

XXI.

IT was early morning when Blair Martin slowly climbed the heights. The sun as with the tender warmth of youth sifted through the pine woods and with the shadows made a checkered carpet over which she walked. Here and there a bird flew in front of her, as though to guide her, or lingered unafraid near by, searching for its morning meal. For years the birds of the chateau estate had never heard the report of a gun or known its cruelty, and to all who walked their haunts they were friendly guides. One of them now — of splendid plumage — soared over her as she neared the clearing beyond which stood St. Michael's. She could see even from that distance that the great main portal was thrown wide, as though in invitation. She approached it without haste but without hesitation, and mounting the broad steps passed through the vestibule into the memorial chapel.

Her first impression was of grateful shade and coolness from the warmth and glare of the world outside, and she stood quietly at the foot of the main aisle. Near by her stood a basin of holy water. She noticed how clear and cool it looked in its marble receptacle supported by a beautifully carved column.

She slipped into the last pew and, without know-