

Here is the pepper sauce of the Doña Paredis delivered—Bright eyes or bright wine, *señor*; who knows?"

"And to leave either at dawn," said the Colonel, "is both penance and testimony of a soul devoted to duty in spite of all."

"Or a late remembrance that he must meet Manuelo," added that worthy, a little grimly. "But here are matters for your inspection, Don Ricardo."

Beneath the wide spreading branches of the live oak tree had been built row after row of long board tables flanked by benches. These were evidently of long past date, for their lumber was browned and weather stained. But already they were partly concealed by pyramids of fruit cunningly heaped, by batteries of cutlery and tin plates and cups, by long loaves of bread, by tin pans full of walnuts and almonds, by bottles and glasses of condiments and jellies. A number of young girls and older children were darting here and there with armfuls of flowers which they arranged artfully still further to hide the brown planks—brodea, the great white Matilija poppies, Mariposa lilies, branches of mountain lilac, and above all great quantities of glowing golden-orange California poppies, like morsels of sunset entrapped. A very fat Californian woman sat on one of the benches and directed these activities. She had smooth, shining black hair, and a smooth, shining brown countenance, and beautiful black eyes from which unexpectedly youth peered.

"The tables are beautiful, *señora*," said the Colonel.

"*Ay de mi*," sighed the fat woman. "These children—they know not the old arrangements of flowers. When I was a young girl——"

"The *caballeros* gave you little time for flowers, *señora*, that I'll wager. It must be so, for never have I seen the tables better than to-day."

Señora Manuelo raised her fan from her lap to her face. The change was startling. The lower grosser part of her countenance was covered. Only were visible the slumberous youthful eyes, the smooth brow, the shining black parted hair. Returned for a magic moment was all the beauty of her youth. The Colonel bowed in farewell, shaking his head slightly.