

THE

AUGUST

# Atlantic



**Labor's Fight for Power.** . . . . . GEORGE E. SOKOLSKY 129  
*A. F. of L. Takes the Field*

**Remarks: None. A Story of Hot Wires** . . . . WILLIAM WISTER HAINES 143

**Delightful People** . . . . . MRS. WINTHROP CHANLER 156

**'Try Your Hap against the Irishmen'** . . . . . MURIEL SPERRY 165

**These Coils of Debt. Our Laocoön** . . . . . ARTHUR POUND 171

**An Artifice of Dust. Verse.** . . . . . LIONEL WIGGAM 181

**Paddling through Europe.** . . . . . MAJOR R. RAVEN-HART 182

**The Club Secretary** . . . . . LORD DUNSANY 192  
*An Excursion across the Border*

**Pioneers of Silence** . . . . . MARGARET PRESCOTT MONTAGUE 195

**Suffolk with a Porpoise.** . . . . . GLANVILLE SMITH 203

**The Brook** . . . . . BRADFORD K. DANIELS 213

**The Birthday Tree. A Story of My Own** . . . . . ANN BRIDGE 223

**Post-Obit for Post-Depressionists** . . . . . LEONARD BACON 226  
*A Poetical Polemic*

**A Post Office in Fairyland** . . . . . HILDA WORTHINGTON SMITH 231

**The Oxford Group Movement. An Appraisal** . . HENRY P. VAN DUSEN 240

**Contributors' Club** . . . . . 253

40 cents



# THE CLUB SECRETARY

BY LORD DUNSANY

I THINK I have said that it is the custom in our Club to discuss gardening during the spring and summer, or rather to hear the tales of what various members have been doing in their gardens, or of any wonderful growth that has come unwontedly early or incredibly large in the garden of any one of us; but when the season of fogs returns, and the sun sets behind houses before the middle of luncheon, it is rather our custom to tell tales of brighter scenes, to keep our little crescent before the fire from falling asleep, or from drifting away one by one to toy with some tedious business. It was upon such an occasion as this that one of our group in his chair before the fire, who seemed about to be falling asleep, suddenly opened his eyes wide and exclaimed: 'For the Lord's sake someone tell us of somewhere where there is sunlight.' And I heard Jorkens draw in a breath. But, before he had time to speak, the voice of Terbut was raised. 'And let's hear of England this time,' he said. 'I'm tired of the ends of the earth.'

A more deliberate attempt to put Jorkens out of his stride I have seldom heard. But it had no effect. 'I saw a curious thing once in England,' Jorkens said; 'a very curious thing. I was taking a walk out of London once — a long walk with sandwiches, and a good flask, one that would hold a pint. Partly I went for exercise, but it was more to please the spirit than the body that I went. I had somehow got tired of pavements. You know how one

feels then; and spring was coming on with a rush. I don't know what way I went, only that it must have been roughly southwards, for the sun was in my eyes, until it got round to my right.

'I started early and had no lunch until some time after two, for I would not sit down and eat till I was completely clear of London. I must have done a good twenty miles. I sat myself down on a bank of grass by the road, with a hedge in front of me as green as a meteor, along the top of a bank on the opposite side. Primroses were out on the bank, and early violets. There I ate my lunch, with birds singing, and white clouds scurrying over the dome of a blue sky. What was the other side of the hedge on the bank I had no idea: I could see neither through nor over. I sat there wondering comfortably all through my lunch. And after lunch my long walk, the bright sun, birds singing, and one thing and another, were bringing a drowsiness on me, when a sudden bout of curiosity made me leap up and cross the road, and look for a gap in the hedge. Through a gap low down among the stems of the thorn I saw smooth lawns stretching away, and a little house with bow windows and bottle-glass panes and red roof, that was clearly the house of a golf club. And looking at it through the hedge never soothed my curiosity, for the light of spring was hanging so strongly over those lawns that they somehow seemed to have the glow of lawns seen long ago

in the early morning and remembered almost from infancy; there seemed something as magical about them as that.

'I was a lot slenderer in those days, and once I got my head through the gap in the hedge it was only a matter of wriggling. No one was playing golf, and I walked up to the clubhouse with not a soul in sight, and no sound of anyone stirring. Grass of Parnassus was flowering in such abundance that I wondered if those smooth lawns were not too marshy for golf. I came all in the silence to the oaken door of the golf club. And there a hall porter, glittering with livery that was out of date in its splendor, opened the door at once. I had then to apologize and explain I was lost; and, thinking to put a better face on it to an official of the club than to the hall porter, or at any rate hoping to gain time, I asked to see the secretary. Well, the secretary was in the little clubhouse, and the hall porter brought him at once.

"What can I do for you?" he said, all amiability.

"I wanted to apologize," I said. "I am not a member of your golf club. I lost my way on your links."

'He smiled away my apology. "It's not a golf club," he said.

"Not?" said I.

"No," he replied airily. Why did I say "airily"? He seemed to me airy. He seemed volatile, energetic, even for a club secretary. "No, not a golf club," he said.

"I quite thought it was a golf club," said I.

"No," he replied. "It's a club, as a matter of fact, for poets."

"For poets?" I said.

"Yes," said the secretary, "and, what may quite surprise you, for the poets of all time."

"Of all time?" I said.

"Yes," he repeated, and, beckoning me forward to the inner doors of the

hall, he pointed through its glass panes. "There you see Swinburne," he said, "talking to Herrick."

'And sure enough I recognized the earnest face of Swinburne talking, and saw the man that the secretary told me was Herrick giving little answering chuckles. And somehow, in spite of what the secretary had said, it did n't surprise me at all; there was something so fairylike in the light on the lawns before I got to the club, and something so far from this age in the little house, that it seemed only natural that it had gathered up from the ages what was lost to other lawns. I should not have been surprised to see Homer himself. And sure enough there he stood, stroking his beard, eyes full of thought, giving me somehow the impression of a most tremendous Tory.

"And there's Stephen Phillips," he said, "talking to Dante."

'And I recognized the two men, and seemed to see, through the rather dim glass of the door, a certain resemblance of feature.

"A bit lucky, was n't he, getting elected?" I said, pointing to Stephen Phillips.

"Well, yes," said the secretary, "but you have luck in all clubs — there's always somebody who may be just not quite."

'And then Tennyson went by, on the other side of the shimmering glass. I recognized him immediately.

"He's having a bit of a slump over there," I said, pointing over the lawns to the way by which I had come.

"Oh, he's all right here," said the secretary.

"And the waiters?" I said, for they were passing to and fro.

"All writers too," he said. "All wrote good stuff. But not immortal. He's the best we have on our staff," he said, pointing to the hall porter. "That's Pope."

"Pope," I said. "Is it really? I

suppose your standard of membership . . .”

“Pretty high,” he said. “You see, we have Shakespeare, Milton, and all of them. There goes Shelley.”

‘And sure enough I saw a light figure slipping by, to drop what looked like a political pamphlet unnoticed in somebody’s hat.

“And the name of the club?” I asked.

“The Elysian Club,” he said.

‘Somehow I had thought so.

‘Pope only hall porter, Homer himself a member. Who, then, was the secretary? That was the question that in this extraordinary club, where I might have found so much of overpowering interest, became the one thought that absorbed me. What a power is curiosity, when once awakened! I might have heard Shakespeare speak. And yet I wasted my time in trying to satisfy my miserable curiosity as to who the secretary was.

“Of course you write yourself,” I said.

“Very little,” he answered; “I gave it up long ago.”

‘Gave it up! That was even more baffling than ever. Yet greater than Pope, whoever he was. Was he Keats? I thought for a moment. For Keats perhaps wrote little compared to some of them. But no, Keats never gave it up.

‘There was nothing for it but to ask him his name. Which I did. And he told me. And, do you know, it conveyed to me nothing whatever. And that was awkward. It left me saying, “Yes, yes, of course,” and remarks like that, too transparent not to be seen

through. But he took no offense. “No, no, you would n’t have heard of me,” he said. “I never wrote enough. One great line — that’s what the members say. If I had written thirty I could have been a member myself. But only one great line, they say. Better than that fellow, you know,” he said, pointing to the hall porter. “Yet not enough for full membership. But I *am* an honorary member.”

‘Well, I’ve read a good deal of poetry, knocking about the world, and the line might convey something where the name never could. And sure enough it did. I asked him if he would mind repeating the line to me; and he began at once. “A rose-red,” he began, but I got the rest of it in before he had time to. “City half as old as time,” said I.

“Yes,” he said. “A rose-red city half as old as time,” repeating the beautiful line like a good host relishing a taste of his century-old port. “It’s a pity I could n’t have made thirty of them; but I am really very comfortable as I am. Would you like to see my office?”

‘Well, he showed me into a very snug little room, and I should have liked to stop and talk with him, and especially to see more of the members; but, after all, I had forced my way into the club, and had taken up quite enough of his time already. So I offered him my pint flask, which of course I had filled with whiskey, as some slight return for his trouble. And, do you know, he drank up every drop of it. When I opened it for a drop for myself when I got back to the road, I found it was quite empty.’

*Nominations for the Club proposed and seconded by ATLANTIC readers will receive the thoughtful consideration of the Governing Board*