

FIRE SWEEPS LONDON CATACOMBS

London's mystery blaze entails a 36 hour battle. Starting in a basement stacked with Xmas trees, it soon spread around the winding catacombs below Covent Garden's flower hall. Defying dense smoke-clouds, relays of firemen find that they can't come to grips with the heart of the blaze. Though it's the Garden's biggest fire for a decade, the market is still open - seemingly undisturbed by an outbreak that has already caused the death of one fireman and put thirty more into hospital.

Powerful arelights are used to pierce the black smoking inferno. 500 firemen are called in from all parts of the capital to tackle the blaze. A million gallons of water are poured into the vast building, and down below, a miniature flood spells new danger.

Though masked and roped together, the firemen find the heat too much for them. Overcome by smoke and flames, they are ordered up in relays for a breather.

After a fight that has lasted two days and a night, the firemen win the battle of the vaults. London's thanks go out to a company of men, who certainly earned their Xmas dinners