

or prophet spoken such words of despair as may be found in the 12th Psalm and the 57th chapter of Isaiah's prophecy. Nor would we hear from Micah the bitter lamentation: "*I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits . . . there is no cluster to eat.*" Why? Because, "*The good man is perished out of the earth!*"

But why should he settle down in despair? Might not a reaction occur? Does he not evince a weak faith? some would say. Might not his own influence act like the leaven that may in its secret working produce the reform, apparently so distant? Ah! it were possible for him to hope, did he not know that among the agencies which profess to exalt a nation, there was the abortive working of intrigue and deception. So long as the people had good laws, good judges, a sound upper class, there would be reason to hope. If the rich were a healthful example to the poor, and there existed a reverence for the majesty of law, flamed in justice and executed with equity in the punishment of crime, and the enthronement of virtue, the nation could hardly be counted as a ruined heap. But he found pollution in the very foundations of social order, and poison in the very fountains of virtue and equity. Princes and judges alike leagued together to corrupt the classes they were ordained to educate and refine. And although a good king was on the throne, his hands were tied by his subordinates; and only such laws could be passed as would pander to the corrupt incumbents of office. Judgment would be meted by the bench to the man who could pay the most money for it. Virtue, by such a state of things, bit the dust, while vice gathered from the richest of the vine. He knew that so long as bribery in high places sat enthroned, and ruled the administration of state affairs, political death could not be averted; and hence the despair in which he speaks. It may have been equally guilty for the judge to take, and the client to give, the bribe that defeated justice and corrupted law. But there is no doubt that the attempt to interfere with the majesty of law had a twofold result. It tended to the undue acquittal of the criminal, and consequently eased the path of crime itself.

It is because the experience given by the prophet in his lamentations over Samaria illustrates the theme I have chosen, it has been introduced here. For as the nation had little to hope for in the vitiated institutions with which they had trifled, so may this generation yield to discouragement, and individual expectations for personal piety be curtailed in proportion to the extent to which the unhappy policy of the prophet's day is imitated.

As to the chances of defeating the ends of political justice in this age, thanks to the influence of an advanced state of political morality, it may well be said that such overt acts are more the exception than the rule. And it may truly be said that where the exception does occur, it must have the mantle of secrecy thrown over it, to save it from defeat; and no sooner does the instance of intrigue become public, than it is denounced with scorn. It is not with such a phase of the subject, this article is intended to deal. But it is with the attempts, often too popular, to make smooth the rugged path of sin, that this article has to do; and if it is true that the cause of Truth suffers