

CHAPTER XLI

THE NEW DAY

THE slapping of the wind against the tent awakened Beatrice. She could hear it soughing gently through the branches of the live oaks. An outflung arm discovered Clay missing.

Presently she rose, sleep not yet brushed fully from her eyes, drew the tent flaps together modestly under her chin, and looked out upon a world which swam in the enchanted light of a dawn primeval. The eastern sky was faintly pink with the promise of a coming sun. The sweet, penetrating lilt of the lark flung greeting at her.

Her questing glance found Clay, busy over the mesquite fire upon which he was cooking breakfast. She watched him move about, supple and light and strong, and her heart lifted with sheer joy of the mate she had chosen. He was such a man among men, this clear-eyed, bronzed husband of a week. He was so clean and simple and satisfying. As she closed the flaps she gave a deep sigh of content.

Every minute till she joined him was begrudged. For Beatrice had learned the message of her heart. She knew that she was wholly and completely in love with what life had brought her.

The hubbub of the city seemed to her now so small and so petty. Always she had known a passionate love of things fine and good. But civilization had thwarted