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LONDON LETTER

Culture and the Consolidated Rate

(By Airmail — Special to
"The Listener")

October 7

MORE and more the arts are becoming public property, at any rate in England. It may be a monotonous story, this repetition of one essential fact—Covent Garden taken over by the State, sculpture exhibited by the L.C.C., ballet sent to fishery towns by the Arts Council, and so on and on—but it is a significant one. It has not ended yet, or ceased to be interesting.

The Local Government Act, 1948, now permits municipalities to spend 6d in the pound out of the rates on entertainment. Kensington is to be the first London borough to exercise this right, and beginning on November 17 there are to be fortnightly concerts at the Town Hall on Kensington High Street (opposite Barkers, Pontings, and Derry and Toms, those mansions of merchandise for what Wyndham Lewis calls The Peke District. Moiseiwitch, Kentner, Heddl Nash, and Campoli are already on the bill. Sixpence in the pound produces £70,000 a year in Kensington, but Alderman Jenkins, Conservative leader on the borough, who with the Socialist leader has backed the scheme, says it is hoped the concerts will support themselves, and if there is any loss it will be made good up to a sum

of £500. After which presumably the concerts would be called off. They will be managed by one of the London ticket-agent firms, who have teams of experienced concert managers. Seventy-three 1/- seats will be allotted to Kensington Youth Clubs.

MANY of this country's finest private art collections are being scattered on loan to public galleries, because their once wealthy owners can no longer afford to keep them cared for, or to keep the mansions that provided the hanging space. Thus many great masterpieces will be on public view for the first time.

Some owners have approached London galleries, wishing apparently to retain nominal ownerships, but to have their pictures hung, rather than stored in anticipation of Mr. Churchill's return to power, and kept at the right temperature. The Duke of Devonshire is the latest to do this, according to the *Daily Telegraph*.

His assistant librarian at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, where his pictures are hung, told a reporter that he was "faced with problems of light and heat." Valuable pictures would rot away if he kept them where they are, on his present fuel allocation.

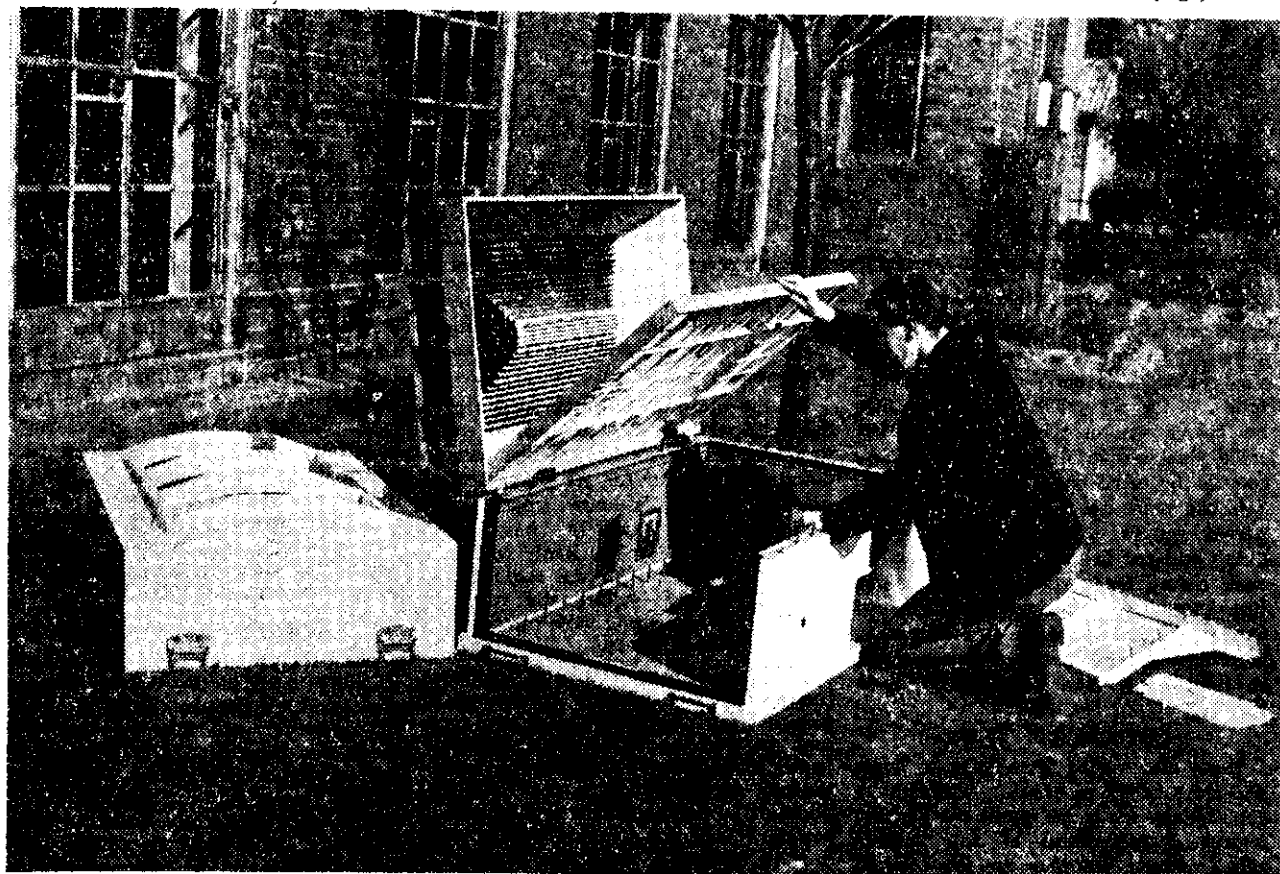
About 20 of the Chatsworth collection are already on loan to museums. Another 60, the best, will be seen in a commercial gallery in Old Bond Street

in October (at a price) and afterwards re-hung in museums. Among them is Holbein's cartoon of Henry VIII which has never been publicly shown.

Birmingham Art Gallery at present has two collections on loan, part of the Wantage Collection belong to Captain C. L. Lloyd, and Lord Rothschild's, which includes some Gainsboroughs. Lord Rothschild gave up Rushbrooke Hall a year ago and took a smaller house at Cambridge. The Earl of Ellesmere recently sold Bridgewater House, Piccadilly, and part of his collection has gone to the Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh, "on loan."

THE L.C.C. recently provided exhibition space in the Victoria Embankment Gardens, by the Thames just below Charing Cross station, so that London's unknown artists could exhibit their own work. It was a sort of free-for-all, but the only unkindness came from the weather. Some of the painters who went there early in the morning to hang pictures on the wire netting seemed more upset about their frames being spoilt by rain than their pictures. Some were good, and some were bad, naturally; some imitative, and some original. It was a good idea, and might give some promising painters a free start. The artists themselves, standing at receipt of custom, were dressed in cloaks, sandals, beards (according to sex) and

(continued on next page)



WHILE owners of private art collections in Britain are bothered by considerations of fuel and space, scientists have been trying to solve the problem of the better lighting of public galleries. The model shown above, designed to demonstrate an improved method of daylighting large galleries by means of light-reflecting louvres in the roof and ceiling, was exhibited at the Imperial College of Science and Technology a few months ago. The design reduces shadow and concentrates the strongest light on the paintings instead of on the upper walls.