

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

1815-1888

THE FRIEND OF YOUTH

FOUNDER OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY,
OF THE SISTERS OF MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS,
AND OF THE SALESIAN CO-OPERATORS

By

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“And he was a stout hunter before the Lord.”
—Genesis 10:9

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Chapter 6

THE WAYS OF A SAINT

IN SPITE of the hundreds of boys who belonged to the Sunday Oratory or who were in residence at Valdocco, there were others who had not yet been tracked down by this hunter of souls. The leader of a certain gang of young scamps who used to meet regularly was astonished one day at the absence of one of their number.

"Where can he be?" he asked.

"Oh, I know," said another, "he has gone to Don Bosco's Oratory."

"What on earth is that?"

"Oh, they say it's a place where boys meet and run about and play, and pray and sing and go to church."

"Run about and play—that would suit me. Where is it?"

"At Valdocco."

The boy set off. The door was shut, for they were all in the chapel, but he climbed onto the wall and jumped down into the yard. An Ora-

tory boy passing on his way to the church invited the stranger in with him. Don Borel was in the middle of one of his inimitable sermons on sheep and wolves and was showing how the sheep were those who were trying to lead a good life and the wolves were bad companions who tried to lead them astray.

"Avoid bad companions," he said, "those who blaspheme and steal and do not fear God. Here in the Oratory you are in the sheepfold, where strong watchdogs are on guard to defend and take care of you. Come often to the Oratory on Sundays and feast days and you will be safe from the attacks of wolves."

The stranger had never heard a sermon that was so simple and practical; he understood it all. When it was over the boys sang the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and as he liked singing, he joined in.

"Who is Don Bosco?" he asked his friend when they came out. "Was it the one who preached?"

"No," said the boy. "Come along and I will take you to him."

Don Bosco was in the playground, surrounded by a crowd of boys. He gave the newcomer a hearty welcome and invited him to join in the