



FIREMAN ARTIST Bernard Hailstone with his portrait study—one of the works by artist members of the London Fire Service at an exhibition opening at the Royal Academy to-day.

Hannen Swaffer's Headline . .

FIREMEN SHOW AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

MANY miracles of achievement have been born out of the war's testing-time. I know of few more extraordinary than the work of London's firemen artists.

They not only did nobly, with the others, all through the night, in saving the metropolis. When morning came they sat down and recorded—tragedy and drama in oil and water-colour, and humour in crayon and carbon—the incidents of the hours of flame-lit darkness.

● **FIREMEN**, in the early days of the Blitz, were buried in sacking because coffins were short! Their widows, in the chaos of mismanagement, sometimes had to rely on the charity of friends.

Flame-fighting casualties, killed or wounded, reached nearly four-figure dimensions in the first six weeks. Firemen, while saving other property, lost their own homes.

Yet the artists among them painted the Great Fires of London as a part of contemporary history.

● **THEIR** first show, exhibited in an art school off Holborn, is now in the States. The second, which Herbert Morrison will open to-day, is now on the Royal Academy walls!

Larger, and much better than the first, it is remarkable for the work of one fireman colourist—Leonard Rosoman, normally a teacher at the Reimann school of industrial art.

● **WHILE** crouching in a doorway in Shoe-lane, he saw a house collapsing on two firemen colleagues. They were killed. He and others were entrapped.

The incident photographed itself on his mind. Yesterday I saw it recorded almost with genius. It is vital with movement. The tragedy lives on, in paint.

● **NEAR** by, Rosoman shows "Bomb Blast and Debris," a memory of Queen Victoria-street. It is an incredibly clever picture of blast—just bursting air.

He has painted, too, wind blowing through a jet of water and steam hissing from debris in Upper Thames-street, and firemen walking through water and smoke in Scrubb's-lane.

All are uncanny Impressionism. So is a picture of a grating after the flames have died away—just the grating and some rubble.

● **IN** the next room, where the comic firemen artists clown, you will get many laughs. Even a Blitz is not all grim.

"And I put threepence in the box for a Spitfire!" moans one much-bombed fire-fighter. "Where is the blighter?"

Ben Betts records this real incident—and also the plight of the man who tried to drink from a hose in full action, only to have his false teeth blown away!

● **PROBLEMS** now arise because of the War Office decision to circulate among platoon commanders two official publications, in alternate weeks.

One will explain the war—weeks late, of course—and the other will deal with "current affairs."

From these, the officers are to choose subjects for explanation to the troops.

● "WHAT political side will the officers take?" asked a journalist of the War Office spokesman who explained the scheme.

"There shouldn't be any difficulty over that," replied the Brass Hat.

Still, as the troops are to discuss the topics after the officers have "explained"—well, there should be some lively arguments.

● **WHILE** the Churches demand "religious teaching" in the schools, parsons themselves seem badly in need of instruction.

The Rev. Philip D. B. Miller, vicar of West Wycombe, writes childish nonsense in his parish magazine.

"We must not forget that holy Russia is now in the power of self-declared Bolsheviks. . . ."

"There is, if anything, less freedom in Russia than in Nazi Germany and there has been in that great country a more violent attack on Christian principles than anywhere else except perhaps Mexico. . . ."

"Perhaps in the providence of God these evils will be turned away from and a Christian philosophy of life be re-established as a result of the sufferings which anti-Christian ideologies have brought to us. . . ."

"Let us by all means help Russia to defend her soil, but consistently defend ourselves from contamination."

"The basis of the Bolshevik order is as anti-Christian and anti-moral as that of Germany."

The Rev. Philip D. B. Miller must put on his gloves while he holds a newspaper containing news of Russia's resistance.

Herbert Morrison
 12 noon
 Regent - 4895
 Mr. Borham
 organizer
 230
 at - Press Room

Entertainments

PICTURES BY FIREMEN

EXHIBITION AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

At the Royal Academy yesterday morning Mr. Herbert Morrison opened an exhibition of paintings by London firemen artists. It is to continue for about three weeks, and will be open from 10 to 6 on weekdays and from 2 to 6 on Sundays. Admission is free.

This is not the first exhibition of the kind to be held, but it is both larger and more varied than that which was seen in London earlier in the year, and which has since visited the United States and Canada. Then the impression given was that the artists had been successful mainly in one thing—the representation of great masses of red flame with buildings silhouetted against them. There are still plenty of flame pictures in the present show, and it is still true that subjects tend to repeat themselves; but, without sacrificing any of the documentary value and sense of actuality of the first pictures, the artists now show signs of having had time to think things over, and to pay attention to the subtler aspects of London under the German fire bombs.

Even in the paintings of flame this increased subtlety is seen, as in some of those of Leonard Rosoman, who makes several interesting attempts to catch not merely the fierceness and terror of fire, but also something of its complexity as a moving, quivering mass of light. But many of the exhibitors have also seized with success upon less dramatic but no less pictorial aspects of the scene, such as the blending of steam and smoke with the colours of London buildings after the worst of the fire is over—a theme which is treated in pictures like Mr. Rosoman's "Steam Rising from Débris, Upper Thames Street"; Mr. Bernard Hailstone's "Ruins of a Wren Church in Cannon Street"; Mr. Norman Hepple's "Dawn"; and Mr. Leslie Carr's fine architectural interior, "St. Bride's Testimony to Nazi Culture (Damping Down)."

Not all the exhibits are concerned with fires in progress or with smouldering ruins and demolitions. There are a number of portraits, including Mr. Norman Hepple's "Major F. W. Jackson, Chief Commander, London Fire Force," and Mr. Paul Dessau's more than usually interesting "Self-Portrait," in which the artist is seen in the background of a pleasantly painted still life. Mr. Reginald Mills in "Civil Defence Review, Hyde Park," a bright picture of jets of water playing over the Serpentine; and Mr. Rudolph Haybrook in "The Fireboat Massey Shaw in Dunkirk Harbour, June, 1940," illustrate other aspects of the London fireman's life in wartime. Among the drawings are, most notably, some excellent architectural work in pen and pencil tinted with water-colour by Mr. Norman Hepple; and a distinguished series, including several views of ruined City churches, by Mr. E. Boye Uden, who combines strength and a sense of quietly dramatic composition with a very delicate and pleasing use of colour. A selection of humorous drawings are also on view.

Firemen Artists at the Royal Academy

The first collection of paintings of "London Burning" by firemen artists was held at the Central Schools in Kingsway. It is now in Canada after a three weeks' stay in Washington, where it was seen by nearly 100,000 people. The second exhibition, to be opened to-morrow at the Royal Academy by Mr. Herbert Morrison, is a bigger and a better show than the first. The paintings are more considered, as, indeed, is natural, as the firemen have now been given a patch of tranquillity in which to remember and to digest their rather too violent emotions of last winter. Scarlet and black still predominate, though here and there the acid greenish white of incendiary bombs adds a cooler note.

Paul Dessau, in his quartet of pictures collectively entitled "Menace," has given the demon of the "Blitz" a personal existence and shown him in turn approaching, triumphant, struggling against odds, and finally defeated by hoses and heroism. One terrifyingly authentic pictorial document shows a burning wall falling on a team of firemen.