

## WAR BLINDED CRAFTSMAN TO MEET QUEEN MOTHER

A war-blinded veteran of the Great War who was the first man to be successfully placed by St. Dunstan's in industrial work, will next week meet the Queen Mother, Princess Margaret and other members of the Royal Family when he takes part in a War Disabled Ex-Service Men's Exhibition and Sale of Work in London.

He is William Henry Lacey of 87 Victoria Road, Edmonton, N.9, now aged 68, and he is particularly looking forward to meeting the Queen Mother for he has written a piece of music for Coronation Year which he has called "Elizabeth Hello!"

Mr. Lacey who served as a Private in the R.A.S.C. (M.T.) in the Great War in France and Italy, was at one time a pianoforte finisher and regulator before his failing sight deteriorated sufficiently for him to be admitted to St. Dunstan's in 1931. Strangely enough he did not learn to play the piano until he became totally blind. At St. Dunstan's he was trained to do basketwork and for a time specialised in nursery furniture. Then he was trained to operate a router machine and later got a job for himself as a router operator making wardrobes and lockers for the R.A.F. He was then placed in work making accessories for fighter planes and tanks, and despite the lack of sight he broke all records and once produced 43,000 accessories a day for five days. But then Mr. Lacey is not afraid of hard work, for in those days when he was in his late fifties he thought nothing of working from 7 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. five days a week and until 4 p.m. on Saturdays, and what is more he still did his fire watching duty during the late war in the evenings.

Now Mr. Lacey is back on furniture work again for St. Dunstan's, and his craftsmanship is a fine example of the skill and patience of the British war disabled soldier whose work the Queen Mother and others will see next week. He is at present engaged on making stools, children's chairs and general basketwork.

But all this is only a part of Mr. Lacey's life for he has from the earliest days in the Great War, when he used to entertain the troops, been a light comedian of some standing. Indeed, if he had decided to take up the variety profession as a career, many of his friends think that he would have gone a long way, for he has the natural ability of the London cockney - he has lived in the Tottenham and Edmonton area all his life - of making people laugh. He still entertains at local concerts, especially the old folks and at the North Middlesex Hospital at Edmonton. He is also, as indicated by his song "Elizabeth Hello!", a composer, and to date has written four songs, the others being "Ida", "Tommy change to Bill" and "A dame song". He writes his own lyrics first, then strums the air on a piano, and when he is satisfied with it, gets a musical friend to put the tune down on paper - and so a new song is written by this blind composer, comedian, and craftsman. Once he sang one of his own songs in a Wilfred Pickles programme, but has not yet had one of his compositions accepted for general publication. But he is still hoping.

Mr. Lacey is also a keen sportsman and still follows football as he should do, for in his earlier days he played for the Tottenham Hotspurs Reserves. A married man, Mr. Lacey has one son, two daughters and eight grandchildren.

At the Lord Roberts Workshops in Brompton Road, London, where the War Disabled Ex-Service Men's Exhibition is taking place from 3rd to 14th November, Mr. Lacey will be on the St. Dunstan's stand exhibiting his work, and with the thrill of meeting members of the Royal Family and other personages, being photographed for newsreels and televised, this fortnight is likely to remain an outstanding event in Mr. Lacey's long and full life.

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF MAJOR B. CURTIS, PUBLICITY ADVISER, WAR DISABLED EX-SERVICE MEN'S EXHIBITION, 1 SOUTH AUDLEY STREET, LONDON, W.1. (GROsvenor 4946).

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P/62