

which 'we must ceaselessly give thanks to the Lord Christ who has brought us to such stability'. (*Ibid.*, 56; 1044 A). And because human perfection is not the achievement of man but the work of God St Nilus never discourages anyone. He does not mince his words where he suspects ill-will but where he sees men bowed down under the weight of their sins he spares no effort to give them new hope. While one ponders these writings of fifteen hundred years ago time seems to lose its significance before the eternal wisdom that teaches God's lovers to comfort and enlighten their fellows in their follies and needs which have remained and will remain the same as long as the fallen race of Adam inhabits the earth.



CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.

Sir,—May I be allowed to make a few remarks on the letter of Gladys M. Stanford in your November issue?

(1) 'It seems to be assumed that a good soul might voluntarily choose to become a contemplative.' Objections: (a) This criticism would also apply to all postulants entering a Contemplative Order. (b) Why should a vocation to a contemplative Secular Institute not be as much a call from God as that to a Contemplative Order?

(2) 'And that this end could be attained within a training period of two years.' No one assumes that—as little as that a member of a Contemplative Order becomes necessarily a 'contemplative' within the period of his or her postulancy and noviciate.

(3) 'Do not all the mystical writers insist that contemplation is the work of God in a soul mysteriously initiated by him . . .?' This again applies equally to all members of Contemplative Orders, and not to Secular Institutes in particular.

(4) 'The very nature of the preliminary purgation renders the course of illumination unintelligible to the developing contemplative soul herself.' Again, why should this apply to Secular Institutes in particular? Your correspondent continually confuses the external organisation, the 'contemplative state', by analogy with the 'state of perfection', with the actual life of contemplation, which indeed is the work of God—in contemplative monasteries as much as in Secular Institutes.

(5) 'Thus it would seem extraordinary that such an experience could be in any way "regimented", even by traditional mystics (?) like the Carmelites.' I fail to see why this experience should be 'regimented' in Secular Institutes any more than in Contemplative Orders—no one would dream of doing so, least of all Carmelites who are traditionally averse to regimentation of the spiritual life.—

Yours, etc.,

H. C. GRAEF.