

**INTERLUDES AND
UNDERTONES: OR,
MUSIC AT TWILIGHT**

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Interludes and undertones: or, Music at twilight by Charles Mackay

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CHARLES MACKAY

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MUSIC AT TWILIGHT

BY

CHARLES MACKAY

AUTHOR OF "VOICES FROM THE CROWD," "ELEGIA," "A MAN'S REAR,"
"LEGENDS OF THE ISLES," ETC. ETC. ETC.

"Quisquis amat, nullâ est conditione senex"

PONTANUS

London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1884

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PREFACE.

THOUGH prefaces are nearly obsolete, from having degenerated into form without spirit, and into attempts to say something where nothing is required, I nevertheless think it necessary to affix a preface to this little volume by way of explanation. It is a collection of the last leaves that have grown on a literary tree which has been blossoming for forty years. If the tree were once gay with the flowers of Spring, it is possible that amid the yellowing foliage of its Autumn there may yet be found some flowers of fancy as well as some fruits of riper experience that may suit the tastes of the newer generation that has arisen since the author's earlier time. Laughter and tears, like flowers and fruit, are the produce of one stem; and if, when we survey society, we either laugh or weep, should the laughter dwindle to a smile or the tear refuse to flow because a sigh may be sufficient, we may be sure that both the smile and the sigh have the same origin in human sympathy. It is in this spirit that the author offers the following verses to the old friends who may remember his earlier efforts, and to the

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new friends whom it is possible he may acquire. Even in an age when Science, with its marvellous discoveries and no less marvellous applications, invades the monopoly once enjoyed by imagination, there is still room for poetry if it be worthy of the name and have a meaning clearly expressed in appropriate language, and can make good its claim to be something better than mere verse. To the class of readers who admire without understanding, and who unconsciously allow themselves to think that whatever is beyond the reach of their intellect must be magnificent, the author makes no appeal. He considers that it is the duty, and that it should be the pleasure of every writer, to express himself clearly, and if he cannot do so, that he should throw aside his useless pen as an admission that he has mistaken his vocation. Lyrical and all other poetry should avoid misty verbiage, confused thought, and pithless metaphysical subtleties, and should, as Milton says, be "simple, sensuous, and passionate," and, above all things, intelligible to the heart and understanding of the uneducated as well as of the refined. To the rule of Milton the author has endeavoured to conform his verse, not without the hope that it might thereby become poetry as distinguished from mere verse, even to the busy and prosaic-minded people of the closing decades of the nineteenth century.



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