

Book Reviews

Father Donders had the prestige and the loveliness of sanctity. He was endowed with neither intellect nor eloquence. 'His external gifts are almost nil,' his bishop said of him. His letters are commonplace. His prayer was usually dry, and mostly vocal. His only originality was that of being a saint. Those who lived with him emphasise his avoidance of singularity and the fact that he seemed to live like everybody else, but this must not be taken too literally and was largely due to his ingenuity in hiding his austerities. As an old man he still disciplined himself to blood night and morning, fasted three times a week and even when not fasting usually ate but a slice of bread with tea or coffee for breakfast and supper. The cause for his beatification is well advanced.

The book has no literary pretensions, and such colloquialisms as 'he was never done--' followed by a present participle, are frequent. But it must be added that, in spite of being twice translated, the book has the merit of being seldom obviously a translation. The photographs are excellent and Father Donders' saintly and beautiful face on the paper wrapper should be his fortune, or his biographer's.

M. B.

TWENTY-FOUR VAGABOND TALES. By John Gibbons. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd.; 5/-.)

A pleasant little book of stories on a wide variety of subjects. They are for the most part quite charmingly written, but with an air of simplicity and of assumed ingenuousness which is apt to be tiring when delivered in large doses. The stories themselves are generally lacking in any form of connected narrative, but are always interesting and entertaining. Those from abroad are particularly good, being experiences of a tramp through parts of Italy, Portugal and the Balkans, a feat undertaken with no knowledge of the languages in question. Especially enlightening in view of recent events in Spain is the story of the little village in Southern Portugal where Mass was not to be had on a Sunday morning, because after the Revolution 'God was dead.' But the donkey-man that acted as the author's guide wore a medal round his neck: 'They say that God is Dead. But how is one to be sure? For He might come again.' It was this same simple spirit that moved the Portuguese after the Peninsular War to make St. Anthony an honorary officer of the British Army (he had already been a captain-general in the Portuguese Army) and as the author relates, most of his statues in the churches are adorned with a red sash as a sign of this honour.

A.A.P.