

**SOCIETY'S QUEEN,
IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Society's Queen, in Three Volumes, Vol. I by Ina Leon Cassilis

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INA LEON CASSILIS

**SOCIETY'S QUEEN,
IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

SOCIETY'S QUEEN.

A NOVEL.

BY

INA LEON CASSILIS,

AUTHOR OF "A LOVELESS SACRIFICE," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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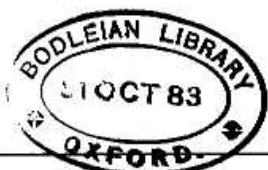
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SOCIETY'S QUEEN.



CHAPTER I.

THE MEMBER FOR MELTON PARVA.

RENGARTH was in a state of excitement. It was not often that the little Cornish sea-coast village had anything more stirring than a wreck to enliven it—and that was not a pleasurable excitement; but on this sunny June day some unusual event had led the fishermen and their wives to deck themselves in their best attire, and caused more or less successful attempts at decoration here and there, notably at the Devereux Arms, the inn,—for there was only one—which displayed two or three bits of gay bunting, the Union Jack floating from a flagstaff on the roof.

The London train had just come in, and a young man, well dressed, and carrying a small travelling-bag, alighted, and asked the porter the way to the hotel—if there was one—and being directed to the aforesaid Devereux Arms, he bent his steps in that direction. Around the old-fashioned porch a group of villagers stood talking so earnestly that they hardly even noticed the stranger as he passed through their midst, and entering the neat little parlour, sat down somewhat wearily; but before he had removed his hat, good Mrs Vosper, in her Sunday dress, with cherry ribbons in her cap, stood curtseying before him.

“Good day, sir. What will you please, sir? We have very nice fowls, sir, and some beautiful mutton, and—”

“Thank you,” said the young man; “I require only a mutton-chop, and a pint of claret—if you keep it; if not, a glass of ale will do. But what is going on here? A marriage? or some grandee expected?”

“Lor’, sir,” answered the hostess, “of course you wouldn’t know, being a stranger here; but you’re not far from the mark in your last guess. You’ve heard tell of Sir Randal Chandos-Devereux of Chandos Royal, of course, sir?”

“Well,” said the young man, smiling, “I come from Canada; but I have heard of the

family. The second son had a very brilliant career at Oxford?"

"Yes, sir," agreed the landlady, brimming over with her news. "Well, sir, it's him that's just been elected for Melton Parva. He went abroad a few years ago, when he left Oxford, and as soon as he came back the townspeople asked him to stand; and what do you think, sir?" said Mrs Vosper, indignantly, "the Radicals were impudent enough to set up somebody—a tradesman, as I've heard—from London, against Mr Vivian; but, lor', he only got ten votes, though they say he bribed like anything!"

"Mr Devereux, then, did not need to bribe?" interrogated the stranger, as the landlady paused to take breath.

"No fear, sir! Why," and Mrs Vosper smiled, "they'd only need to look at him to vote for him! Such a handsome man, sir, and so beautiful-spoken; and then look what a grand family the Chandos-Devereux are, and the property they've got! All Pengarth and miles round belongs to them; and you know Mr Vivian has Rougemont—that's fifteen miles from here. Rougemont always goes to the second son."

"I see. Is Mr Vivian, then, expected home to-day?"

"Yes, sir, that's it; and there'll be grand doings at the Royal presently. Lady Con-