

# SEPTEMBER HEAT

Written for "The Listener" by  
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INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS (N.Z.) LTD.,  
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## Revitalise Your KIDNEYS

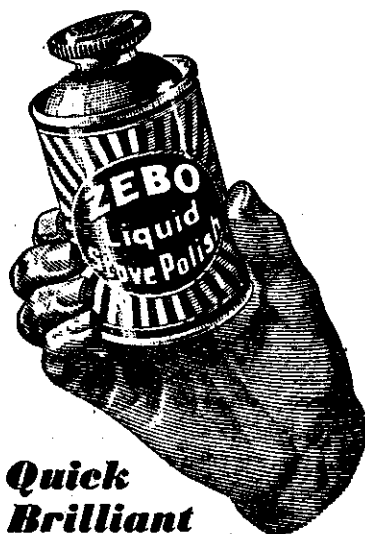
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IT is September now, but the long summer shows no signs of ending. The grass is brown and dry, rubbed bare and sandy in many places. There is still a fierce heat in the sun. Only the heaps of fallen leaves under the trees reveal the month. All the deck chairs are out on the stretch of grass from Marble Arch along Park Lane and the Londoners are sprawled in these, packed tight, reading, sleeping, knitting and watching the crowds moving and changing before them. Just within Marble Arch, on the asphalt, partly sheltered by the trees, is the traditional place for the platforms to be set up and the speakers to declaim. But they have spread out beyond this now, over the wide stretch of grass that leads to the Serpentine. All over this grass, too, people are resting. Here, a sailor and his girl are entwined. Here, mum and dad have sat down and taken baby out of his pram. Here, peaceful and unconcerned, a couple lie asleep, unaware of feet churning the ground almost at their ear.

We attach ourselves to a group and listen. The hecklers here are loud and many and two policemen stand at the edge of the crowd, their presence a silent warning. This is a Conservative speaker yelling strongly to drown the chorus of boos and jeers that greets his statements.

"It will all happen in the night," he yells. "You won't know a thing about it, and in the morning we'll have a Conservative Government."

The booing is renewed.

WE drift on. Over there, under a tree, is a most vehement speaker. His platform trembles as he dips and bends and waves his arms. His whole body seems wracked with emotion. He is the Irish speaker and is wearing a national costume of short orange kilt with emerald green tabs in his stockings. But the passion of his gestures is lacking in his speech. It is stilted, parrot-like, and hesitant.

"Everywhere you go," he points upwards and then with a wide sweep downwards, "you will find Irish men and women . . . peace-loving people. . ."

We are out of the shelter of the trees now, and it is hotter listening and must be even hotter speaking. This orator waves his Bible over his head.

"It is all in the prophet Isaiah," he screams, "all the catastrophic and cataclysmic happenings. Look at the map!"

We look at the map — it is of Europe with arrows stretching out from Germany and Russia. Above is the caption: "The Fifth or Stone Kingdom." We do not see the significance.

Here is a woman, elderly, wispy, a

hat thrust down upon her head, a hand-bag clutched under one arm. No set platform, no placards, for her; she has relied on inspiration. Standing insecurely on a green park chair, she harangues the crowd. What her inspiration is, we do not discover.

"I expect," she bites out her words from a mouth that is almost toothless, "an Englishman to revere his women kind, even when painted and powdered. . ."

Next is a speaker more polished in approach and technique. He is a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain—not the Labour Party—and as such he is busy denouncing all other political parties. He is also describing the aims and ends of his own party, but he is a long time coming to the point—the art of these open-air speakers lies in saying in two hours what could be said in five minutes. He is hindered, too, by a Communist standing behind him whose interjections he treats with good-natured contempt.

WE wander back towards Marble Arch. The crowd has thickened; speeches are more vehement, groups are larger. There are more speakers, too. Small independent groups stand around, not bothering with chair or rostrum. All that is needed is for two men to start an argument and soon a crowd will have collected. Here is a member of the Catholic Evidence Guild, speaking on St. Francis and his cloak. Here the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen is fighting its battles all over again. A little group of eight, the men black suited and respectable, the women gloved and dowdy, have formed a circle and are singing hymns. But their voices are drowned in the grander volume of "Abide With Me" sung by the group surrounding a Church of England parson who conducts vigorously.

"Fa . . . st fa . . . ls the e . . . venti . . . de," he bellows and the crowd responds.

In this next group the speaker has entirely lost control and two hecklers at his feet are busy insulting each other. The speaker himself seems out of place. A suave young man with a little moustache and a smile he knows is charming, he looks neither fanatical nor eccentric. The argument within his circle ends as one heckler goes off to make his own platform ten feet away. The suave young man recaptures his audience.

"My friends," he says, and the accent is vaguely Ameri-

can, "a few years ago we Mormons were thought to be devils with horns and tails. Now you can see I have no horns. . ."

Here is an intimate little group—it is difficult at times to tell which are family discussions and which are public meetings. A lean and hungry man, unshaven, with gaps where his teeth once were, bends forward over the back of his chair to confound a tubby little man.

"My friend," he says, "in the British Museum you will find the skeletons of prehistoric animals."

"But," replies Tubby, "they must be historic. They can't be prehistoric if you can see them."

HERE is a speaker who catches the eye, an African, his dark face vital and eager, his movements vigorous, his voice rich and warm. All this is in marked contrast with the miserable little man who is disturbing his attack on British colonial policy.

"What about Australia?" says the heckler, his voice a whine, his accent nasal.

"My dear sir," replies the African, and his voice is smooth and Oxford. "To hell with Australia! I am talking of the colonies!"

This is the rostrum of the African League and the crowd about us is full of dark faces. There are Negroes from Jamaica in zoot suits with the collars of their bright floral shirts over their coat lapels. There are the intelligent bespectacled faces of law students from West Africa and Gray's Inn. There are swarthy Malays and Indians and even a Chinese.

We move on. Here is a Communist—or perhaps he is an Anarchist. He is a young Jew, perhaps twenty-two, good-looking and well groomed, but his face is distorted with the passion with which he is forcing out his words. He clutches the edge of his platform, leans forward, yells down his opponent and the veins stand out thick in his neck. "Have you ever been to Russia?" Speaker and heckler both point and scream at each other. It is a test of lung power and endurance and the Communist wins.

WE are hot and dusty now, worn out with standing and pushing and being pushed. We cross Rotten Row and step out on to Bayswater Road. We buy peaches from a barrow boy—"8d. each or three for 2/-"—and stand and eat them while we watch the crowd. There is an American tourist with a cine-camera taking photos of his friend buying fruit from a barrow. An African girl passes us, striking and graceful in a

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