

THE SILVER FOX

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The silver fox by E. OE. Somerville & Martin Ross

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BY

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AUTHORS OF

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CHAPTER I

LADY SUSAN had never been so hungry in her life. So, for the sixth time, she declared between loud and unbridled yawns. She worked her chair across the parquet towards the fire-place, dragging the hearth-rug into folds in her progress, and put her large and well-shod feet on the fender.

"What a beast of a fire! When you've quite done with it, Bunny, I shouldn't mind seeing it just the same. You are a selfish thing!"

In obedience to this rebuke Major Bunbury moved an inch or two to one side.

"I'm not as selfish as you are," he said,

with agreeable simplicity. "Miss Morris can't see anything but your boots."

"Oh, she likes seeing boots," replied Lady Susan, establishing one on the hob. "They don't have 'em in Ireland, do they, Slancy!"

It was obviously the moment for Miss Morris to say something brilliant, but she let the opportunity slip. Perhaps she was hampered by the consciousness that her boots had been made in an Irish country town. She got red. She did not know that it was becoming to her to get red. Finding no more appropriate retort, she laughed, and pushing back her chair, walked over to the window. What she looked out on was the lawn at Hurlingham, covered smoothly and desolately with snow; a line of huddled, white hummocks of ice, moving very slowly across the middle distance, represented the River Thames; down to the right, five or six skaters glided on the black and serpentine curves of a little lake—they looked like marionettes sliding

along a wire. Even at that distance they seemed to Slaney over-dressed and artificial. No doubt they were screaming inanities to each other, as were these other English idiots in the room behind her. How ineffably stupid they were, and how shy and provincial they made her feel! How could Hugh have married into such a pack?

One of the double doors at the end of the room opened, and a small, dark man appeared.

"Awfully sorry to have kept you all waiting," he said abjectly. "I'm afraid it's a bad business; they say that there's nothing to be had here on Sundays at this time of year, unless it's ordered beforehand."

"Oh Lord!" ejaculated Lady Susan, bringing her foot and the shovel down with a crash. "Do you mean to say there's nothing to eat?"

"It's not quite as bad as that, but precious nearly," he replied, looking at her so deplorably that Slaney felt inclined to laugh.