

Classic Poetry Series

Alfred Thomas Chandler

- poems -

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Alfred Thomas Chandler (1852-1941)

Born in 1852 in Geelong Victoria.

Alfred Chandler was to began his journalistic career at the Hamilton Spectator. He moved to Adelaide in 1878 and was the co-founder of the Adelaide satirical weekly Quiz in 1892. In 1894, as the Western Australian gold rush began, he arrived in Coolgardie. He edited The Goldfield Courier, The Coolgardie Miner and later, The Sunday Times. He resigned from The Sunday Times in 1925 and became a prominent member of the Secession movement. Chandler was an active member of Perth's literary world.

He died in Perth in 1941

Lights Along the Mile

THE NIGHT descends in glory, and adown the purple west
The young moon, like a crescent skiff, upon some fairy quest,
Has dropped below the opal lights that linger low and far
To havens that are beacons by the Pilot's evening star;
And slowly, softly, from above the darkness is unfurled
A wondrous curtain loosened on the windows of the world.
Then suddenly, like magic, where smoke-stacks fumed the while,
Ten thousand lights flash out aflame along the Golden Mile.

And thro' the dusky gauze that falls upon the looming mines
Dim spires and spars of poppet-heads in faintly broken lines
Grow clearer to the vision, till the shadow picture seems
The argosies from half the world i' the misty Port o' Dreams;
And lo! where golden Day had reigned in radiant robes of blue,
A god of joy and hope, who thrilled the sons of toil and rue,
Now comes the Queen of Starland forth to scatter with a smile
Her diamonds that flash and blaze along the Golden Mile.

And all the night a thousand stamps in ceaseless rhythmic roar
Are beating out the tragic gold from endless streams of ore,
These harnessed giants of the will that so are trained and taught
To answer to the sentient touch and catch the thrill of thought,
From nerve to nerve that quivers thro' the animated steel,
And makes it live and makes it move and strength emotions feel,
Till in their voices music comes insistent all the while
Reverberating massive chants along the Golden Mile.

And down below, a thousand feet, a thousand miners tear
The golden ore, the glistening ore that holds such joy and care;
Ah! down below, another world, with hopes, desires, and dreams,—
Such playthings as the tyrant Fate in fickle will beseems.
Ah! down below, where panting drills are eating thro' the rock,
Where life and death are lurking in the fire's convulsive shock,—
Where many a sturdy hero delves within the lode's long aisle
To win him love, the gold of love, along the Golden Mile.

Now speeding westward flies the train into the wondrous night,
The engine pulsing as a man who strives with strenuous might;
Its great heart seems to throb and throb, its breath comes fierce and warm
To vitalize the force that sleeps along its sinuous form;
So dreaming back from Somerville, a sad thought fills the air,
And starts a poignant fancy o'er the wondrous city where
From Lamington to Ivanhoe there's many a tear and smile
Beneath the myriad lights that gleam along the Golden Mile.

How bright they glitter down the streets o'er camp, and mill, and mine,
The reflex of that mystic stream that flows from dark to shine—
The brother of that vital spark that wakes from mystery,
And grows to life and will and power and human entity;
The confluent currents of the mind that holds us all in fief,
And gives to some the thrill of joy, to some the pang of grief—
Ah! many noble deeds are done and many that are vile

Where love is lost and love is won, along the Golden Mile.

So midnight chimes across the gloom, as we are speeding west,
And sirens screech the respite sweet that ends in sleep and rest;
The cool breeze meets the tired brow and whispers gentler tales
That seem to murmur with the metre sung by wheels and rails.
The night has grown in glory and from out the purple dome
Ten thousand stars are gleaming to show the wanderer home;
While fainter fades the glimmer, like a city on an isle,
Till swallowed in the darkness are the lights along the Mile.

Alfred Thomas Chandler