In 1872 Thomson went to the western states of America, as the agent of the shareholders in what he ascertained to be a fraudulent silver mine; and the following year he received a commission from the *New York World* to go to Spain as its special correspondent with the Carlists. During the two months of his stay in that distracted country he saw little real fighting, and was himself prostrated by a sunstroke. On his return to England he continued to write in the *Secularist* and the *National Reformer,* under the initials “ B.V.”@@1 In 1875 he severed his connexion with the *National Reformer,* owing to a disagreement with its editor; henceforth his chief source of income (1875-1881) was from the monthly periodical known as *Cope’s Tobacco Plant.* Chiefly through the exertions of his friend and admirer, Bertram Dobell, Thomson's best-known book, *The City of Dreadful Night, and other Poems,* was published in April 1880, and at once attracted wide attention; it was succeeded in the autumn by *Vane’s Story, and other Poems,* and in the following year by *Essays and Phantasies.* All his best work was produced between 1855 and 1875 (“ The Doom of a City,” 1857; “ Our Ladies of Death,” 1861; *Weddah and Om-el-Bonain;* “The Naked God­dess,” 1866-1867; *The City of Dreadful Night,* 1870-1874). He died at University College Hospital, in Gower Street, on the 3rd of June 1882, and was buried at Highgate cemetery, in the same grave, in unconsecrated ground, as his friend Austin Holyoake.

To the productions of James Thomson already mentioned may be added the posthumous volume entitled *A Voice from the Nile, and other Poems* (1884), to which was prefixed a memoir by Bertram Dobell. This volume contained much that is interest­ing, but nothing to increase Thomson’s reputation. If an attempt be made to point to the most apparent literary relation­ship of the author of *The City of Dreadful Night,* one might venture the suggestion that James Thomson was a younger brother of De Quincey. If he has distinct affinity to any writer it is to the author of *Suspiria de profundis;* if we look further afield, we might perhaps discern shadowy prototypes in Leopardi, Heine and Baudelaire. But, after all, Thomson holds so unique a place as a poet that the effort at classification may well be dispensed with. His was no literary pessimism, no assumed gloom. The poem “ Insomnia ” is a distinct chapter of biography; and in “ Mater Tenebrarum ” and elsewhere among his writings passages of self-revelation are frequent. The merits of Thomson’s poetry are its imaginative power, its sombre intensity, its sonorous music; to these characteristics may be added, in his lighter pieces, a Heine-like admixture of strange gaiety, pathos and caustic irony. Much the same may be said of his best prose. His faults are a monotony of epithet, the not infrequent use of mere rhetoric and verbiage, and perhaps a prevailing lack of the sense of form; besides an occasional vulgar recklessness of expression, as in parts of *Vane’s Story* and in some of his prose writings.

See the *Life,* by H. S. Salt (1905 edition).

**THOMSON, JAMES** (1822-1892), British physicist and engineer, was born in Belfast on the 16th of February 1822, and, like his younger brother, Lord Kelvin, at an unusually early age began to attend the classes at Glasgow University, where his father had been appointed professor of mathematics in 1832. After his graduation he decided to study civil engineering, and for that purpose became a pupil in several engineering offices and works successively; but ill-health obliged him to leave them all, and he had finally to accept the fact that an occupation involving physical exertion was out of the question. Accord­ingly, from about 1843, he devoted himself to theoretical work and to mechanical invention. To this period belong his well- known researches in thermodynamics, which enabled him to predict by the application of Carnot’s theorem that the tempera­ture of the freezing point of substances which expand on solidi­fying must be lowered by the application of pressure, the reverse being the case with substances which contract on solidification;

and he was able to calculate the amount by which a given pressure lowers the freezing-point of water, a substance which expands on solidification. His results were experimentally verified in the physical laboratories of Glasgow University under Lord Kelvin’s direction, and were afterwards applied to give the explanation of regelation. In 1861 he extended them in a paper on crystallization and liquefaction as influenced by stresses tending to change of form in the crystals, and in other studies on the change of state he continued Thomas Andrews’s work on the continuity of the liquid and gaseous states of matter, constructing a thermodynamic model in three dimensions to show the relations of pressure, volume and temperature for a substance like carbonic acid. With regard to his inventions, he devised a clever feathering mechanism for the paddles of steamboats when only a boy of sixteen, and later turned his attention to water engines. In 1850 he patented his “ vortex water-wheel,” and during the next three or four years carried on inquiries into the properties of “ whirling fluids,” which resulted in improved forms of blowing-fans and water-turbines (see Hydraulics). Settling in Belfast in 1851, he was selected to be the resident engineer to the Belfast Water Commissioners in 1853, and four years later became professor of civil engineering and surveying in Queen’s College, Belfast. Thence he removed in 1873 to Glasgow as successor to Macquorn Rankine in the chair of engineering in the university, and retained this position until 1889, when the failure of his eyesight compelled him to resign. He died on the 8th of May 1892 at Glasgow. His contributions to geological science included studies of the parallel roads of Glen Roy and of the prismatic jointing of basalt, as seen at the Giant’s Causeway. In 1876 and following years he studied the origin of windings of rivers in alluvial plains and made many experiments with the aid of artificial streams; and the currents of atmospheric circulation afforded him the material for the Bakerian lecture of 1892.

**THOMSON, JOHN** (1778-1840), Scottish landscape painter— Thomson of Duddingston, as he is commonly styled—was born on the 1st of September 1778 at Dailly, Ayrshire. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were clergymen of the Church of Scotland. He studied for the same vocation in the university of Edinburgh; and, residing with his elder brother, Thomas Thomson, afterwards celebrated as an anti­quarian and feudal lawyer, he made the acquaintance of Francis Jeffrey and other young members of the Scottish bar afterwards notable. During the recess he sketched in the country, and, while attending his final college session, he studied art for a month under Alexander Nasmyth. After his father’s death he became, in 1800, his successor as minister of Dailly; and in 1805 he was translated to the parish of Duddingston, close to Edinburgh. He continued, however, to practise art as an amateur, apparently without any detriment to his pastoral duties. Thomson’s popularity as a painter increased with his increasing artistic skill; and, having mastered his initial scruples against receiving artistic fees, on being offered £15 for a landscape—reassured by “ Grecian ” Williams’s stout assertion that the work was “ worth thrice the amount ”—the minister of Duddingston began to dispose of the productions of his brush in the usual manner. In 1830 he was made an honorary member of the Royal Scottish Academy. Thomson was also an accomplished performer on violin and flute, an exact and well-read student of physical science, and one of the writers on optics in the early numbers of the *Edinburgh Review.* He enjoyed a singularly wide and eminent circle of friends, including, among artists, Turner and Wilkie, and among men of letters, Wilson and Scott—the latter of whom desired that Thomson, instead of Turner, should have illustrated the collected edition of his works. He died at Duddingston on the 27th of October 1840 (not the 20th, as stated by some authorities). Thomson was twice married, and his second wife, the widow of Mr Dalrymple of Cleland, was herself also a skilful amateur artist.

Thomson is fairly represented in the Scottish National Gallery; and the “ Aberlady Bay ” of that collection, with the soft infinity of

@@@1 Bysshe Vanolis: “Bysshe,” as the commonly used Christian name of Shelley, Thomson’s favourite writer; and “Vanolis,” an änagram of Novalis—(F. von Hardenberg).