

The gardener smiled when he was brought; but when he came again, with his iron pick, he set cruelly to work. No advice would he take from the little worker—no entreaty would he listen to. Down he struck, deep into the soil.

How the ground shook as the split rock gave way! How it heaved as roots and shallow earth were cast into the air—her garden spoiled for altogether now, she thought!

Nor could she have believed, had she not stood by and seen it all, how well an old, kind hand works, and how quickly. He let her help him to smooth all down again into the flat bed, and plant the roots, too, where they now could grow, and he promised to bring her more plants—some all in flower—and to come and see how she got on, as she tried to do what a child may, to watch and weed a little plot, to dress it and to keep it.

What does the Bible mean when it says, "I will take the stony heart out of your flesh"? It means that there is in your heart something that makes it as hard for you to be good, as that great stone in that little piece of ground made it hard to turn it into a garden where flowers would grow. Did your heart ever give you as much trouble as that?

Most people's hearts give them but little trouble. It takes them some trouble to keep the door of the lips, to keep the foot from evil; but the heart is a deep well within, hid out of sight. They do not care to look far down into it, if only it keeps quiet and does not vex them much.

But some people's hearts give them a great deal of trouble. To *keep the heart* is so hard a thing to them, that every time they try it, they are driven to call in the help of that Hand that made the worlds. They find the heart so hard, that they have to take it straight to Jesus, saying—

"Turn and look upon me, Lord,
And break this heart of stone."

And the Lord Jesus is never at a loss for means and ways to do *all* He promises. He has a hammer for breaking the rock in pieces. There is love enough in His eye to do this; it only needs to look once on a young heart to win it to Himself for ever.

He can so break up sin in the heart as that it will never be so strong again; He can plant in it all the sweet fruits of the Spirit, dropping in the seeds of grace, and then come down as the dew, to keep it always fruitful, and ever green.

M. F. B.