

**THE CITY OF
DREADFUL NIGHT:
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The City of Dreadful Night: And Other Poems by James Thomson

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JAMES THOMSON

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DREADFUL NIGHT:
AND OTHER POEMS**

Old World Series



THE
CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT
AND OTHER POEMS



**THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT
AND OTHER POEMS BY
JAMES THOMSON**



Portland, Maine
THOMAS B. MOSHER
Mdcccclij

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PROEM





PROEM

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.

We stagger under the enormous weight
Of all the heavy ages piled on us,
With all their grievous wrongs inveterate,
And all their disenchantments dolorous,
And all the monstrous tasks they have bequeathed ;
And we are stifled with the airs they breathed ;
And read in theirs our dooms calamitous.

Our world is all stript naked of their dreams ;
No deities in sky or sun or moon,
No nymphs in woods and hills and seas and streams ;
Mere earth and water, air and fire, their boon ;
No God in all our universe we trace,
No heaven in the infinitude of space,
No life beyond death — coming not too soon.

Our souls are stript of their illusions sweet,
Our hopes at best in some far future years

PROEM

For others, not ourselves; whose bleeding feet
Wander this rocky waste where broken spears
And bleaching bones lie scattered on the sand;
Who know we shall not reach the Promised Land;
Perhaps a mirage glistening through our tears.

And if there be this Promised Land indeed,
Our children's children's children's heritage,
Oh, what a prodigal waste of precious seed,
Of myriad myriad lives from age to age,
Of woes and agonies and blank despairs,
Through countless cycles, that some fortunate heirs
May enter, and conclude the pilgrimage!

But if it prove a mirage after all!
Our last illusion leaves us wholly bare,
To bruise against Fate's adamant wall,
Consumed or frozen in the pitiless air;
In all our world, beneath, around, above,
One only refuge, solace, triumph, — Love,
Sole star of light in infinite black despair.

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.

January 1882.





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