

THE DIPLOMA GALLERY

Each in his golden frame for ever laid
The rude forefathers of the forty sleep.

THE Diploma Gallery has been re-opened to the public. "Why!" you may say, "was it shut?"—or possibly, "What is the Diploma Gallery?"

To people who do not know this institution London must be a veritable nightmare of unending noise; it has been so to me these last six years. Charles Lamb praised the peace of a Quakers' meeting: would that I had his skill to tell of the repose and silence of the Diploma Gallery! . . . I did not often go to it. I do not suppose that Charles Lamb often went to a Quakers' meeting. But I knew that it was open to me, and that in the vortex of London I could be sure of solitude as tranquil as any in the world.

Usually I have been alone. There was always a policeman near the door, but he never moved and I doubt if he were real. In the inner room a pair of lovers used to meet; but the policeman gazed at nothing, and the lovers at one another, so I had the pictures to myself. American visitors sometimes intruded; but they were breathless and subdued after all those stairs and they never stayed long.

Let those who love peace and pictures follow these directions. They will spend nothing but their time and for that they will get good value. Between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. walk into Burlington House as though you were making for the Royal Academy. Go up the steps into the lobby and turn to your right. A notice points the way to the Gibson and Diploma Galleries. Do not hurry up the stairs; take them gently, pausing to examine the drawings that hang there. You may see why Blake admired Flaxman, and why Sanby set a whole generation of painters experimenting in water-

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colour. When you reach the galleries look well round. Among the Diploma works are a few superb paintings, such as that by Mr. Clausen ; but most of them are bad. Many of them are so bad that they cease to offend as paintings and can only be considered as historical curiosities. The Gibson statues have not even that interest. Happily the galleries contain other things besides the Diploma works. Here are two Madonnas famous throughout the world—the relief of Michelangelo and the cartoon of Leonardo, both unfinished and the more interesting on that account.

To me the greatest treasures of the collection are the small Constable sketches. These used to hang at the head of the stairs. I strained my neck in my efforts to get a proper view of them and leant over the banisters in peril of a horrible death in the abyss below. Now they are placed at intervals around the gallery, very near to the floor. Is it the intention of the authorities that they shall be seen kneeling or not at all ? I know not ; but it is edifying to see an earnest student apparently “ making the stations.”

As I write a dreadful fear assails me. Supposing that this should be read and my advice taken ! Supposing that when next I fly for refuge from the turmoil of Piccadilly, the staircase should re-echo with the tramp of other readers of BLACKFRIARS !

For each man kills the thing he loves . . .
Some with a flattering word.

But I will be comforted. Surely in that atmosphere they will tread quietly, they will not speak above a whisper. And after all they will be readers of BLACKFRIARS—people I should be glad to meet.

PHILIP HAGREEN.