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JAMES THOMSON ("B.V.") IN SEARCH OF A CREED
WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON
THE DOOM OF A CITY

by

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James Thomson is known primarily by his masterpiece, The City of Dreadful Night. Because of the overwhelming pessimism of this work, Thomson may seem to have been a weak character who was unable to stand up to the disappointments and pressures of life. This, I believe, is an inadequate conception of the man. For a better understanding of Thomson both as man and poet, I believe a study of his earlier, relatively unknown poem entitled The Doom of a City is necessary. This early poem shows Thomson as a healthy young man with the normal desires to believe in a principle of good and in an all-wise God who is in control and will triumph in the end. It shows him as a humanitarian and reformer who feels people can be helped to an improvement of their lives. It shows Thomson at a time before his rationalistic mind caused him to reject the ideas of an omniscient and loving God, of immortality, and even of the possibility of reform and progress. It indicates that these rejections were not achieved without a struggle. By the time Thomson wrote The City of Dreadful Night, the rejection had taken place, and Thomson could no longer believe in the vision of the living God which he had seen in The Doom.
Science for him had stripped away all such pleasant illusions. Thomson's pessimism seems to be not so much the result of his frustrations and inability to stand up to the problems of life as the result of his complete acceptance of the scientific thought of his age coupled with his intellectual honesty in facing up to life and refusing to accept anything without rational proof.

In my study of Thomson, I discuss first the scientific and religious thought of the nineteenth century as it relates specifically to Thomson; second, Thomson's early attempt in *The Doom of a City* to develop a meaningful creed which his mind could accept; third, the ideas in *The Doom of a City* which are repeated throughout Thomson's career; fourth, the changes in Thomson's creed as revealed in *The City of Dreadful Night*; and finally, the tendency toward a contradiction between the agnosticism of his essays and the atheism of his later poems, particularly *The City of Dreadful Night*. 
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INTRODUCTION

James Thomson (1834-1882) occupies a rather strange position in the history of English letters. His works, when published, generally drew praise from discerning critics and fellow artists. George Meredith on reading The City of Dreadful Night wrote glowingly to Thomson:

I have not found the line I would propose to recast. I have found many pages which no other English poet could have written. Nowhere is the verse feeble, nowhere is the expression insufficient; the majesty of the line has always its full colouring and marches under a banner. And you accomplish this effect with the utmost sobriety, with absolute self-mastery.¹

Later critics have tended to agree with Meredith.² Llewelyn Powys says of The City that "it contains passages of extraordinary and appalling power. . . . The conception of the poem with its sombre imagery is terrific."³ Lafcadio Hearn comments: "And then there is James Thomson, the greatest of English pessimistic poets, the only man in English literature whom we can fairly compare with the Italian Giacomo Leopardi. . . . but I think that Thomson, in spite of his want of education, is much more remarkable for the force of his pessimism than the delicate Italian sufferer."⁴ Hoxie Neale Fairchild says: "Here was an excellent poet, a sensitive literary critic,"⁵ and W. Lewis Jones: "As a lyric poet Thomson ranks high, and every thoughtful reader
of his lighter verse will have little patience with those who assert that the most depressing of his poems is his only title to literary distinction." Among his biographers, Meeker says The City of Dreadful Night is "the greatest single pessimistic poem in English, or perhaps in any literature," and Imogene Walker writes that "no one expressed it [nineteenth century pessimism] so clearly, so deeply, so unalteringly as did Thomson in The City." But in spite of such interest and praise, Thomson has remained a relatively unknown poet, particularly outside The City. A note of regret is often expressed by scholars. J. M. Cohen laments the fact that "Thomson is the only major Victorian poet whose works have tempted no publisher to reprint them." Henry Salt comments that "the scanty recognition Thomson gained as a poet was—and still is—absurdly out of proportion to his merits." Though one of the avowed intentions of his biographers—Dobell, Salt, Meeker, and Walker—has been to rectify this situation, Thomson still remains a little known poet. The amount of scholarship concerning him is small—particularly if one should agree with Cohen in calling him a "major Victorian poet"—and most of it centers on The City of Dreadful Night. Thomson's biographers have all grappled with the problem that Thomson's subject matter is not such that it is likely to attract a large audience. Decided atheism and extreme pessimism is likely to be mistrusted by the public,
which generally prefers to ignore the night side of life. The reviewer in the *Athenæum* reacted in such a way to *The City of Dreadful Night*: "The only intelligible intent to be discerned is that the poet, for some reason or another, wishes to make the reader feel that he is himself one of the dreadful occupants of a dreadful city; in a word to make him as uncomfortable as possible." One has enough troubles without dwelling in the dark side of life searching for more seems to be the popular attitude. Consequently the biographers seem to have felt it necessary to apologize for Thomson and to explain how he happened to develop such a deep pessimism. If people knew about his life, they would understand and forgive and read his poetry. If people could sympathize with him in his lonely struggles and despair in the dark streets of London, they would be able to appreciate the pessimism of *The City of Dreadful Night*. Meeker says that "like practically all his other poems, it is sincere and intensely personal, and until the background of his actual life during the period of its composition is realized, its merits cannot be fully appreciated." Bertram Dobell had commented in a similar fashion when he wrote: "If we are interested in Thomson's writings we shall find, when we come to analyse our feelings about them, that it is because we are interested in the author's personality." This puts the emphasis on the interesting personality rather than on the merits of the poet, and thus,
in spite of their good intentions, the biographers have contributed to the conception of Thomson as an oddity, an interesting psychological specimen, rather than an outstanding poet. Interesting psychological specimen he may be, but poetry must stand or fall on its own merit. A recent doctoral dissertation by Henry Paolucci criticizes the biographers for this excessive emphasis on Thomson's personal tragedy and tries to establish an approach more in the manner of the "new critics." Paolucci's method is to find echoes in Thomson's poetry of previous artists such as Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and Leopardi. Thus he hopes to show Thomson's cultural background and to prove the fact that he did have a good poetic education and did strive after fine artistic expression. He examines Thomson's works to discover his religious, moral, literary, and philosophic preparation "in order to dispel some of the prevalent misconceptions regarding the cultural preparation of the poet--misconceptions that have in fact made adequate appreciation difficult."14

Paolucci's examination of The City as poetry is refreshing, but there is another factor which has made adequate appreciation difficult, namely that Thomson is known and admired almost exclusively for the one poem. Thus J. M. Cohen could say that "The City of Dreadful Night is in danger of becoming a mere slate slab in the cemetery of literary history, where nothing else that Thomson wrote
Because of this neglect of the rest of his poetry and writings, misconceptions have arisen regarding Thomson's position both as poet and thinker. The emphasis on his pessimism has tended to be excessive. Although such passages as "Give a man a horse he can ride" do get into anthologies, they are almost inevitably overshadowed by the more impressive and more completely quoted sections from The City. The student who has only a passing acquaintance with Thomson will undoubtedly remember him as the author of one of the most deeply pessimistic poems in English literature. His general impression is likely to be that Thomson was a colorful but weak person, that he quickly succumbed to the misfortunes of life and became a dipsomaniac, and that he very energetically preached his belief that life is not worth living, that it would have been better never to have been born, and that having been born, the next best thing is to die as soon as possible. Such an impression is, of course, a simplification and hardly does justice to the man and poet who was James Thomson—the man who was described by his friends as a bright and lively companion and the poet who, in another mood, could write in section seventeen of Sunday up the River:

Let my voice ring out and over the earth,
Through all the grief and strife,
With a golden joy in a silver mirth:
Thank God for Life!
This is not to suggest that in *The City of Dreadful Night* Thomson was insincere or was only striking a pose and trying to cash in on a cheap popular interest in pessimism, as was suggested by one of the early reviewers. But it is meant to suggest that *The City of Dreadful Night* cannot be completely understood unless it is read in the light of Thomson's other poetry and particularly as the culmination of a long and serious search for the meaning and purpose of life.

This lifelong search for Truth resulted in two long poems in which Thomson tried to formulate a philosophy of life and death and eternity in which he could believe and which would give him an assurance and stability whereby he could face life with confidence—one poem, *The Doom of a City*, written near the beginning of his career and essentially optimistic, the other, *The City of Dreadful Night*, written near the end and essentially pessimistic. Obviously the later poem more adequately represents his mature philosophy. The very fact that he felt called upon to set down a second formulation of his belief suggests that he felt his first one inadequate, but not necessarily that he felt it completely false. Many of the ideas in the more optimistic *Doom of a City* are echoed throughout Thomson's poetry, and even in its optimism this poem contains seeds of the pessimism which was to grow and develop during the next twenty years. Though *The City*
of Dreadful Night presents Thomson's mature and final comment on life, it is not the whole and complete truth as Thomson himself indicated when he wrote:

The sun has never visited that city,
For it dissolveth in the daylight fair.
Dissolveth like a dream of night away.17

The City of Dreadful Night represents one side of the coin, the night side. The dreadful darkness is true of certain men at certain times or perhaps of certain men at all times but not of all men at all times.

The one incident in Thomson's life which particularly seems to have cast its dark shadow across his search for Truth was the unfortunate death of Matilda Weller, the young Irish girl with whom he fell in love. She was fourteen and he was eighteen, but in spite of their youth her death apparently left a scar on him for life. He never married, and he often wrote about the dead young girl, the angelic person who might have saved him. She became for him a symbol of innocence and beauty. Her death has been used to explain all of Thomson's melancholy and pessimism. Harold Hoffman says that "henceforth life held no lure for him" and "his whole philosophical and moral existence was determined by the death of a young and beautiful girl."18 While her death was undoubtedly a blow to Thomson, this seems to be stretching it a bit too far in the direction of a morbid sentimentality. Such an
emphasis lends itself nicely to the romantic but misleading picture of a weak man who was crushed for life by an unfortunate love affair with a teen-age girl and who thereafter retreated into a lifetime of morbid gloom and drunkenness because he was unable to stand up to the pressures and problems of life. I think a study of The Doom of a City will help to dispel this view. This poem shows Thomson as a healthy young man with the normal desires to believe in a principle of good and an all-wise God who is in control and will triumph in the end. It shows him as a humanitarian and reformer who feels people can be helped, that if their sins are pointed out, they will repent. Later his rationalistic mind caused him to reject the ideas of an omniscient and conscious God, of immortality, and even of the possibility of reform and progress, but these rejections were not achieved without a struggle. Emotionally Thomson always yearned for the belief in the "Antique fables! beautiful and bright" which offered hope and joy to previous generations, but intellectually he could not accept them. Science for him had stripped away all such pleasant illusions. Thomson's pessimism seems to be not so much a result of his frustrations and inability to stand up to the problems of life as the result of his complete acceptance of the scientific thought of his age coupled with his intellectual honesty in facing up to life and refusing to accept anything without rational
proof.

In the following study of Thomson, I plan to discuss first the scientific and religious thought of the nineteenth century as it relates specifically to Thomson; second, Thomson's early attempt in *The Doom of a City* to develop a creed his mind could accept; third, the ideas in *The Doom* which are repeated throughout Thomson's career; fourth, the changes in Thomson's creed as revealed in *The City of Dreadful Night*; and finally, the tendency toward a contradiction between the agnosticism of his essays and the atheism of his later poems, particularly *The City of Dreadful Night*. Thomson had rejected not only Christianity but any metaphysical or transcendental system which would presume to understand God or to describe the destiny of the soul after the death of the body. Such things as God or the soul, if they exist, belong to an extrasensory spirit world and are quite beyond the comprehension or knowledge of mankind. They can neither be proved nor disproved in any rational way. And yet philosophers from Plato to Spinoza have been drawn into this realm of thought by the desire to know for certain man's destiny. In *The City of Dreadful Night* Thomson also feels the need to know and states with certainty that there is no God and that this little life is all we have to endure, an unbelief which cannot be demonstrated by any kind of rational proof and which also requires "blind faith" on the part of the unbeliever.
I. THOMSON AND THE INTELLECTUAL MILIEU

A full-scale discussion of the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century would take much more space than I can devote to it here. The developments of and reactions among science, philosophy, and religion were many and complex. But since all men are largely shaped by the society in which they live and were reared, it seems appropriate to comment briefly on the society which shaped Thomson, and to point out some of the developments of particular relevance to the growth of Thomson's thoughts and attitudes as he searched for the meaning of life.

The stereotyped picture of the Victorians portrays them as pompously staid and dull. This picture may have been true of some but certainly not of all. In paraphrase of Dickens one might say of the age that it was the dullest of times and the liveliest of times, it was the most conservative of times and the most liberal of times. The Victorians lived in an age of scientific growth and enlightenment, an age of change and expanding industrialization, an age of scepticism and re-examination of old religious creeds in the light of new scientific discovery. The changes were often painful. Man's reason and man's faith, man's scientific discoveries and man's creeds, often seemed to be in vital disagreement. The discomforting withdrawal
of the sea of faith often seemed inevitable as a result of man's growing knowledge. Like many of his contemporaries, Thomson was caught and bewildered in this ebb tide of faith, and was disillusioned perhaps more than most because of the nature of his early religious education.

Scientific enlightenment is, of course, not in itself incompatible with religious faith. But there have been times when a new scientific theory seems to be in complete disagreement with current theology, when new thought conflicts with firmly established patterns of thought, upsets the accepted philosophical and scientific as well as religious ideas of the day, and leaves in its wake an era of pessimism and unbelief. Two outstanding examples of such revolutionary and upsetting theories in western history have been the Copernican and the Darwinian theories, both seeming to strike at the very root of Christian faith, at the belief that man was created in the image of God and as the crowning jewel to which all the rest of creation in subservient. The Ptolemaic system with its positioning of the earth as the center around which the heavenly bodies revolve fit very well the Biblical emphasis on the importance of man. The Copernican system fit less well, or so it seemed. By taking the earth out of the center, by showing its insignificance in relation to the vastitudes of space, this new astronomy seemed to imply the insignificance of man as well.
Three hundred years of advancing scientific knowledge passed between Copernicus and Darwin. We may note that as the realm of science expands, the realm of the supernatural contracts. Phenomena which had been explained in supernatural terms can often be explained scientifically in natural terms. The increasingly obvious orderliness and immutability of natural laws may reach the point where the universe seems to be utterly mechanical and self-sufficient. The necessity for a God may seem less obvious except perhaps as an originator who quickly abandoned the universe to run itself. Many people reached the point where they could see no evidence of a God who is personally interested in human history. The Darwinian theory, much more completely than the Copernican seemed to imply the puniness and unimportance of mankind. It seemed flatly to contradict the Biblical story of a special creation of man in the image of God. Instead it saw man as simply one link in the chain of evolution—perhaps the most highly developed link so far, but likely to die out as have other species and leave room for an even more highly developed link. How foolish was man in his pride to claim a greater value than the other animals and to think that God could have an interest in, much less love, for him!

Coinciding with the theory of evolution was the theory of natural selection. These theories tended to produce a pessimism not only because they implied the insignificance
of man but also because they showed nature not as a tender, loving mother but as a cruel, impersonal, and irrational force. The theory of natural selection pointed out the enmity and insensibility in nature. All species, including the human, seemed involved in a bitter and miserable struggle for survival, a struggle which seemed wasteful and often quite senseless. The problem which this cruel struggle presented for one who wished to believe in a benevolent deity was expressed by Tennyson in *In Memoriam* when he said, "Though Nature, red in tooth and claw/ With ravine, shrieked against his creed--." If there was a God it would seem that either he did not care that his creatures suffered, or else he did not have enough power to do anything about it. The concept of an infinitely loving and infinitely powerful God did not seem to fit in with the condition of His universe. In the words of Lionel Stevenson, "human life became a mysterious and melancholy thing, a brief struggle of consciousness against overwhelming and irrational external forces," and God or Fate or the Cosmic Force seemed indifferent to it all.

Richard Church comments:

that supreme indifference was what hurt these sensitive spirits. They were emerging from a domestic religion which, if at times terrifying, was at least personal. Since the enunciation of the doctrines of evolution and the survival of the fittest, that possibility of man's intercourse with an individual deity was vanishing. The result was a sense of betrayal, as though the
universal law, by its ruthless economy of indifference to the unit, were guilty of some monstrous cheat.²

Thomson gave expression to this sense of betrayal when he had one of the inhabitants of the dreadful city say:

Speak not of comfort where no comfort is,
Speak not at all: can words make foul things fair?
Our life's a cheat, our death a black abyss:
Hush and be mute envisaging despair.—³

Another character strikes out directly at the pitiless being who could have created such a monstrous world:

"The vilest thing must be less vile than Thou From whom it had its being, God and Lord! Creator of all woe and sin! Abhorred, Malignant and implacable! I vow

"That not for all Thy power furled and unfurled, For all the temples to thy glory built, Would I assume the ignominious guilt Of having made such men in such a world."

And then denies that such a being could exist:

"As if a Being, God or Fiend, could reign, At once so wicked, foolish, and insane, As to produce men when He might refrain!⁴

An interesting similarity is found in Edward FitzGerald's indictment of God in his translation of The Rubáiyát:

0 Thou, who Man of Baser Earth didst make, And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake: For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man Is blackened--Man's forgiveness give--and take!

In this period of increasing scepticism and growing emphasis on scientific method, there was bound to be an effect on theology. Inevitably scholars began to study the Bible critically as they would any other ancient piece of literature, and gradually opened for discussion an area
which had been closed. Questions were raised. How is Jonah's whale to be interpreted? Or Joshua's command to the sun? Did Moses really write the Pentateuch? To what extent can the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus be accepted as historical truth? Such questions were raised and often answered contrary to the traditional beliefs of orthodoxy. In the light of man's increasing awareness of natural laws, the miracles of Jesus frequently seemed repulsive to man's rationality. The Gospel narratives often seemed to represent Jesus as a cheap thaumaturge. Consequently some men turned their backs on Christianity completely, and others, like David Friedrich Strauss and Ernest Renan, who had grown up in the Church and were emotionally attached to the Christian heritage, tried to remake Christianity in a more palatable form. Strauss in *Das Leben Jesu* (1835) and Renan in *Vie de Jésus* (1863) set out on a search for the historical Jesus in an attempt to remove the mounds of undignified "superstition" which had obscured the true character and nobility of this man. Renan particularly, more the mystic than the scholar, was motivated by a love and admiration for the founder of Christianity. These men could accept Jesus as a great man, perhaps even the greatest that has ever lived, but not as a divine member of the Trinity. They sought rational explanations for the miracles and for the accounts of Jesus' resurrection. The accounts of the resurrection
could be explained as the result of hallucinations or visions brought on by wishful thinking or the urge to vindicate one's belief. The scientifically critical approach of these men was likely to attract those rational and scientific-minded people who could not accept orthodoxy. George Eliot was a notable Strauss convert.

But in spite of such attempts at compromise or at finding an adequate substitute in humanism, the spiritual encounter with modern science continued to be upsetting for the Victorians and often frightening. This is illustrated by a quotation from George Romanes, a friend and disciple of Darwin, who wrote in 1878:

Never in the history of man has so terrific a calamity befallen the race as that which all who look may now behold advancing as a deluge, black with destruction, resistless in might, uprooting our most cherished hopes, engulfing our most precious creed, and burying our highest life in mindless desolation. . . . The flood-gates of infidelity are open, and Atheism overwhelming is upon us."

Higher criticism had shown the Bible to be an imperfect book. Darwin had seemed to contradict the Biblical account of a special creation of man. If man as well as all the other animals had evolved slowly from an elementary prototype, then how could man claim an immortal soul any more than the animals? If the development and continuance of the world could be explained by natural laws acting mechanically, was there any reason to believe in a spiritual
sustainer? Perhaps the only reality was that which man could touch and see and smell. And thus there developed a scientific materialism which denied the spiritual because it could not be touched or seen or smelled, a materialism which, seeing no reason to believe in a future life, pointed toward a hedonistic view of this life. Such a materialism had frightening implications in the realm of morality and order. If this life is all there is and it is largely a bitter struggle for existence, then isn't man justified in seeking his little pleasure wherever he can in whatever way possible? Men had lost their faith in the God of their fathers but seemed to have little with which to replace Him. Could the western moral code survive without the backing of its God? Or would decency and order be drowned in a flood of infidelity? It was a question which troubled many.

The conflict between faith and scepticism did not, of course, come suddenly with the publications of Darwin or Strauss or Renan, but had developed gradually. During the third decade of the nineteenth century a strange and sometimes grotesque religious movement entered the scene largely in protest against the growing sceptical and scientific climate. In London the movement centered around the popular Scottish preacher, Edward Irving. Although some intellectual and even scholarly people were among the Irvingites, the movement had an extremely anti-intellectual bias. Its followers exalted the poor and ill-educated.
Continually emphasizing that Jesus chose illiterate fishermen to found his kingdom, they often quoted such verses as, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes." They wished to rely on faith and effortless inspiration to the exclusion of reason and serious study. They experimented with charismatic Christianity in an attempt to prove that the supernatural in the form of the Holy Spirit really was working in their midst. Thus their emphasis was on a renewal of the more spectacular spiritual gifts of the apostolic church such as speaking in tongues, prophesying, and healing.

The man who gave his name to this movement was not the narrow fanatic one might expect, but an intelligent, well-meaning man whose eloquent preaching had become the sensation of London. In his circle of friends were included such outstanding people as Coleridge and Carlyle. Irving and Carlyle had in fact come from the same town in Scotland. Irving had been Jane Welsh's first tutor, and he had introduced her to Carlyle. Although neither Carlyle nor Jane could sympathize with the "tongues" movement, they always admired and loved Irving as a generous and kindly friend. Thirty-two years after Irving's death, Carlyle in writing about him in his Reminiscences continually speaks of him as "noble Irving," "good Irving," "generous Irving": 
Noble Irving! he was the faithful elder brother of my life in those years; generous, wise, beneficent, all his dealings and discoursings with me were. Well may I recollect as blessed things in my existence those Annan and other visits, and feel that beyond all other men he was helpful to me when I most needed help.

Irving's relationships with the Irvingites makes a rather pathetic story. He believed implicitly in the working of the Holy Spirit and did not seem to consider the possibility of a selfish person using a spiritual gift to gain personal fame and prestige. Although the tongue speakers seldom exhibited the other fruits of the Spirit mentioned by St. Paul such as love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control, and although by bawling out in a strange tongue during the worship service they often disobeyed St. Paul's command that everything should be done decently and in order, yet they had only to make an unintelligible utterance and Irving was convinced of the genuineness of the gift. He himself never spoke in tongues, but he indiscriminately encouraged others and the movement got out of hand. The gifted ones were smitten with spiritual pride, and the inner circle soon began to consider even their preacher a rather inferior Christian because he did not have the gift.

Irving and the Irvingites are important in Thomson's background because Thomson's mother was an Irvingite. She was among those who followed Irving when he was removed from his church, and she kept a portrait of him in her house.
Irving died in the same year Thomson was born, but his books on the interpretation of prophecy were in the house and the young Thomson read them, as he later wrote, for their imagery.

The anti-intellectual approach of the Irvingites tried to ignore the problems being raised by science, but such an approach is like that of the man who drank to drown his troubles and woke to find they could swim. Such action may give a false sense of security but it solves nothing. The anti-intellectual approach is bound to fail as soon as the disciple begins to wonder why man was created with the power of reason in the first place. This is the faculty which most obviously distinguishes him from the animals, and certainly God could not have meant for man not to use this noble faculty. There were men who felt that one must accept either Christianity or science; to accept both would be impossible. But a calmer and more compromising approach was possible and through the years has been made. Tennyson was able to develop an optimistic belief in God which he felt was not inconsistent with the evolutionary principle. In fact the theory of evolution strengthened his optimism, for it seemed to support the idea of progress—even inevitable progress perhaps—and therefore certainly the best was yet to come. Browning also was able to retain an optimistic religious faith. "Both poets," comments Stevenson, "countered all the dangers of materialism by
glorifying their inherent sense of divinity and immortality."9

James Thomson, however, could not honestly reconcile science and Christianity, or science and any optimistic religious faith. Perhaps if his childhood contact had been with a more rational, less rigidly fundamentalist and literalist type of Christianity than the Irvingites provided, he might have developed in the way Browning or Tennyson did. Instead, Thomson seemed to develop the feeling that Christianity by its very nature is obscurantist and anti-intellectual and that only a fool or a hypocrite could say he believed in the dogmas of the Church. He considered the Tennysonian religious solution very shallow and wrote of Maud and In Memoriam as pieces full of "hysterics and commonplace philosophy."10

Turning his thought to the great men of previous centuries, Thomson makes a more devastating attack on Pascal's religious thought—more devastating partly because of Thomson's great admiration for Pascal as both intellectual and artistic genius. "In mathematical genius he was without superior,"11 said Thomson, and "the best sentences in Pascal's thoughts are probably the finest for simple and noble beauty in the whole range of French literature."12 But in spite of Pascal's great and noble abilities, Thomson believed that his religion forced him to be a hypocrite, and he was saddened to think that such a great man was not strong enough to look truth in the face but
rather retreated ignobly into the speciously peaceful bosom of Christian superstition.

The religion of Pascal is responsible for the degradation of the philosopher as a philosopher; for making the man, whose intelligence was naturally so pure and veracious, attempt tricks of legerdemain with an intricate shuffling of texts; for making the austere and sincere thinker abase himself to conscious paradox and sophistry, and to the moods of a courtesan, scolding, weeping, wheedling, imploring, to convert others to a faith which his own lucid logic would not suffer him to establish to his own contentment. We cannot but blush with shame for the man one reveres as for one's own unworthiness, when reading the later articles of the Pensées. The tragedy of Pascal's life is all noble; the tragedy of his spiritual life as developed in this masterpiece of fragments is not all noble.\textsuperscript{13}

Pascal might be partly excused because he lived in an earlier age when it had been easier to accept Christianity, but Thomson found it difficult to believe that a scientific mind could ever actually accept the unreasonable elements which are so basic to Christianity. Like Renan, Thomson greatly admired Jesus as a true mystic. He placed the Open Secret Society of Mystics at the top of his orders of great men. "These are the very flower and crown of the four already touched upon, Saints of Saints, Heroes of Heroes, Philosophers, of Philosophers, Poets of Poets."\textsuperscript{14} And furthermore the loftiest member of the society of mystics was the carpenter's son. But again like Renan, Thomson wished to distinguish carefully between Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus of Christendom. "Christianity was
founded by the poor Jew Jesus (not at all the same person as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with whom he has been commonly and stupidly confounded, but indeed an immensely better character than the said Lord and Saviour).”

Modern science has killed our Lord and Saviour, and men are waking up to the fact that the "dreary absurdities of dogmatic theology" which surrounded him have become irrelevant. Large churches still lift their spires to the sky, but they are "blank, soulless, sepulchral, the pyramids of this mournful desert, each conserving the Mummy of a Great King in its heart." But the poor Jew might reign over men yet in a different and better way if we could only strip away the system which hides him from our sight.

"When the theological scaffolding which has been reared round the image of this man shall have altogether fallen away, and the lineaments can be seen in the broad daylight, we shall discover that he reigns over us by the power and prerogative of his divine mysticism." Such mysticism would be man-centered. It would not lose itself in senseless controversies about the character of God but would limit itself to the knowable, to the study of man.

During many millenniums some of the best and wisest of our race have devoted themselves to teaching us all about God and our immortal souls, the origin and final causes of the world, and so forth; yet when one comes to reflect on the matter it is overwhelmingly certain that not one of these men has ever really known anything about any of these things, or whether they really exist or not."
Perhaps if these men had concentrated on man rather than on an uncertain God, their contributions to the race would have more successfully alleviated some of the sufferings of humanity.

Thomson does admit that many of the noblest spirits in western history have been Christians, but he feels that this is the result of their being enchanted by the fascination with the hope of finding certainty somewhere within this uncertain world.

The fascination itself is not to be wondered at, for no fascination can be stronger to such intellects and such spirits than the hope of securing certitude beneath the transitory and illusive shows of this world and life. So intense, indeed, is this fascination that it has bewitched exceedingly able and good men, who despaired of attaining such certitude by rational inquiry, into abjuring their reason, strangling their doubts, and seeking peace in blind faith and abject submission to authority, mutilating their minds as Origen mutilated his body, as in the deplorable instance of J. H. Newman.

The indictment here is not only of Christian thought but of any thought which goes beyond the realm of man's experience and tries to speak authoritatively about the unknowable. The metaphysical systems of the great philosophers are usually just as unbelievable as the systems of the great religions. Man likes to think that his orderly mind is the reflection of an orderly mind which controls the universe. He thinks that he can build, out of pure thought, a system which truly mirrors the cosmos, but there is no
adequate proof that the universe is ruled by a rational and orderly mind. In his essay "On the Worth of Metaphysical Systems" Thomson cites the Germans, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, as having developed some of the most elaborate and absolute systems ever constructed. Each system may be perfectly consistent and rational in itself, an amazing display of man's mental powers and of great educational worth in developing such powers and skill, but if it concerns itself with what transcends man's experience it is simply a castle in the air, a magnificent structure with no foundation. The only systems which can rightly be called philosophical, says Thomson, are those "of a very different kind, being founded on experience not intuition, following Nature instead of trying to transcend her, consciously limited amidst the Illimitable." Such natural systems are capable of improvement and extension as man's knowledge increases, but the supernatural systems are absolute, they cannot be changed without being destroyed, and they are all made of guesswork at best as is evidenced by the great number of differing absolute systems which have risen and fallen from favor. History should show us that, although they may be fun to play with, such systems are useless as conveyors of knowledge about the actual universe.

But it is strange that we have to appeal to history to show the worthlessness of absolute systems. How can man, an in-
finitesimal atom in an infinite universe, embrace that infinity? How can man, whose life is an inappreciable moment in eternal time, comprehend the laws of that eternity? A critic may be very small, and a philosopher or theologian very great (according to our petty human standards), yet the former in relation to the latter must be immeasurably greater than the latter in relation to the universe he has the audacity to expound. Therefore even the most stupid of men is quite justified in rejecting decisively and without examination any universal system whether of theology or philosophy, for beyond doubt it is ludicrously inadequate. 21

Thomson often marvels that the finite is so audacious as to think that it can understand the infinite. In "The Sayings of Sigvat" he further elaborates this idea.

The sage hath it somewhat thus, "The people are many millions, and the most of them are fools." But were the most foolish as wise as the most wise are now, and were the wisest proportionately wiser, the saying would be none the less stinging. Some men stand but five feet, and the difference is large in ratio to the average height of the race: but what is the height of seven feet to the diameter of the earth, to the distance of the moon, of the sun, of the nearest star? 22

And yet this puny man, ever smaller in the increasing light of scientific discovery of the vastness and complexity of the universe, has the audacity to claim immortality. On being questioned about his immortal soul, Sigvat scoffs at the questioner:

A very sublime being truly is this Sigvat, to expect and claim immortality! But I fear that the universe can do without me. . . . Immortality! why the most of us don't know what to do with this one little personal
life, and might well wonder how we came to be promoted to the dignity thereof: the claim to immortality is the claim to be trusted with millions of pounds because one has shown himself unfit to be trusted with sixpence. Leave me, O comical little men, with your talk about eternity; go and try to live a single happy rational day!23

Man is neither powerful nor important. He is a weakling living in a savage world which seems to have taken little thought of his comfort. Nature is not a loving mother but a cruel and capricious force.

The animals she brings forth (not to speak of the plants and minerals) are in many cases ugly, unamiable, ferocious, and tormented with monstrous appetites, which can only be satisfied by devouring their fellow-creatures. Nearly all of them are quite selfish and immoral; and the few of them that are philanthropic (such as surly old lions, tigers, wolves, sharks, vultures, and other sweet carrion fowl; all genuine lovers of man) are almost as disagreeably so as our human philanthropists themselves.24

Man must have strong teeth to crack the nuts Nature throws him. In the light of the obvious cruelty of Nature, Thomson is amazed to find that "there are grown men always talking treacle and pap! men who have seen and heard a thunder-storm, and are not ignorant of the existence of shark and crocodile and tiger!"25 It is much more courageous to face the hard facts of life than to hide behind a veil of pleasant illusions, much more noble to be a Leopardi than a Pascal, much more noble to gaze "on the dreadful truth, recognizing it in its nakedness, refusing all the fond
Concerning God and what awaits man after death
Thomson was an agnostic. Man cannot know anything beyond material phenomena. "Know this only, that you can never know; of this only be assured, that you shall never be assured; doubt not that you must doubt to the end—if ever end there be . . . ."27 On one thing only can he be sure, that he is moving on and on to Death. Thomson could not accept intuition or divine inspiration as reliable means of revelation. These things are too intangible, too capable of deception, too often contradictory. Though it would be pleasant to be able to believe in a principle of good which was bound to triumph, he could not find evidence of such a principle working in the world. To be an optimist he would have had to deny the dictates of his reason, and this he could never do. He might admit the possibility of something that transcends reason, but it is futile for man to attempt a study of such a something, for man can work only with his reason. Thomson's devotion to his reason made him ever incapable of taking the leap of faith. The resulting feeling of loneliness in the face of indifferent Nature, the belief that mankind is doomed to failure in his search for God or for the meaning of life, these were the things which troubled Thomson. He found poetical expression of this problem in the work of Heinrich Heine. The following is Thomson's translation
of Heine’s "Fragen," which sums up the feeling of despair
felt by the children of the scientific age:

By the sea, by the desert midnight sea,
Stands a youth,
His heart full of anguish, his head full of doubt,
And with sullen lips he questions the waves:—

"Oh, solve to me the Riddle of Life,
The painful primordial riddle,
Which already has racked so many heads,
Heads in hieroglyphic caps,
Heads in turbans and black berrets,
Heads in wigs, and myriad other
Poor perspiring human heads;
What is the meaning of Man?
Whence comes he? Whither goes he?
Who dwells there above in the golden stars?"

The waves murmur their everlasting murmur,
The wind sweeps, the clouds scud,
The stars glitter indifferent and cold,
And a fool awaits an answer."
II. THE DOOM OF A CITY

Most of the quotations in the preceding chapter were from essays written by Thomson in his thirties and forties after the major struggle with the undertow was over, when the tide had ebbed and he was left alone on the barren beach. The quietness, loneliness, and despair of the deserted sand-flats can be so intense that we forget the earlier bounding of the surf and the bitter struggle against the outgoing tide. The darkling plain, the mausolean city—these can seem so naturally a part of our poet that it is difficult to think of him as ever having had the buoyant spirits of youth. But he had had such spirits.

"No one is voluntarily a pessimist," says F. C. S. Schiller. "Everyone desires to believe in optimism if he possibly can." Even Dobell's "laureate of pessimism" desired to believe in optimism, and only after a struggle was he able to decide that he couldn't possibly do so, and that Arnold was correct in saying, in "Dover Beach," that this world

"Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain."

Thomson did seriously search for an optimistic answer. This search was given fullest expression in The Doom of a City, dated 1857, when the poet was twenty-three. It is a poem little commented on and apparently little
read, buried even more deeply in the cemetery of literary history than most of the rest of Thomson's work. This, however, is not to say that it has received no significant literary praise. Gordon Hall Gerould has said that:

this magnificent if not wholly achieved and sometimes incoherent poem is a work of youth, but it could have been written only by a youth of genius. *Alastor*, let us recall, is by no means without faults of construction; and *Endymion*, as Keats was the first to discover, did not fulfil the hopes with which it had been conceived. Like *Alastor* and *Endymion*, *The Doom of a City* is a precious and beautiful work of the human imagination, which no lover of poetry can afford to ignore.²

But the poem has been ignored. Probably one of the reasons is that *The Doom of a City* can be seen as merely an unsuccessful first sketch of *The City of Dreadful Night*. Both Gerould and Paolucci speak of it as a first sketch, and Paolucci implies that its main importance in Thomson's life was that it showed him he was not yet ready to tackle such a serious theme. The experience taught him that he must read widely, write much, and live longer before he could successfully write a poem containing the statement of his beliefs about life.³ I do not wish to dispute that the earlier poem can correctly be seen as a first sketch of *The City of Dreadful Night*. Undoubtedly the underlying purpose of both poems is the same: Thomson wished to express poetically his search for the solution to the riddle of life and the solution which his search seemed to bring.
In both poems the protagonist is a lonely man walking through the street of a dark and sleeping city; in both poems there is a heartfelt sympathy for the poor, the weary, and the wretched; and in both poems the protagonist searches for the basic meaning of life. But the idea of a first sketch can be misleading. The City is not merely a revision of The Doom nor is The Doom merely a rough draft of The City. Rather they are two separate poems similar in purpose but moving in different directions and toward different answers. The Doom has its gloomy passages, but there is a pervasive optimism which finally bursts out in a ringing declaration of faith in the ultimate triumph of the Truth of the Living God—a far cry from the later declaration in The City that there is no God.

Thus in The Doom of a City Thomson's attitude is basically optimistic. He sees the evil and ugliness in the world, but as yet he has not abandoned an optimistic outlook concerning the progress and the future of mankind. He has reservations about the popular conceptions of the Judaeo-Christian God, but as yet he has not abandoned the idea of a benevolent deity. He has not yet arrived at the somber position of The City of Dreadful Night "when Faith and Love and Hope are dead indeed." It is still possible for him to follow Moses out into the desert and perhaps at a new Sinai commune with the All-knowing and bring back a new revelation, a message of hope, for a
mankind desperately in need of new hope. And in fact Thomson does follow Moses into the wilderness. The structure and imagery of the poem is based on the idea of a prophet journeying through the wilderness toward a meeting with Truth and then returning to his people with the message. Such a journey, meeting, and return is rich in historical suggestion. Jesus, St. Paul, and Mohammed, among others, thus journeyed into the wilderness before beginning their respective ministries. But the particular example Thomson had in mind was obviously that of Moses. Much of the imagery is similar to that in the books of Moses. In Part III the voice of God which rings forth comes from the cloud-consuming fire in the sky similar to the way in which the voice of God rang forth to Moses from the fiery mountain and earlier from the burning bush. The most obvious connection with Moses is found in some of the early lines of Part II where Thomson speaks of "dire Egyptian bondage" and the "Mount of God wrapt in thick clouds of thunder fire and gloom":

Some revelation from the awful Throne
Awaits me surely: if my life, torn free
From dire Egyptian bondage, has been led
In safety through the all-devouring sea;
If, lost in foodless deserts, it was fed
Though murmuring ever; hath it truly trod
Such paths for nothing? Shall it not be brought
To stand awe-stricken 'neath some Mount of God
Wrapt in thick clouds of thunder fire and gloom,
And hear the Law of Heaven by which its doom
To good or evil must be henceforth wrought?

Thomson describes this journey in four parts. First
is the exodus from the oppressive city and the voyage over the sea with its storms and monsters, each threatening to destroy him. Second is the arrival at the City of Marble set on the shore beneath the hills. Third, the judgments of God echo forth from the fiery skies and pronounce the doom of the citizens of this stony city. Finally, the poet returns to his own city full of the vision and, like an Old Testament prophet, preaching repentance.

Part I. "The Voyage"

The scene opens in that city which is the poet's home, the same city of dreadful night so vividly described in the later poem. It is a city of "dire Egyptian bondage" from which the poet's soul longs to be free. It is a city of power and tumult and toil, but most of all a city of cold loneliness, a city of "baffled longings, and starved misery." The lack of sympathy, the lack of feeling, has outraged the poet's soul with an outrage similar to that expressed nine years later when he wrote:

There were thousands and thousands of human kind
In this desert of brick and stone:
But some were deaf and some were blind,
And he was there alone.

Here in the first part of The Doom of a City Thomson speaks of the "buried City's maze of stone," "the peopling corpses" which "lie motionless within their tomb . . . and never laugh or weep," the "desert streets" where a man though surrounded by thousands is alone in a cold and impersonal
atmosphere. Even the lamps which feebly light the way increase rather than diminish the gloom. They are "like lamps sepulchral which had slowly burned through sunless ages, deep and undiscerned." Thus he pictures the funereal cold and oppressiveness of the City. It is a desert where the basic needs of the human spirit, such as love and understanding, are not to be found. The poet's sensitive soul rebels. He is driven forth from the City, "that stifling tomb":

Drove forth as one possest
To leave my kind and dare the desert sea;
To drift alone and far,
Dubious of any port or isle to gain,
Ignorant of chart and star.

Confused, ignorant of where he is going, the poet feels he must set out on "that infinite and mysterious main" in search of Truth. He must try to discover if this is really the way human life is meant to be lived. The Israelites wished to leave Egypt that they might worship their God as they ought. The poet wishes to leave the oppressive City in order to discover a God to worship. Only away from the City, away from Egypt, could either hope to reach the Holy Mountain and the confrontation with Truth.

On the dark river the poet finds his boat, a small rowboat hardly large enough to be seaworthy on the desert sea, out in "the unknown awful realm where broods Eternity." But the boat is appropriate, for the poet has run away from society. The one-man rowboat holds all the society
left, simply himself, unsheltered, unprotected, no surrounding buffer layer of human beings, all alone in the grip of vicious Nature which sends cruel storms and horrible monsters, deceitful Nature which sends rosy, peaceful dawns to trick feeble man. The day begins in beauty,

But soon—like any human life,
The golden promise of whose dawn doth fail
Into the same drear noon of barren strife
Of which our hearts were weary—sick of yore—
The day grew chill and dark.

And another storm builds up in the heavens, lashing the waves until the sea is one vast region of mountains and abysses.

But in spite of Nature's viciousness, the man survives. Something preserves him just as something preserved the Israelites in their forty-year march through the desert, their forty years of contending with poisonous snakes, plague, lack of food, lack of water. In spite of it all, they survived and went on to conquer Canaan. Our poet's journey is shorter, lasting only two nights and two days, but they are nights and days so filled with storm and fearsome monsters that the poet sinks in desperate prayer "amidst the horrors overwhelming me." The Israelites experienced the horrors of a sandy desert, our poet those of a watery desert. Thomson does not attempt to make his story consistently parallel to that of the children of Israel, but the suggestions and hints are there and contribute
a richness of association to the poem. The Israelites were completely dependent on God for their survival. Without the heavenly manna they would have starved. Without the water from the rock they would have died of thirst. Innumerable times God miraculously saved them from certain disaster. Our poet is also completely dependent on something outside himself during his voyage. "My boat and I with dizzy swiftness sped, / In strange salvation from the certain doom."

There is little he can do for himself in a rowboat in the ocean during a storm. The horrors overwhelm him and he faints, he and his boat becoming a society of two similar, inert, and seemingly lifeless bodies thrown around on the tips of the waves.

I lay in quiet mercy-granted swoon
As senseless as the boat in which I lay:
And we two things through all the agonies
Of night, tornado, sea, and fire,
Were drifted passive on our fearful way.

The poet in his boat is as passive as a note in a bottle bobbing in the water, completely dependent upon the elements of nature or perhaps upon some provident force which is saving him for an important future such as leading a new group of Israelites out from the bondage of a new Egypt.

Throughout the poem Thomson uses images of wasteland, lifelessness, and sterility in his picture of human life. Some of these images in Part I have already been cited—"buried city," "peopling corpses," "lamps sepulchral,"
"desert sea," "barren strife." There are many more. The river's "pulse had ceased to quiver" and it stretches across land consisting of "livid marshes wild and bare," "dreary flats of barren sand," "Bitter weeds," "salt slime," "barren main"—all is sterile wasteland.

Part II. "The City"

At the dying of the second day the poet's boat enters the harbor of the city which the guiding Force has settled on as his destination. It is set amongst lush green foliage and beneath "amber-vested hills." Above stand "Grand marble palaces and temples, crowned/ With golden domes and radiant towers and spires"—truly a magnificent city, but deathly still. The pervading mystery of silence and the miraculous survival of the poet from the horror-haunted sea voyage combine to evoke in his mind the certainty that he has been preserved for a purpose. "Some revelation from the awful Throne/ Awaits me surely."18 Certainly he is to stand beneath the Mount of God and hear the Law of Heaven.

As he walks from the harbor and approaches the City, the poet's attention is caught by the sad sight of a funeral group complete with dead maiden, mournful lover, reverend priest, and flower-strewing attendants. He approaches, deeply moved by their sorrow and silence, particularly that of the youth, when suddenly struck with
cold amazement, he sees that what he had mistaken for real human sorrow is actually only sculptured marble. All—"the maidens meek with bated breath," the priest, the youth, and the girl he mourned—"All save the flowers, the withered flowers alone,/ Were carven weirdly in unconscious stone." What strange people, asks the poet, would set such a scene "of Life in solemn conference with Death" at the entrance of their fair city? What sort of people? The poet soon finds his answer. This city of grand marble palaces is in fact what his native city was in metaphor—a city of "Mausolean loneliness," a "City of the Dead." The trees are green, the fountains are plashing, in the market place are "Jewels and silks and golden ornaments,/ Rich perfumes soul-in-soul of all rare scents," but it is all a wild mockery, for the people are marble—cold, unfeeling, dead marble. The imagery of lifelessness and sterility becomes horribly vivid—"Dead stone sentries stony-eyed," "Dim stony merchants holding forth rich wares," and "Fair statues leaning over balconies,/ Whose bosoms made the bronze and marble chill."

The whole vast sea of life about me lay,
The passionate, heaving, restless, sounding life,
With all its tides and billows, foam and spray,
Arrested in full tumult of its strife
Frozen into a nightmare's ghastly death,
Struck silent from its laughter and its moan;
The vigorous heart and brain and blood and breath
Stark, strangled, coffined in eternal stone.

The poet searches the City and then turns to the
Palace:
The Palace gates indeed stand open wide:
Perchance the stately sepulchre may hide
Some single life amidst the desolation,
Preserved alone in mystical salvation,
Entranced apart in holy contemplation?23

But the ghostly echoes awoken by his feet are just that—
ghostly echoes, and the Palace is indeed a stately
sepulchre. The horror of the ghastly atmosphere, "the
chemistry of terror" works upon the poet's soul:

Better, far better that the air be rife
With weird deliriums of demoniac life,
Than void with utter idiotic death.24

Finally he reaches a lofty, secluded turret, the ivory
tower where the sage dwelt alone, yet not alone, in seeming
solitude that he might the better from a distance view
general life. The Sage, the light and hope of the ages,
the one who hands on "the torch of Wisdom, bright/ With
growing splendour, 'thwart the billowy night/ Of shoreless
Ignorance."25 Surely here if anywhere will be hope and
life preserved. But unfortunately the secluded Sage has
not been preserved from the petrifying fate of his fellow
citizens. He too is stone.

The manuscript of the Sage lies open before him, and
the poet reads. It contains the Sage's answer to the
question of life. "This glorious universe shall live for
ever;/ By all decay and death diminished never."26
Moreover, the earth is young, and man is young with her,
and she opens her heart to man, imparting her dearest
secrets to him, "to Man, her Lord." Sounding like an overly optimistic Victorian the Sage had written:

"How blest are we all previous men above,
Born in this Spring of her millennial Youth!—
O gracious Truth, divine and tranquil Truth,
As I long years have worshipped only Thee,
Thou hast at length unveiled Thy face to me,
That I may ever of Thy priesthood be!" 27

This is too much for the poet. The marble Sage with his idiotic grin shows too clearly the irony of the last lines. It is too horrible. Better for the Sage had he mingled with general life if in his "holy contemplation" he could arrive at nothing better than this deluding, false wisdom. The lone Sage does not have the answer to life. Of all the figures in the City, he is probably the most pitiful.

The poet had felt alone in his native city, but here in the City of Marble he discovers what true loneliness is. Here with the Sage his last hope of finding life is gone and he discovers that "this is Solitude, O dreadful Lord!"

My spirit starves in this abysmal air—
Of every human word,
Of sigh and moan, of music and of prayer,
Of passionate heart-beats felt though never heard,
So utterly stript bare. 28

All human life has been transformed into cold marble.
"The Soul is murdered," but by some mystery of fate, the "fadeless corpse whose perfect form is rife/ With ghastly affectations of true life" 29 still exists. In this dreadful solitude, in this mysteriously inverted order where the immortal is dead and the mortal lives on, the poet comes
to realize the importance of the "cords of sympathy which should have bound me/ In sweet communion with earth's brotherhood" and to lament the fact that they had not bound him, that he had retreated into himself, that "I shut myself up from the lives around me,/ Eating my own foul heart—envenomed food." The experience in the Marble City has taught him a lesson. Never again will he despise his fellow men. He is now ready to hear the judgments of God, to learn the law of heaven, and then to return to his native city with a new realization of the importance of life and a new concern for humanity. Humanity may often seem insensible and even unconscious, but it is not stone.

Part III. "The Judgments"

From the deathly solitude and silence of the Sage's chamber there is an abrupt transition to the noise and tumult and reawakening life which heralds the coming actions of the God who will not leave his creation in its stony predicament.

A multitudinous roaring of the ocean!
Voices of sudden and earth-quaking thunder
From the invisible mountains!

Throughout the Mausolean City spread
Drear palpitations, long-drawn moan and sigh;
And then—an overwhelming whirlwind blast?
Or else, indeed, the irrepressible cry
Of all its statues waking up aghast?
Doth God in final Judgment come thus heralded?

God does come thus, and the poet is brought to stand beneath the Mount of God as from the fiery sky God passes
sentence on the statues and consumes those whose virtues have not redeemed their time. The awesome Voice speaks from the sky, a Voice "of thunder-dreadfulness," a trumpet Voice from "fold on fold of massy thundercloud/ Intensely burning down with steadfast might."\textsuperscript{33} The fiery aspect of the sky is reiterated--"That cloud-consuming fire still held the sky,"\textsuperscript{34} and "Once more that fire possessing sole the sky."\textsuperscript{35} Such imagery is highly suggestive of the Old Testament pictures of God meeting with and speaking to man. For example:

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. . . . And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.\textsuperscript{36}

The first judgment is pronounced by a stern and terrifyingly unimpassioned Voice:

\texttt{"When all the wine is poisoned it must be Destroyed utterly; The vessels also which contained it must Be burned and ground to dust."}\textsuperscript{37}

In the Bible are depicted two co-existent pictures of God--God as the stern Judge and God as the heavenly Father. Thus there is the God who said in the days of Noah, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the
air, for I am sorry that I have made them." There is
the God of Moses who said, "I the Lord your God am a
jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon
the children to the third and the fourth generation of
those who hate me." It is the voice of this judging God
which reverberates throughout the City of Marble. The
effect is instantaneous. The condemned statues shudder.
They rebel against the Voice. "Abominable Fate,/ We
hurl thee back thy hate!" You created us, they argue.
Therefore you are to blame. But to no avail. The
inexorable doom descends upon them as a black cloud of
"intolerable fire" which consumes them. "The uttered
condemnation had been wrought/ Upon the ruined fragments,—
they were naught."

This first judgment destroys only a portion of the
stony crowd—those whose lives had been vessels of poison.
The second judgment is pronounced against those "sapless
trees" who have borne neither flowers nor fruit, those
"whose virtue cannot pay their life's expense," who
have wasted their lives in idle and profitless sensations
and thoughts. Another judgment is pronounced upon that
group which has had riches and power but has proved "unjust
and proud" and has "spent its treasures/ On selfish pomps
and pleasures." All those condemned by these judgments
crumble into dust and are consumed by fire:

Inexorably swift it streamed and poured
A red-fire deluge from that cloud on high,
Which drowned the City and the multitude,
Devouring all the space from hills to sea,
Hissing and roaring the resistless flood
Plunged through the trembling earth, in haste to flee
With its vast ravage; and the earth gaped wide
To swallow in that cup of wrath amain.

The parallel to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is obvious. Another interesting parallel in Biblical imagery is the description of the punishment of the rebels led against Moses by Dathan and Abiram:

... the ground under them split asunder;
and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up... So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly... and the fire came forth from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men offering incense.

During these judgments the poet has not been simply a passive spectator but has felt a personal involvement. When the black burning cloud descended on the City, he noted that "its black oppression burned throughout my frame." Now when the fire passes away, he opens his eyes and is relieved to note that a remnant is still standing. The fire in the sky has faded considerably, but the Voice speaks forth once more. This remnant has not been perfect either. They have lagged when they should have traveled on, they have stopped "to sport with idlers," they have lacked the courage to try the "lone paths steep and drear." They humbly plead for mercy, and God listens. Instead of fire descending to consume them, there is an inundation
of the ocean. When the flood subsides, the statues still stand, but all other signs of the City are gone.

Had that swift deluge been the stream of Time,
And every billow some vast age sublime,
Erasure had been scarcely more complete.

Thus some of the statues have survived and have been purged both by fire and water. These two elements from antiquity have been associated with purging. In the time of Noah water purged the earth from the pervading evil of man and preserved the one good man and his family alone. Later the ceremonial washings of the Hebrews and the Christian sacrament of baptism further recognized and reinforced the symbolic cleansing quality of water. Concerning fire, God manifested himself in this form in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament the Holy Spirit appeared as tongues of fire on the heads of the disciples. Jesus brought these two images together when he said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The remaining statues have been born anew of water and the Spirit. It is now time for God to show his other side, that of the loving Father who adds to the pronouncements of the jealous God, "but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." Time for the skies, now clear and radiant, to open and reveal "the vision of the Living God."
Once more a Voice descended vast and lone,
The Voice of Infinite Love Omnipotent;
Sweeter than life or death, it swelled and blent
The Universe all tuned into one tone.50

The poet notices "how a gradual change beatified the
statues." These are the soldiers who have fought the
good fight, have been purged, born anew, and now are assured
of their reward.

The vision of the Living God is too splendid for the
poet's mortal eyes. It leaves him lying on the ground,
"ravished and blind," in a mystical ecstasy, in direct
contact with divine truth. Such an intense experience,
of course, must soon pass. The statue people have lived
their lives and been judged and now may enter into the
paradise prepared for them, but the poet has yet his life
to live, his destiny to fulfill, before he can become
permanently purged and permanently united with the One.
The Voice ebbs away and the poet must come back to the
world of flesh.

And when it ebbed it left my shrinking soul
To shudder back into its cave of clay,
Blind, hopeless, one dead atom fallen astray
From vital union in and with the Whole.

O Life! this is thy deepest woe of all--
That as a soul regains its heaven of birth,
The body drags it swooning back to earth,
Stunned, hopeless, blind with its tremendous fall.51

Moses cannot stay on top of Mt. Sinai forever. The heavenly
vision fades. He must return to his people, and likely
as not he will find them treacherously worshiping some golden calf. But the inspiration remains, and he does have a message for the people, faithless though they are. "Night is past! Arouse ye dreamers, to the day and foe!"52

Men are beset by many obstacles and stumbling blocks. But as they persevere and overcome these obstacles, they grow, they progress. The struggle becomes a blessing.

Life is only by perpetual on-flowing; Torpid rest is the true life-devouring death; Through stern struggles all things ever are up-growing; Sighs and moanings prove a vital-throbbing breath.

Finite souls and all things live by progress solely, All are but what they do.53

The poet has seen a promising new dawn. He has seen the regeneration of creatures "born anew in perfect birth!"

This view sounds more like the general Victorian optimism about science and progress than like the "laureate of pessimism." Apparently in 1857 Thomson still believed he could salvage and hang on to an optimistic faith in the progress and ultimate triumph of humanity. About thirteen years later he was ready to write a new message for mankind. It was still a message of hope but in a quite different sense. Whereas in this early poem he finds hope in the onward struggle and consequent spiritual growth, in the 1870's his message became:

My Brother, my poor Brothers, it is thus; This life itself holds nothing good for us, But it ends soon and nevermore can be;
I ponder these thoughts and they comfort me. 54

Part IV. "The Return"

The vision is over, the wisdom has been caught, and the poet must return to his people. The aftermath of the spiritual ecstasy is a peaceful, pleasant, almost trance-like state and a feeling of warm well-being as the poet drifts home on the quiet seas in his little boat. His mind is at ease, and with no storms speeding him on, the voyage passes slowly through eight days. In this section the images are not of sterility and death but of fulfillment and life—"Long nights which did those days fulfil, / As some sweet girl a fervent youth"; Time set in the sky the sun, moon, and stars and "made thereby/ A marriage-ring of blissful boon"; and Nature seemed to dream "Of all the Spring and Summer toil/ Her children were about to reap,---/ The wealth of corn and wine and oil." 55

This passage is a good one for showing Thomson's musical skill and poetic ability in closely joining rhythm, rhyme, and careful word choice to his meaning. Throughout are found such adjectives as "tranquil," "dreamful," "autumnal," "silent," and "sleeping," which do much to evoke the light, airy, pleasurable atmosphere of the section. Adding a hypnotic effect are the seven six-line stanzas of almost perfectly regular iambic pentameter, each stanza ending with a similar couplet—"While day by day in dreamful
We glided o'er the glistening seas, "With which in ever-dreamful ease/ We floated o'er the happy seas," "As day and night in dreamful ease/ We floated o'er the solemn seas." The obvious alliteration of "s's" also adds to the dominant mood of pleasurable silence and hypnotic enchantment. The alliteration, the rhythm, and the concluding couplets reflect the monotony of the sea, but it is not an oppressive monotony. In its sameness the sea is always changing, and in their sameness the concluding couplets also show a continual change. The whole section adds up to a glistening, glimmering, silent, happy, sleeping, solemn, tranced experience. Thomson concludes:

I lay in one long trance of rest
And contemplation,—free from thought
Of Future issue, worst or best
To be from Past and Present wrought:
While day and night in dreamful ease
We glided o'er the tranced seas."

But finally the City looms up on the horizon, and the poet knows the dream must end.

Before me, in the drowsy night outspread,
The City whence in anguish I had fled
A vast dark Shadow loomed:
So still, so black, it gloomed,
It seemed the darkness of a great abyss
Gulfed in a desert bare."

It is still an oppressive city to the poet, still a wasteland. As he comes closer "the very air appeared no longer free,/ But dense and sultry." He does not wish to leave his boat and his new-found vision of God, and yet the nature of the vision demands that he must. He has a
message for these people.

The burden of the message I had brought
From that great City far across the sea
Lay heavy on my soul.60

He has been entrusted with the duty of a prophet, but
he is an unwilling prophet—a Jonah hating to go to Nineveh,
a Moses feeling inadequate and saying, "Oh, my Lord, send,
I pray, some other person."61 The poet longs for the
peace of death, but it is not his time. His purpose in
life is yet unfulfilled. The Lord had said to the fainting
Moses, "Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth
and teach you what you shall speak."62 So also the Spirit
inspires the poet and, as with all true prophets, it is
not the voice of the poet which speaks, but that of the
Spirit speaking through him.

That Spirit which will never be withstood
Came down and shook and seized and lifted me,—
As men uplift a passive instrument
Through which to breathe whatever fits their mood,
And through my lips with irrepressible might
Poured forth its own stern language on the night.63

The following speech, or sermon, which concludes the
poem, is in the true spirit of an Old Testament prophet—
a Jeremiah, Hosea, or Amos crying woe unto the people
unless they repent. Hosea brings the message that because
of their iniquity God will destroy the people of Israel.
But it is not too late yet, he indicates, as he exclaims,
"Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have
stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you words
and return to the Lord; say to him, 'Take away all
iniquity.' Likewise the inspired poet says to the
wealthy, proud, and confident City,

Repent, reform, or perish! the Ages cry unto thee:
Listen, oh listen, ere yet it be late, thou
swarthy Queen of the Sea!

The City is wealthy and great, a modern Babylon, but also
like Babylon it is selfish and has misused its blessings
so that now they have become curses. From those who have
been given much, much is expected. The long list of
indictments flows smoothly from the poet's mouth:

"Thy heritage vast and rich is ample to clothe
and feed
The whole of thy millions of children beyond all
real need;
But thy chief social laws seem strictly framed to
secure
That one be corruptingly rich, another bitterly
poor. . . .

"The mass of thy rulers live with scarcely one
noble aim
Scarcely one clear desire for a not inglorious
fame; . . .

"Thy flaring streets each night affront the patient
skies
With an holocaust of woes, sins, lusts and
blasphemies;
So dreadful, that thou thyself must sometimes look
for the fire
That rained from heaven on Sodom to make thee
one funeral pyre.

"Thy Church has long been becoming the Fossil of
a Faith;
The Form of dry bones thou hast, but where are
the blood and breath?
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
While He lived He fought with sin, with fleshly lust and pride;
While He lived His poor and mean were wealthy and dignified;
While He lived His reign was freedom, faith, chastity, peace and love;
And the symbol borne on His banner was not the raven but dove; .

Then comes a list of denunciations in the Biblical form of "woe unto you."

Woe to thy pampered rich in their arrogant selfishness;
Woe to thy brutelike poor who feel but their bread-distress;
Woe to thy people who dare not live without hope of wealth,
Woe to thy rulers who rule for the good of themselves alone,
Fathers who give their children crying for bread a stone;
Woe to thy prophets who smile Peace, Peace, when it is a sword;

The conclusion is a ringing statement of belief in a Living God who purges the world and destroys all that is false.

For the earth is pervaded wholly, through densest stone and clod,
With the burning fire of the law of the Truth of the living God;
Consuming the falsehood, the evil, the pride, the lust, the shame,
With ever-burning, unrelenting, irresistible flame;
Until all save the purest spirit, eternal, of truth and love,
Be altogether consumed away, beneath as well as above.

And thus Thomson ends this, his first major attempt to formulate a creed, optimistically looking forward to paradise regained, to the ultimate triumph of Good. He has taken
his hint from Moses, has tried to construct his own religious allegory, and has freighted it with Biblical imagery. He has journeyed into the wilderness, has had a mystical meeting with Truth, and has returned with a message for his people.

That Thomson yearned for an optimistic hope, that he wished to believe that behind the world was a divine plan and that everything ultimately would work for the good, is clear. That he sincerely believed this when he wrote *The Doom of a City* is less clear. Imogene Walker says of the sections stating his belief that "the tone . . . is forced, over-insistent, and the language is not his own but that of the pulpit and hymnbook. One feels no sincerity in the passages." And the imagery is that of the Bible, we might add. But Thomson has not merely paraphrased the book of Exodus or the hymnbook. What he has borrowed he has made his own and has woven into his own allegorical search. Yet in the light of Thomson’s later works we may very well feel that Imogene Walker is right, that Thomson was passing through a struggle between belief and despair, that he was desperately trying to persuade himself of the truth of his belief but not altogether succeeding. That he had doubts even at this time about the importance of man and the existence of a loving, sympathetic God is brought out when the poet, standing in the City of Marble, says to the earth:
Canst Thou still leap forth and run, glory-speeded round the Sun,
0 Thou Niobe of World-stars, with Thy fairest and Thy best—
With Thy vigorous youthful darling lying stone-cold on Thy breast!

It seemed to make no difference that man, the jewel of creation, was dead. This sceptical attitude was the one which was to prevail and which in the long run was deeper and more sincere than the statement of belief in the "burning fire of the Truth of the Living God." The later Thomson, who charged Pascal with sophistry and self-deception in his religious beliefs, must have considered The Doom also to be full of sophistries and self-deception, which may have been one reason why he had to write The City of Dreadful Night. But at the time he wrote The Doom, certainly he was sincere in his struggle, sincere in wanting to believe.
III. RECURRING THEMES

Although Thomson's thoughts grew and developed throughout his career and sometimes changed considerably, many of the themes, ideas, and images used in *The Doom of a City* continue to occupy an important place in his thought. The City, the wasteland, sleeplessness, the death of a young girl, the yearning for faith, these are some of the topics which troubled and fascinated Thomson throughout his life, and all are found in *The Doom of a City*. Again and again Thomson returned to consider further some idea he had expressed in *The Doom*. In this chapter I intend to discuss and trace the use and development of these recurring themes.

A. The City

Most obvious among these recurring topics is the City. Having lived most of his life in London, he knew city life well. He was intimately acquainted with the paradox of being surrounded by millions of people and yet being absolutely, painfully alone. He knew the squalor of the less desirable sections of London, for he lived in them. He felt the ugliness, dirtiness, darkness, and monotony of the city streets. He was oppressed by the absurd hurry, the competitive ruthlessness, and the mechanical lives of his fellow citizens, the
scarcity of a smile or a friendly face. The City swallowed up the people, took away their lives, and turned them into unthinking cogs in the mighty machinery of industrial life. The City was depressing.

In contrast to the City was the country, which stimulated him with its beauty and vigor. Its attraction for Thomson appears in a letter written from an army camp in Ireland:

> It is good to get out here from a town. The sky is seen, not in patches, but broad, complete, and sea-like; the distance where low blue hills float in the horizon is also sea-like, and the uncorrupted air sweeps over us broad and free as an ocean.

At the time Thomson was an army schoolmaster, but this career was to end abruptly in 1862, and from then on his life was spent mainly in London earning an unreliable and poor income by writing for obscure publications such as the *National Reformer* and *Cope's Tobacco Plant*. In 1872 when the Champion Gold and Silver Company sent him to oversee their operations in Central City, Colorado, there was a short escape to the vigor of the American frontier. He was fascinated by the vast country and its great potential, but was recalled to London in little more than six months. On his return he wrote:

> I enjoyed my trip to America very much, and should like to be sent out there again. If I were only about twenty years old, or if, old as I am, I had a good trade, I would certainly emigrate and become a citizen of the free and enlightened Republic.
He wasn't twenty years old and his trade seemed insecure even in London, and so he was ensnared ever more securely by the City. There was one other brief escape, this time to Spain to report on the civil war, but the lazy Spaniards did not attend to their fighting, and Thomson was soon recalled because of lack of copy. Imogene Walker comments that "it was as though the City were reaching with long tentacles, even to Spain, to torment him and drag him back."5

With such a background it is not surprising that Thomson often writes of the City. In the previous chapter I have already discussed the use of the City in The Doom. The city from which the poet flees is a city of "Egyptian bondage," a mighty, cold, corpse-like city. The city he comes to is one in which the people actually have been transformed into the cold, dead marble of which the people of his own city only seemed to be made. The lack of sympathetic feeling in the city, the loneliness, the inability to communicate, this is all very vividly felt in the City of Marble. The same loneliness is expressed in "William Blake," a poem of 1866. William Blake came to "the desert of London town," but although "there were thousands and thousands of human kind," they were not interested in him or his work. "Some were deaf and some were blind,/ And he was there alone."

At length the good hour came; he died
As he had lived, alone;
He was not missed from the desert wide,
Perhaps he was found at the Throne.6
A similar but more bleak description of the City's loneliness is found in "In the Room." Here is described one of the dingy, depressing rooms of the London where poor people like James Thomson lived. The ancient, decaying pieces of furniture discuss their sad condition, complain about the poverty of the present tenant, and finally are shocked by the bed's announcement that the corpse of the man is lying on it. "It lay, the he become now it." In this curious reversal the man becomes the inanimate object and the inanimate objects become alive. There is no one among the thousands of the City to mourn the man except the pieces of furniture, and their grief is mainly selfish, for they

Were old and worn, and knew what curse
Of violent change death often brings,
From good to bad, from bad to worse.

The City's loneliness and despair is most fully described in The City of Dreadful Night. It is a dark and dreary place. "The City is of Night; perchance of Death, / But certainly of Night" are the opening lines. Then in lines which recall the opening of The Doom, Thomson describes the funereal atmosphere of the City:

The street-lamps burn amidst the baleful glooms,
   Amidst the soundless solitudes immense
Of ranged mansions dark and still as tombs.

As in The Doom, the feeble street-lamps only add to the dreariness of the atmosphere. The description of the people also recalls The Doom, for these inhabitants are stony-
faced and lack vitality. They have "worn faces that look
dead and blind/ Like tragic masks of stone."\textsuperscript{11} These are
people of despair, people for whom rich life is impossible.
"They leave behind all hope who enter there."\textsuperscript{12} It is a
dark, cold city. Any hope there may be is not in life but in death.

That the country had quite a different effect on
Thomson's spirit is shown by two poems written under its
influence, \textit{Sunday at Hampstead} and \textit{Sunday up the River}.
These poems celebrate an escape from the depressing City:

\begin{quote}
Away to the green, green country,
Under the open sky;
Where the earth's sweet breath is incense
And the lark sings psalms on high.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Under the influence of the "green, green country" and the
"open sky," cares and depression are forgotten, the poet's
soul soars to heights of happiness, and he says:

\begin{quote}
Let my voice ring out and over the earth,
Through all the grief and strife,
With a golden joy in a silver mirth:
Thank God for Life!\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

In this joyful day of rest out in nature, London and its
machinery are almost forgotten; they seem far away both
in time and place.

\begin{quote}
Was it hundreds of years ago, my Love,
Was it thousands of miles away,
That two poor creatures we know, my Love,
Were toiling day by day;
Were toiling weary, weary,
With many myriads more,
In a City dark and dreary
On a sullen river's shore?
\end{quote}
Was it truly a fact or a dream, my Love?
I think my brain still reels,
And my ears still throbbing seem, my Love,
With the rush and the clang of wheels;
Of a vast machinery roaring
For ever in skyless gloom;
Where the poor slaves peace imploring,
Found peace alone in the tomb.\textsuperscript{15}

The City is a place of "rush and clang of wheels,/ Of a vast machinery roaring." The reality of the City is still inhuman, but out in the country one can almost forget it for a while.

B. The Wasteland

Any study of the City in Thomson's poetry inevitably leads to a consideration of wasteland, for the two are very closely connected. For Thomson the City is a place where human beings are starved from lack of sympathy and understanding. Thus images of sterility and lifelessness abound in descriptions of the City. In \textit{The Doom of a City}, the streets are "desert streets"; the City is a "maze of stone." In fleeing from the City, the poet must cross "livid marshes wild and bare," "dreary flats of barren sand," "lethal waste." When he arrives at the City of Marble, he finds it set among lush greenery but all human life is dead as stone. In the poem "William Blake" the same desert-like aspect of the City is stressed. "He came to the desert of London town" is repeated in the first line of each of the first two stanzas. In the third stanza is found, "In this desert of brick and stone," and in the fourth stanza, "He was not
missed from the desert wide."

Because of the contact with the enervating atmosphere of the City, life itself often comes to resemble a desert. In "To Our Ladies of Death," the poet speaks of being

Weary of erring in this desert Life,
Weary of hoping hopes for ever vain,
Weary of struggling in all-sterile strife. 17

In a poem of 1878 entitled "Songs of the Desert," Thomson writes of his life in the wasteland:

Songs in the Desert! songs of husky breath
And undivine despair;
Songs that are Dirges, but for Life, not Death,
Songs that infect the air;
Have sweetened bitterly my food and wine,
The heart corroded and the Dead Sea brine. 18

The City encourages death rather than life. Life in it is difficult and disappointing, and yet something usually keeps men living. For Thomson this something is the power of songs, and he comments that "the magic of their music, might, and light/ Can keep one living in his own despite." 19

Much of the dreadfulness and loneliness of The City of Dreadful Night is aroused by Thomson's use of wasteland imagery. As in The Doom, a person has to travel through marsh land and barren sand flats in either entering or leaving the City. On the City's south and west "waste marshes shine and glister to the moon," "a trackless wilderness rolls north and west," and to the east is the ocean. 20 Thus the one who arrived in the City could say over and over, "As I came through the desert thus it was,/


As I came through the desert. Once in the City the traveler finds that it is a place of death also. The soil is infertile as in the desert and nothing healthy can grow. A church lifts its tower in the sky, "a black mass in the gloom." Surrounding it are gravestones. The church is now a dead monument to a faith that once was alive, and the cemetery once called "God's-acre" is now "corruption's sty." The atmosphere is full of poison. "Here Faith died, poisoned by this charnel air." So also Love died in the poison of the City, and Hope, too, "starved out in its utmost lair." "So faith, hope, love abide, these three," wrote St. Paul, but for the inhabitants of the City of Dreadful Night this trinity of blessings has been choked to death in the desert air. There is no hope but to accept the poison and hope it will do its work quickly. Yet men still attempt other solutions. One man thinks he can retrace his steps through the desert of life and, following a golden thread, return to baby innocence and joy:

... It leads me back 
   From this accursed night without a morn, 
   And through the deserts which have else no track, 
   And through vast wastes of horror-haunted time, 
   To Eden innocence in Eden's clime.

But why seek to escape the desert through the door of the womb when the door of death is so close?

The true lord of this desert is described in the penultimate section of the poem. It is the sphinx, the cold stone which outlasts the angel, the warrior, and the
unarmed man, taking no notice of the passing of any. This monster is appropriately lord of the desert, for he is majestic, cold, and unconscious.

Wasteland imagery also finds its way into "Insomnia," but here it is used to describe the nightmare horror of the exhausted body which cannot sleep, rather than the social conditions of the City. Each hour is described symbolically as a journey down a deep ravine and then up the other side, climbing over "tangled root and rock—jut sharp" until the insomniac lies "upon the ridge of arid sand and gravel," and the bells chime the next hour. So the night passes.

C. Insomnia

The City is of night, but it is also of sleeplessness, and the sleeplessness is a major factor in its dreadfulness. As early as his twenty-third year Thomson clearly was thinking of insomnia in connection with the City. The poet of The Doom leaves the City at night when others are asleep:

But sleep and sleep's rich dreams were not for me,
For me, accurst, whom terror and the pain
Of baffled longings, and starved misery,
And such remorse as sears the breast,
And hopeless doubt which gnaws the brain
Till wildest action blind and vain
Would be more welcome than supine unrest.27

The "baffled longings," "starved misery," "remorse," and "hopeless doubt" deprive the poet of rest and drive him
forth on the quest for Truth.

The man of "In the Room" is also an insomniac. In their complainings, the pieces of furniture mention his odd sleeping habits. The mirror says:

*It is so many hours ago--
The lamp and fire were both alight--
I saw him pacing to and fro,
Perturbing restlessly the night.*

The table says, "He wrote so long/ That I grew weary of his weight,"* and the mirror again speaks out comparing the man with a previous tenant:

*She did not sit hours stark and dumb
As pale as moonshine by the lamp;
To lie in bed when day was come,
And leave us curtained chill and damp.
She slept away the dreary dark,
And rose to greet the pleasant morn.*

The City of Dreadful Night describes a city of such insomniacs, the ones who tread its lonely streets, "wander, wander,/ Or sit foredone and desolately ponder/ Through sleepless hours with heavy drooping head." Or as Thomson says in the first section:

*The City is of Night, but not of Sleep;
There sweet sleep is not for the weary brain;
The pitiless hours like years and ages creep,
A night seems termless hell. This dreadful strain
Of thought and consciousness which never ceases,
Or which some moments' stupor but increases,
This, worse than woe, makes wretches there insane.*

Perhaps one of these sleepless ones might achieve a single night of peaceful rest and then awaken to a bright, new morning, a world new-born. "He scarce can believe the blissful change," and vows the poison of the City of
Dreadful Night will never reach him again. He doesn't realize that the insomniac can never escape his doom.

"Poor wretch! who once hath paced that dolent city/ Shall pace it often, doomed beyond all pity." The sleepless man must "dree his weird."32

Man in his fancy has pictured Time as having quick wings, but not the insomniac. For the citizen of the City of Dreadful Night, Thomson has another image. Time does not fly but

* * * crawleth like a monstrous snake,
Wounded and slow and very venomous;
Which creeps blindwormlike round the earth and ocean,
Distilling poison at each painful motion,
And seems condemned to circle ever thus.33

Other men may lament the swift passage of Time, but the insomniac says:

0 length of the intolerable hours,
0 nights that are as aeons of slow pain,
0 Time, too ample for our vital powers,
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
Not of your speed and variance we complain.34

All the weary wanderers in this City are seeking rest. Except in death the search seems fruitless.

One of the last poems Thomson wrote is the one entitled "Insomnia." Here he describes with a great vividness the night of the insomniac. In the first two stanzas he describes the attitude toward night of his more fortunate friends. One by one they leave the room in "calm assurance," looking forward to a night

Just weary enough to nestle softly, sweetly, into divine unconsciousness, completely
Delivered from the world of toil and care and strife.

Just weary enough to feel assured of rest,
Of Sleep's divine oblivion and repose,
Renewing heart and brain for richer zest
Of waking life when golden morning glows. 35

But these are the fortunate, healthy ones. For the infinitely weary poet there is no such sweet deliverance. His mood is in sharp contrast to theirs, and he is the last to leave the room. As he goes to his "drear bed," he feels as if he were in a tomb among the peaceful dead, all enjoying restful oblivion except him alone, who is doomed to an eternity of painful consciousness. The poet closes his eyes, but he is aware of the "dark Presence" watching by his bed. It is the hour with wings folded. The poet pleads with the hour to unfold its wings, but the hour answers:

"My wings shall open when your eyes shall close
In real slumber from this waking drear;
Your wild unrest is my enforced repose;
Ere I move hence you must not know me here." 36

And so the poet faces the night devoid of the hope of rest and quick passage. It stretches before him

* * * an immense
Black waste of ridge-walls, hour by hour apart,
Dividing deep ravines: from ridge to ridge
Sleep's flying hour was an aërial bridge;
But I, whose hours stood fast,
Must climb down painfully each steep side hither,
And climb more painfully each steep side thither,
And so make one hour's span for years of travail last. 37

Agonizingly he climbs down and up three of the steep ravines, but when the fifth hour comes he has reached the point of the protagonist in The Doom of a City when "wildest action
blind and vain/ Would be more welcome than supine unrest." No longer can he remain "supine in mockery of blissful sleep." He must get up and "move through the unmoving hours."

Of all worst agonies the most unblest
Is passive agony of wild unrest:
Trembling and faint I rose,
And dressed with painful efforts, and descended
With furtive footsteps and with breath suspended,
And left the slumbering house with my unslumbering woes.  

D. Death Wish

From the wish for sleep it is a short distance to the wish for death. As the insomnia becomes more intense, so does the desire for peaceful rest, until death may finally seem the best answer. In The Doom of a City, the poet realizes that his return will involve him once again in the aimless activity and strife of his native city. It is likely again to cause deep unrest, and the thought depresses him. The peace of Death looks very inviting. But Death's blessing is not yet to be his:

Death passed his hand across my brow; but went
To lay its plenary pressure on some heart
That throbbed true life—"for this poor pulse,"
thought he,
"Is not worth quelling"—I watched him depart
Bearing all peace with him.

The poet is not left in an intolerable situation, however, for he does have a message for his people and he is assisted by "that Spirit which will never be withstood." In contrast, the troubled soul of "In the Room" has no such comfort and no such assurance of the value of his own life. He chooses
suicide. As he swallows the poison he says,

Thus ends barren strife:
0 sweeter, thou cold wine of death,
Than ever sweet warm wine of life.41

In "A Requiem," a short poem dated a year later than The Doom of a City, Thomson celebrates the peace of the grave. To a friend who is dead he says, "Thou hast lived in pain and woe," but now "Thou art sheltered in the grave." For long years you have borne the burden of life's wilderness, but now "Thine is quiet in the grave." In the final stanza Thomson turns to the unhappy lot of those still living as he changes the pronoun from second person singular to first person plural:

We must toil with pain and care,
We must front tremendous Fate,
We must fight with dark despair:
Thou dost dwell in solemn state,
Couched triumphant, calm and brave,
In the ever-holy grave.42

"To Our Ladies of Death" contains a similar wish for the peace of Death. It is an invocation to the bringer of peaceful oblivion:

Weary of erring in this desert Life,
Weary of hoping hopes for ever vain,
Weary of struggling in all-sterile strife,
Weary of thought which maketh nothing plain,
I close my eyes and calm my panting breath,
And pray to Thee, O ever-quiet Death!
To come and soothe away my bitter pain.43

It is not for the Christian death which frees the soul from the earth-bound body, although he admits the attraction of such death, nor is it for annihilation that he prays; it
is for that "retired nun and throneless queen,/ Our Lady of Oblivion," who is the real bringer of peace, who picks up in her arms "the weak, the weary, and the desolate" and in her hidden dreamland "Dost lay them, shrouded in eternal rest."  

O sweetest Sister, and sole Patron Saint  
Of all the humble eremites who flee  
From out life's crowded tumult, stunned and faint,  
To seek a stern and lone tranquility  
In Libyan wastes of time: my hopeless life  
With famished yearning craveth rest from strife;  
Therefore, thou Restful One, I call on Thee!  

In "Insomnia" the poet inevitably considers death as a solution as he climbs down and up the ravines which separate the hours. At the third ravine the poet, too weary to put his wish into effect, desires that "I might rush down sharply hurled/ From rock to rock until a mangled corse" which would sink to the depths of the ocean, "Beneath all surface storm calm in Eternity."  

Once through the ravine and again on the ridge of the striking hour, the poet is aware of the "Image of the Fifth Hour" near his bed, but behind this is another shadow, the shadow of Death,  

Pregnant with overpowering fascination,  
Commanding by repulsive instigation,  
Despair's envenomed anodyne to tempt the Soul.  

The City of Dreadful Night expresses Thomson's most complete acceptance of death as the anodyne for despair.  

There is  

One anodyne for torture and despair;  
The certitude of Death, which no reprieve  
Can put off long; and which, divinely tender,
But waits the outstretched hand to promptly render
That draught whose slumber nothing can bereave.43

To this Thomson adds a footnote: "Though the Garden of thy
Life be wholly waste, the sweet flowers withered, the
fruit-trees barren, over its wall hang ever the rich dark
clusters of the Vine of Death, within easy reach of thy
hand, which may pluck of them when it will."49 And later
the minister in the cathedral in preaching his "Good tidings
of great joy" says:

O Brothers of sad lives! they are so brief;
A few short years must bring us all relief:
Can we not bear these years of labouring breath?
But if you would not this poor life fulfil,
Lo, you are free to end it when you will,
Without the fear of waking after death.—50

In his further wanderings the poet comes to the "River of
the Suicides," so named

For night by night some lorn wretch overweary,
And shuddering from the future yet more dreary,
Within its cold secure oblivion hides.51

No one tries to save these poor souls, for all realize
that they themselves may soon wish to seek peace and "refuge
in the self-same wave." In contrast to the protagonist of
The Doom, the poet of The City can think of no reason why
these lives should be saved.

Thus throughout his career, Thomson wrote of the
fascination of Death, of the hope which oblivion could
offer the sufferer in this world, "that one best sleep
which never wakes again."52 Why then was not James Thomson
a suicide? He raises the question himself and attempts
to give a partial answer in *The City of Dreadful Night*:

> When this poor tragic-farce has palled us long,
> Why actors and spectators do we stay?—
> To fill our so-short rôles out right or wrong;
> To see what shifts are yet in the dull play
> For our illusion; to refrain from grieving
> Dear foolish friends by our untimely leaving.  

Partly it is curiosity, partly thought of grieving friends, partly inertia which keeps men alive in spite of despair.

But Thomson could arrive at a more exact answer, at least concerning his own survival, and a few years later when he returned to the question in "Songs in the Desert," he said:

> So potent is the Word, the Lord of Life,
> And so tenacious Art,
> Whose instinct urges to perpetual strife
> With Death, Love's counterpart;
> The magic of their music, might, and light
> Can keep one living in his own despite.  

Thus life is not completely black. There are certain compensations, certain pleasures which keep most men alive in spite of the prevalent despair.

**E. Dead Maiden**

Whether the dead maiden would have occurred in Thomson's poetry had Matilda Weller lived is a moot question. The influence of her death on his life and work has been overrated by some and underrated by others. But whatever the cause, the idea of a dead young maiden appealed to Thomson's poetic sense and occurs frequently in his works.

In *The Doom of a City*, the maiden is the central
figure of the funeral group which the author meets in approaching the City. Here in one of the most dramatic scenes of the poem, the poet receives the first shocking hint of what he will find within. A significant member of the group is the young lover standing in silent grief. He appears with the maiden several times in later poetry and seems to correspond to the youthful Thomson and his grief for Matilda.

The maiden reappears in "Indeed You Set Me in a Happy Place." Here Thomson writes of his "Good Angel" who had taken his hand and showed him the way to Paradise. But unfortunately she had died:

How soon, how soon, God called her from my side,
Back to her own celestial sphere of day!
And ever since she ceased to be my Guide,
I reel and stumble on life's solemn way;
Ah, ever since her eyes withdrew their light,
I wander lost in blackest stormy night.\(^{55}\)

Thomson seems to have believed here that if Matilda had lived she would have kept him from the City of Dreadful Night. By the time he wrote The City of Dreadful Night, he seems to have changed his mind, for he writes, "Though he possess sweet babes and loving wife,\(\ldots\) They shall avail not; he must dree his weird."\(^{56}\)

The dead maiden appears twice in The City of Dreadful Night. Her first appearance is as the specter on the wild seashore. The man crossing the desert sees her approach: "A shape came slowly with a ruddy light;\(\ldots\) A woman with a
red lamp in her hand. As she comes closer he sees that "That lamp she held was her own burning heart,/ Whose blood-drops trickled step by step apart." The man in the desert becomes two distinct selves. One watches while the other, the youthful lover, steps forward and faints before the woman. The woman bends over the second self with compassion and murmurs "words of pity, love, and woe." The tide comes in unheeded and sweeps the two away:

Swept up to her there kneeling by my side,
She clasped that corpse-like me, and they were born
Away, and this vile me was left forlorn;
I know the whole sea cannot quench that heart,
Or cleanse that brow, or wash those two apart.

It seems that the man is Thomson, and he is saying that when Matilda died a part of him, the better part, died also.

The maiden's second appearance is in the strange mansion from whose windows light is flowing forth into the night. The light promises life and activity, perhaps a gay party, but as in the Marble City of The Doom the promise is not fulfilled. The house is deadly still.

Each room is hung with black and each

... held a shrine, around which tapers burned,
With picture or with statue or with bust,
All copied from the same fair form of dust.

The poet walks through each room and finally comes to the one where the lady lies. Here as in The Doom she is attended by her grieving lover:

And one lay there upon a low white bed,
With tapers burning at the foot and head:
The Lady of the images: supine,
Deathstill, lifesweet, with folded palms she lay:
And kneeling there as at a sacred shrine
A young man wan and worn who seemed to pray.

In the prayer the symbolic meaning of the mansion is explained. The chambers are those of the mansion of the heart; in each one is the image of the girl and the black draperies of eternal grief. The mourner intends to stay by her side forever, whether in life or death, for without the girl life holds no further purpose. This section recalls the sections of The Doom which describe the marble people. First there are the images and pictures of the girl, and later the mourner feels as if he himself were turning to stone.

I kneel here patient as thou liest there;
As patient as a statue carved in stone,
Of adoration and eternal grief.

While thou dost not awake I cannot move;
And something tells me thou wilt never wake,
And I alive feel turning into stone.

F. Unconcern of Nature

One of the major reasons for Thomson's growing pessimism, as well as that of some of his contemporaries, was Nature's seeming unawareness of the importance of man. If man should somehow become extinct, what difference would it make? More than likely the sun would still rise and set and the seasons would still come and go. What effect could the extinction of man have on the vast universe? This question comes up very naturally in The Doom of a
City, for there the people are dead and yet Nature prospers, the plant life is luxuriant. Man does not like the idea of being so expendable. The poet cries out against the lack of cosmic sympathy:

Ever-loved and gracious Earth, Mystic Mother of our birth,  
This is cruel, bitter, terrible, this joy in our dead rest!  
Canst Thou still leap forth and run, glory-speeded round the Sun,  
O Thou Niobe of World-stars, with Thy fairest and Thy best—  
With Thy vigorous youthful darling lying stone-cold on Thy breast!

The doubts about man's importance are largely dispelled by the vision of the Living God—though Nature is unfeeling, God is concerned about the welfare of those created in his own image—and yet there remains a nagging doubt. Even after the vision, Thomson returns to comment on the sad fact of Nature's lack of sympathy:

The moon and stars where they had shone before Shone on in cold and stern sublimity.  
The hills loomed dark upon the silent shore,  
Round which the waves in thoughtful monotone Rolled their old voice of Ever—evermore.  
A royal City dwelt upon this throne,—  
And what now left of all its wealth and pride?  
A few strange groups of pallid-gleaming stone!  
But Nature cares not for the ruin wide,  
Her dreaming beauty glows in perfect bloom:  
Most cold, imperial, un lamenting Bride,  
Her Lord and Bridegroom scarcely in the tomb...

In The City of Dreadful Night this theme becomes much more emphatic. There is no loving God to counterbalance the indifference of Nature. The inhabitants of the City
are alone in a hostile world. There is little comfort from other men and none from God. In his wandering, the poet overhears two lonely inhabitants discussing their misery and the "supreme indifference of Fate." One says to the other:

"The world rolls round for ever like a mill; It grinds out death and life and good and ill; It has no purpose, heart or mind or will."  

It whirls on and on in its blind mechanical fashion. Will it whirl on forever, or is it wearing out? No one can know.

"Man might know one thing were his sight less dim; That it whirls not to suit his petty whim, That it is quite indifferent to him."  

In the cathedral scene, the preacher announces that the universal laws of nature operate from neither love nor hate, cruelty nor kindness. They are merely indifferent and treat all creatures the same:

I find no hint throughout the Universe
Of good or ill, of blessing or of curse;
I find alone Necessity Supreme.

The poet goes on to meditate on the stars, those lights which men have long regarded with "passionate awe and yearning," to which they often have attributed divine pity or majestic scorn. In The Doom, the stars are described as "cold and stern." In The City they are neither stern nor kind. They are dead:

Fond man! they are not haughty, are not tender;
There is no heart or mind in all their splendour,
They thread mere puppets all their marvellous maze.
The spheres eternal are a grand illusion,
The empyrean is a void abyss.67

This life is a "poor tragic-farce." The symbol of such life is the image of "Melencolia" which sits above the City, its "sombre Patroness and Queen." She is "baffled and beaten," but she works on nobly in spite of the fact that each effort is doomed to ultimate failure. Her subjects often look up to her and in her countenance receive "renewed assurance/ And confirmation of the old despair." There they perceive

The sense that every struggle brings defeat
Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;
That all the oracles are dumb or cheat
Because they have no secret to express;
That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain
Because there is no light beyond the curtain;
That all is vanity and nothingness.68

This theme is expressed again in "A Voice from the Nile," one of the poems of 1881, Thomson's last year. Men have lived in the rich valley of the Nile for a long, long time, they have built towns and temples and pyramids, religions have risen and fallen, and through it all the river keeps flowing, slightly contemptuous, slightly pitying, mostly indifferent to the scrawny figure of man:

... their peoples ever are at war,
Slaying and slain, burning and ravaging,
And one yields to another and they pass,
While I flow evermore the same great Nile,
The ever-young and ever-ancient Nile.69

Pretentious man builds cities and gods, but the cities fall into ruin and the gods and men die. Only the Nile
flows on forever.

And as I flowed here long before they were,
So may I flow when they no longer are,
Most like the serpent of eternity:
Blessed for ever be our Mother Earth. 70

G. Yearning for Unattainable Faith

Along with Thomson's growing conviction that there is no sympathetic God with a plan for humanity is a yearning wish that he might believe otherwise, that he might achieve the assurance and joy of a simple faith. But like Thomas Hardy in "The Impercipient," he cannot see the sights which his brethren claim to see, and his integrity will not allow him to pretend he sees. Even in The Doom of a City, though the poet sees the vision of the Living God, he has difficulty feeling a part of it. He feels that he is tainted and unworthy of such a vision. He is like a profligate reeling homeward from his orgies who shamefully enters a grand cathedral seeking peace among the holy people, the saints and martyrs who shine in the windows, the pure women who are praying. But they are too pure.

"What right has he to share/ Their silent feast of sacred love?"71 And so his guilt drives him away hoping faintly that some day he might return and dare to remain. But it is likely that his guilt will keep him in the darkness forever:

The Spectre that has roamed forlorn,
Sin-restless, through the sombre night,
Must creep to its old grave at morn,
Nor blot the world of life and light. 72
In a sonnet of 1858 called "A Recusant," Thomson again expresses the attraction of the Church, but here it is the integrity of the reason rather than guilt which keeps him away. The first twelve lines describe the yearning wish to enter the Church and partake of its peace:

How sweet to enter in, to kneel and pray
With all the others whom we love so well!
All disbelief and doubt might pass away,
All peace float to us with its Sabbath bell. 73

But the final couplet is the stern reply of conscience:
"Conscience replies, There is but one good rest,/ Whose head is pillowed upon Truth's pure breast." 74

The climactic scene of The City of Dreadful Night occurs in the cathedral where a group of the citizens have entered hopelessly in search of comfort. They would like to believe in the God of the cathedral, but it has become impossible. They do, however, receive comfort of a sort. The preacher tells them there is no God, this life is all one has, and one may end it when one wishes. It is a poor sort of hope to substitute for Christian hope, but at least it partially satisfies the human craving for assurance.

In "Proem," dated 1882, Thomson laments the loss of the antique fables and illusions which helped make life endurable. The modern, scientific age has stripped the world of its happy illusions. The praying women and the saints in the cathedral of The Doom trusted in a happy
belief, but modern man finds no deities in the sky, no
nympha in the woods, and no God in the cathedral:

No God in all our universe we trace,
No heaven in the infinitude of space,
No life beyond death—coming not too soon.75

And so the world has become a desert of black despair, a
cold, hard world of reality stripped naked of its dreams.
The only hope left is one which might benefit "our children's
children's children's heritage." Perhaps through evolution,
the Promised Land will eventually be reached, but who
knows if this Promised Land at the end of the evolutionary
process be mirage or fact. If the process does actually
end in a promised land, it will be only after a prodigal
waste of earlier lives. Perhaps it would be best after
all to live in a less scientifically advanced age, an age
which believed it could find God in a cathedral.

O antique fables! beautiful and bright,
And joyous with the joyous youth of yore;
O antique fables! for a little light
Of that which shineth in you evermore,
To cleanse the dimness from our weary eyes,
And bathe our old world with a new surprise
Of golden dawn entrancing sea and shore.76

H. The Poet and Real Life

In discussing art and life, Thomson always exalted
the art of living well above the art of writing or painting
or sculpting well. He felt the true poet is the one who
is able to express in flesh and blood what lesser artists
can only express in verse or picture or statue. H. S.
Salt comments that "his strong natural yearning for action in preference to thought led him to regard art as a mere substitute and makeshift for the fuller and truer life of reality that is so often denied us; art was to him the outcome of want rather than fruition, of disappointment rather than success."77 Thomson himself says in the "Introductory Note" to "A Lady of Sorrow," "The happy seldom write for writing's sake; they are fully employed in living."78 In "Per Contra: The Poet, High Art, Genius," Thomson accuses of weakness and lack of vitality the artist who willingly becomes a slave to his art and does not use it "simply as relaxation or as the least irksome mode of earning the daily bread."79 The truly great artist is superior to his works. Shakespeare realized this and thus "wrote no more when he could afford to live without writing."80

\[
\text{The artist cannot enjoy, cannot achieve; if at any time he can enjoy it, can achieve it, be sure that he is not then pondering or singing it. Where and when rich life is present, it lives, and does not content itself with shadowing forth and celebrating life. When and where rich life is not present, the shadowing forth and celebration of life may partially console for its absence, or may even partially illude into the belief in its presence.}^{81}
\]

This idea emerges in The Doom of a City when the poet comments on the achievement of the Sage. The Sage has isolated himself from general life, "doubtless his individual life required/ In seeming solitude to be inspired,"82 but
what poor stuff the solitude has inspired. The "divine and tranquil Truth" which the Sage thought he had discovered was false. He would have done better had he lived "in sweet communion with earth's brotherhood." It is not the Sage who knows how to live richly but rather the beer-drinking youths described in *Sunday at Hampstead* and *Sunday Up the River*.

In "Art" Thomson expresses the same idea:

Singing is sweet; but be sure of this,
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.

Who gives the fine report of the feast?
He who got none and enjoyed it least.

Were the wine really slipping down his throat
Would his song of the wine advance a note?

Will you puff out the music that sways the whirl,
Or dance and make love with a pretty girl?

Who shall the great battle-story write?
Not the hero down in the thick of the fight.

Statues and pictures and verse may be grand,
But they are not the Life for which they stand.

In the City rich life was not present for Thomson. There was indeed so little enjoyment or achievement in the City that the greatest comfort was the fact that life would soon be over. Life for Thomson was to be endured, not to be enjoyed. Perhaps poetry would help him and similar unhappy people to endure. "The night-side of nature has been the theme of literature more often than the day-side," wrote Thomson, "simply because literature, as a rule, is
the refuge of the miserable; I mean genuine, thoughtful, and earnest literature; literature as an end in and for itself, not merely as a weapon to fight with, a ware to sell, a luxury to enjoy.\textsuperscript{34} The miserable one can express his thoughts, and thus perhaps obtain some pleasure. But the happy one, the one who is able to enjoy life richly, does not have this motive for expression. The healthy one seldom thinks of his health; he simply enjoys it. It is when he becomes diseased and is prevented from living life full that he turns to analysis and expression of his situation. Why did Thomson write \textit{The City of Dreadful Night}?

Because it gives some sense of power and passion
in helpless impotence to try to fashion
Our woe in living words however uncouth.\textsuperscript{35}

For whom did he write it? Not for the hopeful young,

Or pious spirits with a God above them
To sanctify and glorify and love them,
Or sages who foresee a heaven on earth.\textsuperscript{36}

These people would not understand anyway. They are too busy enjoying life. It is the "weary wanderer" here and there who "will understand the speech, and feel a stir/ Of fellowship in all-dastrous fight."\textsuperscript{37} Rather than trying to achieve vicarious enjoyment in describing the pleasures of other people, Thomson found a satisfaction in writing of his own despair. He did not write a report of a feast. If he had been enjoying a feast, if the wine had been slipping down his throat, if he had been dancing with
a pretty girl, *The City of Dreadful Night* would likely never have been written. We are glad it was written, but as Jeannette Marks has said, "Who is that Shylock who would knowingly and willingly purchase a great poem at the price of such disaster to a fellow human being?" More could be said about each one of these themes. My main purpose has been to show that each occupied an important place in the thinking of James Thomson and that an early expression of each is found in *The Doom of a City*. Each is concerned with an important aspect of life, and each involves questions essential to an understanding of Thomson's developing creed.
IV. THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

Thomson, although surrounded by the scientific materialism of the nineteenth century, the ever increasing awareness of the immutability of the laws of nature, and the seemingly ever more probable concept of the universe as mechanical and unsympathetic, yet had made an attempt to formulate an optimistic creed. In The Doom of a City he had tried to reconcile the reality of evil and human misery with the conception of a benevolent God. He had concluded that justice will prevail and that the "Truth of the Living God" will finally purge the world of all evil and leave only truth and purity. This purging comes through fire—an "ever-burning, unrelenting, irresistible flame."¹ Such flame is, of course, uncomfortable to men in their present condition—it may even seem miserable—but it is truly miserable only for falsehood, evil, pride, lust, and shame. For goodness, truth, purity, and love it is a purgative blessing. Without the fiery deluge, the good statues of the Marble City never would have been born anew. Thus seeming evil or misfortune may actually be good.

This is basically the Christian solution to the problem of evil. It is similar to St. Paul's "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him,"²
and to William Cowper's "God moves in a mysterious way/
His wonders to perform." But the solution proved eventually
to be unsatisfactory for Thomson. For one thing, it relied
too much on blind faith. Obviously St. Paul's words can
be true only if there is an afterlife, and the concept
of an afterlife, being based not on experience but on
something one might call intuition, is a concept which
can neither be proved nor disproved. There is no more
reason to believe it than to disbelieve it unless one
accepts the idea of divine revelation. Furthermore, if
God is all-powerful why does He have to wait until an
afterlife to reward good? Why did He allow evil in the
first place? Why did He in His omniscience create a man
who would sin, this God who in the words of *The Rubáiyát
"with Eden didst devise the Snake"? Furthermore, why
should a sinner be condemned to hell? Why should flames
destroy anyone no matter how evil? Did the sinner create
the evil? Was Adam responsible or was it the creator of
the snake? Thomson came to look upon the Christian
explanation for man's evil condition as "the excellent
absurdities of Freewill and the Fall."\(^3\)

Such questions about good and evil plagued Thomson.
His devotion to reason and knowledge based on tangible,
material experience made him incapable of taking any leap
of faith. Without this leap, without a positive belief
in an afterlife and the triumph of good, God's wonders
often seemed more like blunders, and in fact material
evidence seemed to indicate that a God is unnecessary.
The laws of nature seemed to work well on their own.
If there were a God, there seemed to be no evidence that
He was personally involved with this world. "Heaven helps
those who help themselves" Thomson interpreted as "when
man has done all the work, God is willing to appropriate
the credit." The Christian solution to the problem
of evil and his own similar solution in *The Doom of a
City* finally seemed to Thomson to be evasions of the issue,
hidings from uncomfortable questions. Such evasions
brought forth words of scorn for men like Pascal and
J. H. Newman, who Thomson felt must have maintained faith
only by "abjuring their reason, strangling their doubts."
They were apparently too weak to look truth in the face.
Thomson's integrity would not allow him this easy way
out. Having tried it in *The Doom of a City* without
satisfaction, he was ready by his mid-thirties to write
another statement of belief, this time with no evasion
of the face of probability no matter how horrible its
visage might appear. Thomson's situation after the
recognition of his failure in *The Doom* might be described
with the words he puts in the mouth of one of the
inhabitants of the City of Dreadful Night:

From writing a great work with patient plan
To justify the ways of God to man,
And show how ill must fade and perish quite:
I wake from daydreams to this real night. 6
As *The Doom of a City* seems to have been inspired largely by the Mosaic journey, so *The City of Dreadful Night* seems to have been inspired by Dante's *Inferno*. In *The Doom* the poet goes into the wilderness to hear the saving words of God. In *The City of Dreadful Night*, it is no longer possible to make contact with God. The citizens of the City are as surely separated from the divinity as are the inhabitants of hell, and thus Thomson writes his own version of *The Inferno*.

Dante's influence on Thomson has long been recognized. H. S. Salt says, "It is evident that Dante, whom Thomson had studied till he knew him almost by heart, had made a profound impression on his mind." John Heath-Stubbs says that "*The City of Dreadful Night* does really approach nearer, as regards atmosphere, to the *Inferno* of Dante than does any other English poem," and Thomson himself points out the connection by prefacing *The City of Dreadful Night* with a quotation from Dante which may be translated thus: "Through me is the way into the doleful city."

Dante's "città dolente" and Thomson's "dolent city" have much in common though the poets themselves may be poles apart in their attitudes toward the places they are describing. Paolucci believes this Dantean influence is very important: "The least one should bring to bear in attempting to read the poem *The City of Dreadful Night* intelligently is a fair acquaintance with the
poetic world of Dante. For it is the loss or exhaustion of all the good things of that world—not a personal but an historical loss—that is represented in *The City of Dreadful Night.* It is the Victorian religious loss that is represented. Beyond Dante's "città dolente" was purgatory and heaven, and thus Dante was able to call his work the *Commedia.* But beyond the City of Dreadful Night was nothing. Dante was only a visitor, but Thomson was himself a prisoner in his "dolent city."

Thomson’s City is a city of night and black despair. A writer in *The Academy* called it an "edifice of black marble." It is completely cut off from the light of divine love and understanding, and its inhabitants seem unable to find much light in any substitution of human love and understanding. They murmur to themselves but rarely speak to each other. They are caught in a miserable existence and already, like the inhabitants of Dante’s *Inferno,* have left all hope behind. As the poet sits by the riverside, he hears two of the citizens discussing their situation. They are weary of living in this "insufferable inane" of "dead Faith, dead Love, dead Hope." Even the fire and brimstone of hell, "that positive eternity of pain," would be better than the nothingness of the present existence, and thus one of the spirits has gone to search for the portal, above which is engraved according to Dante's report, "Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here."
But the spirit, long since having left his hope behind, is denied admission.

So I returned. Our destiny is fell;
For in this Limbo we must ever dwell,
Shut out alike from Heaven and Earth and Hell.

Being without faith, without hope, and without love, they are in hell already. The very fact that they are unable to exchange their form of torment for another adds to the hellishness and to the similarity to the tortures in The Inferno. They are eternally separated from God, and as in the second circle of hell Paolo and Francesca must endure the torment of being driven incessantly by fierce winds through the region void of light, so the citizens of the City must wander restlessly, despairingly, through the eternal darkness. "With weary tread, / Each wrapt in his own doom, they wander, wander."

Life lingers on, but because it is separated from hope and faith and God, it is meaningless and absurd. The poet asks one of the inhabitants of the City, "When Faith and Love and Hope are dead indeed, / Can Life still live?"

The inhabitant answers coldly,

\[\ldots\] Take a watch, erase
The signs and figures of the circling hours,
Detach the hands, remove the dial-face;
The works proceed until run down; although Bereft of purpose, void of use, still go.

The bodies are still living, but the purpose is gone; the souls are dead. There is no hope of a rebirth such as that which revived the marble statues of The Doom. These are
a people "whose faith and hope are dead, and who would
die."\textsuperscript{14} They have experienced the second death which is
spoken of in the book of Revelation.\textsuperscript{15} Christians have
long spoken of death as the separation of two natures
meant to be in union, such as the body and soul or the
soul and God. St. Augustine commented that "death comes to
the soul when God abandons it, just as death comes to
the body when the soul departs."\textsuperscript{16} I am not suggesting
that Thomson was consciously thinking of St. Augustine,
but only that in describing a godless existence he did
use the terms and images which were familiar to him and to
all in the Christian culture of Europe. Thus, since
God, if there is a God, has completely abandoned the
citizens of the City of Dreadful Night, their souls are indeed
dead and they are in hell. The only hope of the empty,
hollow bodies is to die also. "We yearn for speedy death
in full fruition, Dateless oblivion and divine repose."\textsuperscript{17}

The gospel message of the preacher in the cathedral
is the comforting assurance that this yearning will find
fulfillment. "Good tidings of great joy for you, for all," he announces. "There is no God; no Fiend with names divine/
Made us and tortures us." Furthermore, man is free to end
his life when he wishes, "without the fear of waking after
death."\textsuperscript{18} What comfort there is in this message does not
completely satisfy the audience—in fact, it is most
unsatisfying. The message is negative. It admits there
is nothing good in this life, that all of man's dreams are like bubbles which quickly burst, and that there is no hope for another chance in another life or in a heaven. The small comfort that exists is found in the hope that the tragic farce of life ends completely in the grave. For Thomson atheism was not a source of great joy and freedom. "He was never able to suppress his awareness that a godless life is a devaluated life," says Hoxie Neale Fairchild. Perhaps this was partly the result of his Presbyterian childhood. At any rate, for Thomson atheism meant that there was no divine purpose in life, no triumphant principle of good, and no divine hindrance to evil and chaos. Such a world could be nothing less than tragic.

Not all atheists find themselves imprisoned in the City of Dreadful Night. It is possible to escape from the City by finding a substitute god, a substitute which once again will give meaning and value to life. One of these substitutes is the god of pleasure. One might escape by glorying in the beauties and pleasures of this world, fleeting though they may be. If, as the preacher says, there is no being

Whom we must curse for cursing us with life;
Whom we must curse because the life He gave
Could not be buried in the quiet grave,
Could not be killed by poison or by knife,

if death really is the end of the individual, then man is
freed from the burden of sin and guilt. He can do as he pleases without fearing the consequences after death.

The wise man will make the most of each pleasure in his path, his only lament being the shortness of the path and the transience of the pleasure as is the lament in Fitzgerald's Rubáiyát. But such a happy paganism, such a philosophy of "gather ye rosebuds while ye may," was impossible for Thomson. The rosebud was not worth picking, for it was already turning to ashes. In this God-forsaken world "every struggle brings defeat/ Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;/ ... all is vanity and nothingness." 21

For the sufferer imprisoned in the City, this life is hell and it can never become a paradise. Instead of lamenting its shortness, he laments its length. E. G. Stedman wrote that here "we have Omar Khayyam's bewilderment without his epicurean compensations." 22  The preacher in the cathedral acknowledges that "this life holds nothing good for us." 23 We never achieve that which we desire. We have one life in all eternity, and this one opportunity is a mockery. "This sole chance was frustrate from my birth," says one of the sufferers,

My wine of life is poison mixed with gall,
My noonday passes in a nightmare dream,
I worse than lose the years which are my all:
What can console me for the loss supreme?

Speak not of comfort where no comfort is,
Speak not at all: can words make foul things fair?
Our life's a cheat, our death a black abyss:
Hush and be mute envisaging despair.— 24
The sole comfort, weak though it may be, is that this life is the only hell man must endure. This is the comfort the preacher gives:

This little life is all we must endure,
The grave's most holy peace is ever sure,
We fall asleep and never wake again.

Providing another possible exit from the city is the substitute god of humanitarianism. The sufferer might lose himself in reform and find hope in the prospects of bettering human life and conditions. This was an important part of the solution in *The Doom of a City*. There the poet came back from his journey to point out the faults of the City and thus to show it how to improve. Thomson was always sympathetic with suffering humanity, but by the time he was ready to write *The City of Dreadful Night* his hopes were gone. If indeed there is no divine plan behind the universe, if there is no principle of Good but instead the events of the world are controlled by blind chance as represented by the cold sphinx of the desert, then what hope can puny man have in resisting the fortuitous misfortunes of life. Without the backing of something larger than himself, how can he hope for his plans to succeed? Without the backing of an absolute standard, how can he even be sure that his earth-bound plans really are good or will result in good if they do succeed?

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley.
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain
For promised joy,
had written Robert Burns. In a letter to George Eliot written soon after the publication of The City of Dreadful Night, Thomson had this to say:

I certainly have an affectionate and even joyful recognition of the willing labours of those who have striven to alleviate our lot, though I cannot see that all their efforts have availed much against the primal curse of our existence. Has the world been the better or the worse for the life of even such a man as Jesus? I cannot judge; but I fear on the whole considerably worse.

Thus Thomson, who rejected the substitute god of pleasure, also found it necessary to reject the substitute god of humanitarianism. Although Thomson was closely associated with Charles Bradlaugh and his group of militant social reformers, although his ideas for the most part agreed with theirs, his hopes and attitudes were often quite different. In a letter to his sister-in-law, he compares his position with Bradlaugh's:

... while he considers his opinions of the utmost importance, and is unwearied in the profitable task of trying to convert the world to them, I care very little for mine, and don't believe the world capable of being benefited much by having any opinion whatsoever preached to it.

In his essay "Sayings of Sigvat," Thomson tries to answer the question why he writes at all if the world is really so hopeless and his own opinion so unimportant. One reason is that "it is my nature to," but beyond this is another:

... my word may bring cheer and comfort and self-knowledge to others who are more or less like myself, and who may have thought
themselves peculiar and outcast; it may be to them a friendly voice revealing that they have a brother in the world, and may thus hearten them to put trust in themselves and keep true to themselves, nor succumb to the amiable cowardice of seeking to pretend to believe otherwise than they really do believe, for the sake of Fellowship and Communion.28

And this brings us back to The City of Dreadful Night, where in the "Proem" Thomson speaks of the brotherhood for which he is writing:

Yes, here and there some weary wanderer In that same city of tremendous night, Will understand the speech, and feel a stir Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight; "I suffer mute and lonely, yet another Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother Travels the same wild paths though out of sight."29

Thomson no longer feels he is addressing the whole world as he did in the call to repentance of The Doom. His intended audience is considerably smaller. There is no preaching in The City of Dreadful Night, no calling to repentance and unselfishness as there is in The Doom. There is only sympathy and understanding for hopeless man, whoever he may be, and an attempt to alleviate despair somewhat by the assurance that there will be no further hell after death, but that, as the preacher says, such belief was only "the dark delusion of a dream."30
V. EXTREMES MEET

From the time that Thomson recognized the inadequacy of the belief expressed in *The Doom of a City,* he was able to find satisfaction in the fact that he had not been one of those who "succumb to the amiable cowardice of seeking to pretend to believe otherwise than they really do believe." In *The City of Dreadful Night,* he was true to himself and did not flinch from the truth as he saw it. His courageous melancholy finds sympathy and admiration even among those for whom he said he was not writing—"the hopeful young," the "pious spirits with a God above them," and "sages who foresee a heaven on earth." Thomson had the honesty and integrity to reject those beliefs of orthodoxy which he found impossible to reconcile with his reason. For them he substituted other beliefs which seemed to him more rational and more in keeping with the realities of this world.

 Basically Thomson was an agnostic. In his essays this is always his position. He refuses to accept intuition or revelation as conveyors of truth, and insists that man can know nothing beyond material phenomena, nothing beyond what he can perceive with his senses. Concerning the nature of God and the destiny of the human soul he says, "doubt not that you must doubt to the end—if ever end there be."
Theologians devote themselves to teaching about God, our immortal souls, the origin and purpose of the world, but "when one comes to reflect on the matter it is overwhelmingly certain that not one of these men has ever really known anything about any of these things, or whether they really exist or not." Nearly every great philosopher has also ventured into the realm of the unknowable. Of Spinoza, whom he greatly admired, Thomson said, "I must consider the system, as a system, a failure, though so stupendous an achievement of human genius and audacity." When Spinoza starts defining the character of God, he is speaking about a "subjective conception, of whose objective reality we have not the shadow of a proof." The system becomes "a speculative figment, a matter of blind faith as certainly as any grossest superstition."

The agnostic attitude toward God, the attitude of scepticism regarding His existence and the possibility of discovering truth about Him, is likely to produce an attitude of uncertainty regarding ideals and moral values also. Perhaps if Thomson had been more completely an atheist he would have been a more wholehearted crusader for Bradlaugh's National Reformer. As it was he seemed to feel his own convictions were not necessarily worth more than anyone else's. How can one know that one's own convictions are right? Concerning The City of Dreadful Night, Hoxie Neale Fairchild says that "perhaps the saddest
feature of the poem is the absence of conviction that anything is really true or really false." This absence is found in the poem to a certain degree. Thomson admits that his picture of a godless life is probably not true for everybody. Even for those who do feel its reality, it is possibly a dream which will dissolve when daylight comes. But when the dream returns night after night, dream and reality become confused, and the time may arrive when the dream seems more real than the reality, when it is impossible to tell which is which, when the emotional feeling tells the sufferer that surely there is no God even though he knows rationally that he cannot be sure. Thus reality seems to be relative and to change with different people's experiences.

The spirit of conviction, however, is present to a considerably greater degree than one might expect from a poet who was more agnostic than atheistic and who lacked conviction about his own beliefs. The positive expression of belief—or unbelief—in *The City of Dreadful Night* is quite vigorously presented. The preacher positively states that there is no God, there is no hell, there is no after-life. Furthermore, this life holds nothing good for us, and death is our greatest hope. As John Heath-Stubbs has said, "the utter rejection of religious belief becomes itself a sort of inverted dogma." Thomson even uses inversions of Biblical phrases to express his dogma of
unbelief—"Good tidings of great joy for you, for all:/ There is no God."10 Apparently the human mind desires certainty. A complete agnosticism may be intellectually satisfying, but emotionally it leaves a void which cries to be filled. Such filling may come from the assurance of atheism as well as from the assurance of Christianity. Thus in this poem in which Thomson depicts the emotion of Godless despair, he sets forth an atheism which, though it cannot be proved to the intellect, yet is true to the feeling of despair.

In his essays, Thomson was fond of pointing out that extremes meet. This seems to have happened to Thomson himself. In The City of Dreadful Night, he formulated a creed, after rejecting that of Christianity, which was more satisfying to his intellect, more congenial to his dominant mood, but which was really no more provable and was just as completely based on intuition as the Christianity he rejected. The preacher's pronouncements concern things in the realm of the unknowable. The same might be said about the belief expressed in The City of Dreadful Night as Thomson said about the system of Spinoza: it is "a matter of blind faith as certainly as any grossest superstition."11 Rationally Thomson was an agnostic, but emotionally he felt the call of the unknown as all men have, and, along with Spinoza and a vast company of other philosophers and theologians, he too entered into the search for certainty.
FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION


2. "But the feeling is not unanimous. For example, Peter Quennell—"A Victorian Pessimist," *The New Statesman and Nation*, Aug. 27, 1932, p. 235—censures Thomson's imagery as crude and says of *The City of Dreadful Night* that "at its rare best, it resembles the movement of a small but swollen torrent, carrying down a confused freight of rocks and mud. Too often some obstacle stems its path, and it is dammed up into a tumultuous and turgid backwater. Then again it brims over and struggles free. It has no lightness, no eloquence of the romantic kind, no classic sweep that carries all before it."


15. "The Poet of 'the City,'" p. 58.

16. *Athenaeum*, May 1, 1880, p. 561—"The humour of the entire situation lies in this, that the poet . . . has simply written 'dreadful' poetry because just now it is the fashion to be dreadful."

17. *The City of Dreadful Night*, I. Since this poem is found in several places, I will simply refer to it by section numbers.


19. "Proem," 1882. It is interesting to note that this expression of yearning for the old beliefs is dated in the last year of Thomson's life.
CHAPTER I

1. *Darwin Among the Poets* (Chicago, 1932), p. 44.


3. *The City of Dreadful Night*, XVI.


8. Quoted by Meeker in *The Life and Poetry*, p. 11.


22 Ibid., p. 216.
23 Ibid., p. 219.
24 Ibid., p. 60.
25 Ibid., p. 218.
26 "Parallel Between Pascal and Leopardi," p. 96.
CHAPTER II


3. Paolucci, p. 47.

4. Gerould, p. 250. References to *The Doom of a City* will be from Gordon Hall Gerould's edition of Thomson's poetry.

5. *The City of Dreadful Night*, XIV.

6. Ibid., II.


8. Ibid., p. 183.

9. Ibid., p. 5.

10. Ibid., p. 184.

11. Ibid., p. 183.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 189.


15. Ibid., p. 187.

16. Ibid., p. 188.

17. Ibid., p. 196.

18. Ibid., p. 197.


20. Ibid., p. 201.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 203.
23 Ibid., p. 207.
24 Ibid., p. 208.
26 Ibid., p. 211.
27 Ibid., p. 212.
28 Ibid., p. 214.
29 Ibid., p. 215.
30 Ibid., p. 213.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., pp. 216-217.
33 Ibid., p. 219.
34 Ibid., p. 221.
35 Ibid., p. 222.
37 Gerould, p. 219.
38 Genesis 6:7.
39 Exodus 20:5.
40 Gerould, p. 219.
41 Ibid., p. 221.
42 Ibid., p. 222.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., p. 223.
45 Numbers 16:31-33, 35.
46 Gerould, p. 220.
48 John 3:5.
49 Exodus 20:6.
50 Gerould, p. 226.
51 Ibid., pp. 228, 233.
52 Ibid., p. 239.
53 Ibid., p. 241.
54 The City of Dreadful Night, XVI.
55 Gerould, p. 242.
56 Ibid., pp. 241-243.
57 Ibid., p. 243.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., p. 244.
62 Exodus 4:12.
63 Gerould, p. 245.
64 Hosea 14:1-2.
65 Gerould, p. 246.
66 Ibid., pp. 246-248.
67 Ibid., p. 249.
68 Ibid., p. 250.
69 Walker, pp. 31-32.
70 Gerould, p. 206.
CHAPTER III

1 Salt, p. 33.
2 Salt, p. 77.
3 Salt, pp. 95-96.
4 Salt, p. 98.
5 Walker, p. 95.
6 Gerould, p. 5.
7 Ibid., p. 35.
8 Ibid., p. 33.
9 The City of Dreadful Night, I.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 The City of Dreadful Night and other Poems (London, 1880), p. 79. Since this volume was published by Reeves and Turner, I will hereafter refer to it by their names.
14 Ibid., p. 113.
15 Ibid., pp. 81-82.
16 Gerould, p. 5.
17 Ibid., p. 100.
18 Ibid., p. 137.
19 Ibid.
20 The City of Dreadful Night, I.
21 Ibid., IV.
22 Ibid., II.
23 Ibid.

25. The City of Dreadful Night, XVIII.


27. Ibid., p. 183.

28. Ibid., p. 29.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 31.

31. The City of Dreadful Night, I.

32. Ibid., V.

33. Ibid., XIII.

34. Ibid.


36. Ibid., p. 112.

37. Ibid., p. 113.

38. Ibid., p. 183.

39. Ibid., p. 118.

40. Ibid., p. 245.

41. Ibid., p. 34.

42. Ibid., p. 6.

43. Ibid., p. 100.

44. Ibid., p. 105.

45. Ibid., p. 106.

46. Ibid., p. 117.

47. Ibid., p. 118.

48. The City of Dreadful Night, I.

49. Ibid.
50 Ibid., XIV.
51 Ibid., XIX.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Gerould, p. 137.
55 Ibid., p. 136.
56 The City of Dreadful Night, V.
57 Ibid., IV.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., X.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Gerould, p. 206.
63 Ibid., p. 233.
64 The City of Dreadful Night, VIII.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., XIV.
67 Ibid., XVII.
68 Ibid., XXI.
69 Gerould, p. 129.
70 Ibid., p. 132.
71 Ibid., p. 237.
72 Ibid., p. 239.
73 Reeves and Turner, p. 162.
74 Ibid.
75 Gerould, p. xxi.
76 Ibid., p. xxii.
77 Salt, p. 150.
78 Essays and Phantasies, p. 2.
79 Ibid., p. 132.
80 Ibid., p. 134.
81 Ibid., p. 131.
82 Gerould, p. 209.
83 Reeves and Turner, p. 133.
84 Essays and Phantasies, p. 2.
85 The City of Dreadful Night, Proem.
86 Ibid.
87 Genius and Disaster (New York, 1925), p. 126.
CHAPTER IV

2. Romans 8:28.
4. Ibid., p. 77.
5. Ibid., p. 298.
6. The City of Dreadful Night, XII.
7. Salt, p. 156.
9. Paolucci, p. 3.
11. The City of Dreadful Night, VI.
12. Ibid., I.
13. Ibid., II.
17. The City of Dreadful Night, XIII.
18. Ibid., XIV.
20. The City of Dreadful Night, XIV.
21. Ibid., XXI.
The City of Dreadful Night, XVI.

Ibid.

Ibid., XIV.

Quoted by Salt, p. 82.

Ibid., p. 51.


The City of Dreadful Night, "Proem."

Ibid., XIV.
CHAPTER V


9. Heath-Stubbs, p. 117.

10. *The City of Dreadful Night*, XIV.

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