

**A SUMMER IN  
SKYE. IN TWO  
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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A Summer in Skye. In Two Volumes, Vol. II by Alexander Smith

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# A SUMMER IN SKYE

BY ALEXANDER SMITH

AUTHOR OF "A LUCKY DEAR," ETC.

VOLUME II.



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## A SUMMER IN SKYE.

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### *THE LANDLORD'S WALK.*

**W**ALKING into the interior of Skye is like walking into antiquity ; the present is behind you, your face is turned toward Ossian. In the quiet silent wilderness you think of London, Liverpool, Edinburgh, or whatever great city it may be given you to live and work in, as of something of which you were cognisant in a former existence. Not only do you breathe the air of antiquity ; but everything about you is a veritable antique. The hut by the road-side, thatched with turfs, smoke issuing from the roof, is a specimen of one of the oldest styles of architecture in the world. The crooked spade with which the crofter turns over the sour ground carries you away into fable. You



remove a pile of stones on the moor, and you come to a flagged chamber in which there is a handful of human bones—*whose*, no one can tell. Duntulm and Dunsciach moulder on their crags, but the song the passing milkmaid sings is older than they. You come upon old swords that were once bright and athirst for blood; old brooches that once clasped plaids; old churchyards with carvings of unknown knights on the tombs; and old men who seem to have inherited the years of the eagle or the crow. These human antiques are, in their way, more interesting than any other: they are the most precious objects of *virtu* of which the island can boast. And at times, if you can keep ear and eye open, you stumble on forms of life, relations of master and servant, which are as old as the castle on the crag or the cairn of the chief on the moor. Cash payment is *not* the “sole nexus between man and man.” In these remote regions your servants’ affection for you is hereditary as their family name or their family ornaments; your foster-brother would die willingly for you; and if your nurse had the writing of your epitaph, you would be the bravest, strongest,

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handsomest man that ever walked in shoe leather or out of it.

The house of my friend Mr M'ian is set down on the shore of one of the great Lochs that intersect the island; and as it was built in smuggling times, its windows look straight down the Loch towards the open sea. Consequently at night, when lighted up, it served all the purposes of a lighthouse: and the candle in the porch window, I am told, has often been anxiously watched by the rough crew engaged in running a cargo of claret or brandy from Bordeaux. Right opposite, on the other side of the Loch, is the great rugged fringe of the Cuchullin hills; and lying on the dry summer grass you can see it, under the influence of light and shade, change almost as the expression of a human face changes. Behind the house the ground is rough and broken, every hollow filled, every knoll plumaged with birches, and between the leafy islands, during the day, rabbits scud continually, and in the evening they sit in the glades and wash their innocent faces. A mile or two back from the house a glen opens into soft green meadows, through which a stream flows; and

on these meadows Mr M'Ian, when the weather permits, cuts and secures his hay. The stream is quiet enough usually, but after a heavy day's rain, or when a waterspout has burst up among the hills, it comes down with a vengeance, carrying everything before it. On such occasions its roar may be heard a mile away. About a pistol-shot from the house the river is crossed by a plank bridge, and in fine weather it is a great pleasure to sit down there and look about one. The stream flows sluggishly over rocks, in the deep places of a purple or port-wine colour, and lo! behind you, through the arch, slips a sunbeam, and just beneath the eye there gleams a sudden chasm of brilliant amber. The sea is at ebb, and the shore is covered with stones and dark masses of sea-weed; and the rocks a hundred yards off—in their hollows they hold pools of clear sea-water in which you can find curious and delicately-coloured ocean blooms—are covered with orange lichens, which contrast charmingly with the masses of tawny dulse and the stone-littered shore on the one side, and the keen blue of the sea on the other. Beyond the blue of the sea the great hills rise, with a radiant