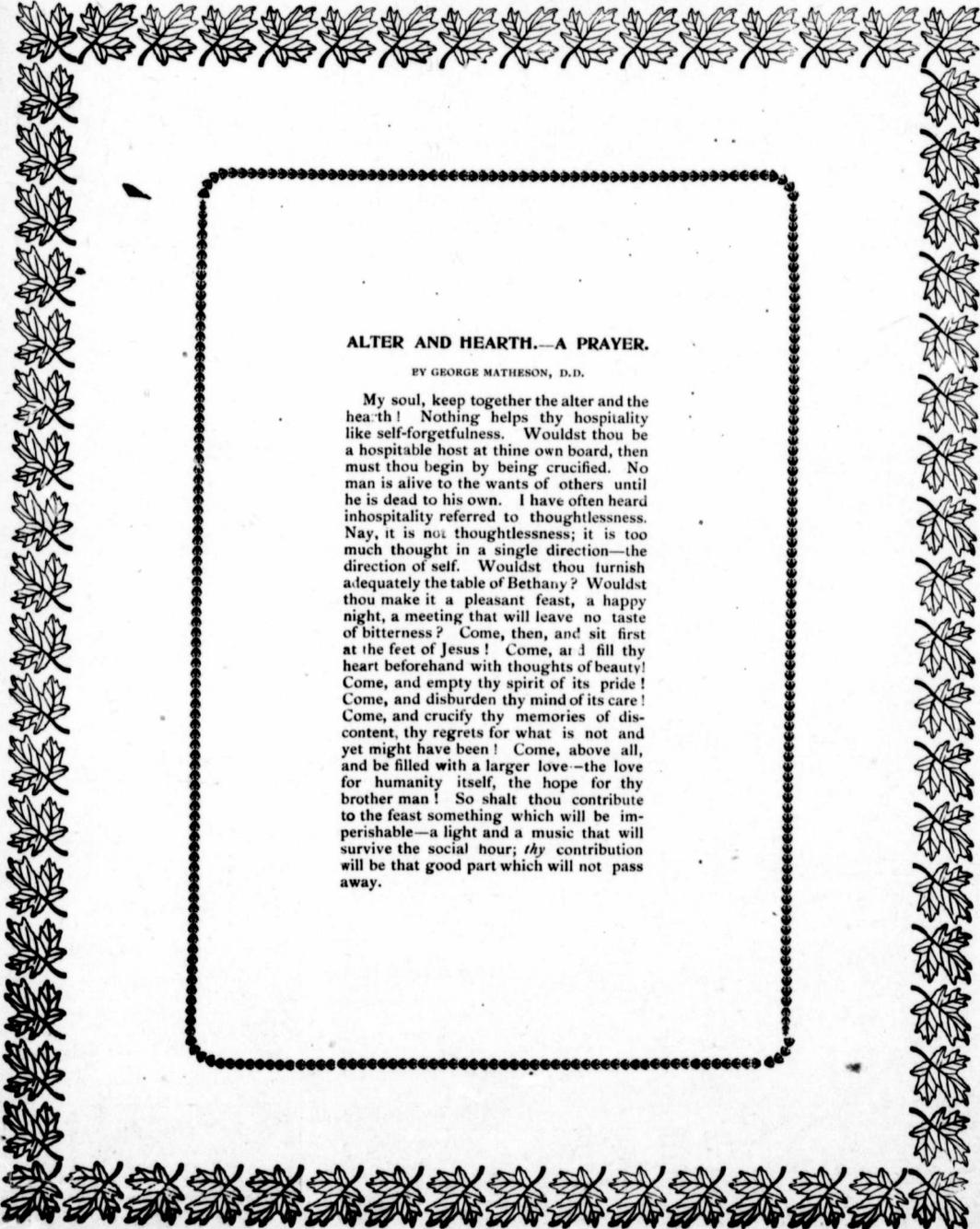
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ALTER AND HEARTH.—A PRAYER.

BY GEORGE MATHESON, D.D.

My soul, keep together the alter and the hearth! Nothing helps thy hospitality like self-forgetfulness. Wouldst thou be a hospitable host at thine own board, then must thou begin by being crucified. No man is alive to the wants of others until he is dead to his own. I have often heard inhospitality referred to thoughtlessness. Nay, it is not thoughtlessness; it is too much thought in a single direction—the direction of self. Wouldst thou furnish adequately the table of Bethany? Wouldst thou make it a pleasant feast, a happy night, a meeting that will leave no taste of bitterness? Come, then, and sit first at the feet of Jesus! Come, and fill thy heart beforehand with thoughts of beauty! Come, and empty thy spirit of its pride! Come, and disburden thy mind of its care! Come, and crucify thy memories of discontent, thy regrets for what is not and yet might have been! Come, above all, and be filled with a larger love—the love for humanity itself, the hope for thy brother man! So shalt thou contribute to the feast something which will be imperishable—a light and a music that will survive the social hour; *thy* contribution will be that good part which will not pass away.