



Phineas Finn: The Irish Member

Anthony Trollope

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Phineas Finn - The Irish Member by Anthony Trollope. Phineas Finn is a novel by Anthony Trollope and the name of its leading character. The novel was first published as a monthly serial from October 1867 to May 1868 in St Paul's Magazine. It is the second of the "Palliser" series of novels. Its sequel, Phineas Redux, is the fourth novel in the series. It deals with both British parliamentary politics of the 1860s, including voting reform (secret ballot and eliminating rotten boroughs and Irish tenant-right) and Finn's romances with women of fortune, which would secure his financial future. Finn is the only son of a successful Irish doctor, Dr Malachi Finn of Killaloe, County Clare, who sends him to London to become a lawyer. He proves to be a lackadaisical student, but being pleasant company and strikingly handsome to boot, he makes many influential friends. One of them, a politician, Barrington Erle, suggests that he stand for Parliament in the coming election. At first, the idea seems absurd. Finn is supported solely by a modest allowance from his father, but a stroke of luck clears his path. One of his father's patients is Lord Tulla, a nobleman who controls a little borough that can be contested cheaply. Lord Tulla has had a falling out with his brother, the long-time officeholder. As a result, while the staunchly Tory lord will not support the Whig Finn, neither will he hamper him. Convincing his sceptical father to provide the funds needed, Finn wins his seat by a small margin. The closest of his London friends is his mentor, Lady Laura Standish, the daughter of the prominent Whig politician Lord Brentford. As their relationship develops, Finn considers asking for her hand in marriage, despite the great social and financial gulf between them. Lady Laura senses this, but despite her partiality for the man, monetary considerations and her own political ambitions convince her to marry the dour, extremely wealthy Robert Kennedy instead. At first devastated, Finn soon recovers and becomes enamoured of a lovely heiress, Violet Effingham. This proves to be awkward, as both Lady Laura and Lord Brentford vehemently want her to marry (and hopefully tame) Lord Brentford's estranged son, the savage Lord Chiltern. In addition, Lady Laura encourages Finn to become acquainted with her brother. Finn and Chiltern become fast friends, which makes the situation even more uncomfortable. When Chiltern finds out that Finn is also courting Violet, he becomes infuriated and unreasonably demands that Finn withdraw. When he refuses, Chiltern insists on a duel. This is held in secret at Blankenberg, resulting in Finn being slightly wounded. Eventually, Violet has to choose between her two main suitors; she somewhat fearfully decides in favour of her childhood sweetheart, Chiltern.

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