

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

THE WESTMINSTER "STATIONS"

SIR,

Rightly, or wrongly, ever since the Devotion found its place in the Church's system, the demand for some pictorial representation of the *Stations* has been insistent. Nobody has seriously asked for the mere "name of the *Station*." But most people with a trained instinct for artistic fitness have felt that there was something wrong with even the most expensive and elaborate sets hitherto erected. It is not that they have failed in their appeal to devotion ; nor, necessarily, that they lack technical accomplishment, according to their lights. Yet, somehow, there has been something wanting.

It would be absurd to pretend that Mr. Gill's designs please every one ! It would be nearer the mark to say that no set of *Stations* has ever roused so much definite hostility. That is because they are, for the moment, such a definite challenge. Yet there are some of us to whom they seem incomparably the most satisfactory set in existence ; some of us even say that they are the only satisfactory ones. Some say that, at least, they mark a new departure on the right road, and that henceforth no *Stations* designed in the spirit which animates Mr. Gill's work can be as bad as those we have been used to.

To compare great things with small, Mr. Gill has done for the *Stations* what craftsmen, centuries ago, did for a set of chess-men. He has invented a convention. Chess-men have been carved in India and in Scandinavia and we can play as good a game with a set carved a thousand years ago, as with the most modern ; with the cheapest as with the most expensive. We are seldom, if ever, put off our game because of the eccentricities of the knight or queen. With mate within sight, we are not conscious of the art which carved the king. They serve their purpose, cause no distraction, and give no offence.

Reviews

Mr. Gill's *Stations* approach the unassuming fitness of a set of chess-men ; and, once their convention is accepted, they should be as helpful to devotion as chess-men are to concentration on the game. Perfectly subservient to their purpose, their individuality gradually effaces itself in the devotion which they aid.

Mr. Gill is quite right to insist that, whether successful or not, they have been done in the right way—the only way in which living art can ever be produced. He is right to insist that the modern industrial system has crushed art out of most craftsmanship. He is right to insist that the sham art we spend such enormous sums of money on is a shockingly bad investment. St. Pancras Hotel, with its "Gothic" fittings in every bedroom, was thought an artistic triumph forty years ago !

But he is too modest to insist that he has invented a convention which has done for the *Stations* what the old craftsmen did for chess-men, and what the Gothic craftsmen did for Christian building. That is his achievement.

LAURENCE W. HODSON.



REVIEWS

BACK TO LIFE. By Sir Philip Gibbs. (London : William Heinemann.)

Sir Philip Gibbs in *Back to Life* gives us in the form of a novel a continuation of impressions gathered as a war-correspondent. The book covers the period from the entry into Lille till after the signing of peace. It is a novel built up on a substratum of fact—or better (because the "novel" part is the least important and the least convincing), a record of real incident with a mingling of fiction and a thin veneer of romance.

Obviously it is a book written with a purpose—the purpose namely of painting war as a ghastly business of