

CHAPTER 10

*Visit from Salvatierra*

[1701]

A YEAR and a half after Kino's momentous journey with Manje, Padre Salvatierra was finally able to leave California to see his old friend in the Pima country. On February 21, 1701, he rode up the river to Dolores and an enthusiastic welcome from Padre Kino. Captain Manje was there too, but he missed the best of the reunion that night when the two old friends talked until almost morning. The Apaches again! Manje and most of his soldiers were called away in the late afternoon to aid a hard-pressed Spanish town.

"Are you sure you are right about the peninsula?" Salvatierra's dark, weather-beaten face, with its great beak of a nose, thrust forward eagerly as he asked the question.

"I am sure," said Kino flatly. "In October I went once again to the Gila River—"

The yellow candle flame flickered in the cold draft from the shuttered window. Neither man noted the chill. Kino was once again on the hilltop with the Indians who had gone with him from Dolores, gazing south, west and southwest over thirty leagues (seventy-five miles) of level country, without any sea, looking down upon the junction of the Colorado River with the Gila and their many groves and fields.

"There was no sea?" repeated Salvatierra.

Kino shook his head. "We were above the head of the Gulf."

"Then what did you do? Go on to the south?"

"No. The Pima guides were tired. Besides, the time had come to collect cattle for the missions of California."

Salvatierra nodded. He was grateful for the generosity of the missions of Sonora, but he had hoped for more proof than this that the Sea of California did not go on and on for hundreds of miles to the north.

"So, you turned back?" he asked.

"We were just starting east when a chief of the Yumas appeared," said Padre Kino. "We had given him the cane of office the year before and now he begged with tears in his eyes that I go to see his people. The pack train had already set out, but I stayed to talk to

this chief and at last I decided it was a matter of conscience to go to see the Yumas."

He smiled. "I was glad for the decision the next morning, after Mass, when I went down the river with the chief and met more than forty of his people who had traveled all night, fearing I would leave without seeing them."

He went on to describe the town at the junction of the two rivers, where he was welcomed by more than a thousand people. Two hundred others came that afternoon and the next day three hundred more. He talked to them throughout the day and far into the night.

"Then," he said, "I started back up the Gila River and once again I turned aside to climb another peak, a higher one this time. From the top I saw a large stretch of country in California. The two rivers, below the place where they joined, ran united about twenty-five miles to the west, turned south, and about fifty miles farther on, emptied into the head of the Sea of California."

Padre Salvatierra straightened with a great sigh that almost blew out the flickering candle. California was not an island! Let others say what they would. He was convinced.

The next morning he set out for Caborca, stopping on the way to visit two other missions, while Padre Kino made a hurried trip to check on the fortifications at Cocóspara. The two met again at Caborca on March 9 and Manje joined them there the same day. The pack train left for Sonoita in the afternoon, the rest of the caravan next morning.

Most of the road to Sonoita was easy enough, but the route they chose thereafter was marked by more hardships than were recorded on any of Kino's other journeys. When they finally reached the Sea of California, Salvatierra felt that it was all worthwhile, however, for across the water he could see California, with its spiny range of mountains distant no more than twenty to thirty miles.

In the north the mountains on both sides of the Sea curved toward each other, but to the disappointment of the padres, they could not get an unobstructed view of the whole. And the springs they had found in these billows of sand were so low after one day's watering that only thirty animals could drink. There was no hope of going on to the north as they had planned. They must turn back.

Before they reached Sonoita they turned aside to climb another high peak, this one so steep they had

to go up on all fours. As they reached the top the sun was setting and in the clear light they saw the Sea spread out below them, the horrible sand dunes through which they had been struggling, the beach where they had picked up all manner of shells except the big blue ones.

Another thing was plain, to Salvatierra and Kino, at least. The California mountains ran northward, curved a bit and joined the mountains of New Spain on the mainland.

"I was far beyond the head of the Sea last October," said Kino.

Captain Manje's lip curled. He had not been with Kino on that last trip and he doubted, frankly, that the good padre had been where he thought he had! Manje could not see that the two mountain ranges came together. He did not argue with the others, but he set his stubborn jaw and stuck to his original opinion. Let the two padres say what they liked, Captain Manje knew that California was an island! And that was not the only subject he disagreed on with Padre Kino. One day soon he would speak his mind about the way Kino pampered the Indians!

So this time as they turned homeward to Dolores, it was Manje who rode in silence while Kino and Salva-

tierra chattered of the land route to California as if they had already traversed it. That was the way they wrote of it, too, when they made a report of their journey. And Kino titled his new map, "Land Passage to California and its Neighboring New Nations and New Missions of the Company of Jesus in North America."

The following April, a year later, in 1702, Kino summed up his findings. He had made two more trips to the Gila and Colorado in that time. Twice he had seen the head of the Gulf. Traveling down the Colorado River from its junction with the Gila to its mouth, no Sea of California had been found or seen. At the mouth of the Colorado River, Kino had seen the sun rise over the head of the Gulf. Natives there brought him blue shells from the other ocean, ten days distant. And Indians from the southwest told of the Jesuits in California and described their vestments.

"Finally," wrote Kino, "if some hostile and obstinate persons should maintain that some Indians say that further west the sea extends to the northwest, those Indians speak of the other sea, the Pacific Ocean, and not of our Sea of California."

Then, almost as if he knew Manje's doubts and

hoped to shake them out of him, Padre Kino asked the captain for a certificate that what Kino had written was true. It would have been better not to ask.

"The report and the signature are Kino's," wrote Manje evasively. "Kino has brought about the conversion of the Pima nation and founded many ranches. The Gulf west of Santa Clara Mountain is only thirty miles wide. As to the rest, I have not witnessed all, but I do assert confidently that the report is by a zealous minister to whom I give entire credit."

What had he said? Nothing. Padre Kino might have persisted, taken Manje on another expedition, convinced him that the padres were right. But Manje was becoming a man of business, of property. He did not see much of Kino any more. And Kino was like a father who has so many children he cannot worry about one for more than a few moments until some of the others demand his attention.

The Apaches to the north and west of the Gila River had replied with friendly messages to a plea sent them through a chief from the Pima border. At peace with their Pima neighbors, it looked for a while as if Kino might be able to establish a mission among the hostile tribes. Apache outbreaks in another part of the coun-

try made everyone cautious, however, and Kino was told to build up his own missions and forget about expansion for a time.

Death had depleted the ranks of the padres. In one summer they lost Kino's old friend, Padre Gonzalez, who became ill on one of the Colorado River expeditions with Kino, was brought home in a litter, carried by faithful Pimas, and died at Tubutama. Within a month the padre who buried him was dead. And in the heat of midsummer, the padre from Bac arrived at San Ignacio, deathly ill. He had been one of Padre Campos' good friends, and it was a sad day for Campos when he had to say his requiem Mass.

Padre Kino, always petitioning the provincial for more priests for his Pimas, would have been sadly discouraged by the losses if he had not been too busy to think about them. He was building two new churches, one at Remedios, another to replace the burned one at Cocospora. They were magnificent structures, too, not the small adobe ones with which you would expect him to be satisfied. As laborers he had the best the Pima country afforded. Chief Coro came with his workers. Everybody who could handle a tool of any kind came from Bac. Chiefs rallied with their subjects from every

direction, coming with their whole families to stay as long as the padre needed them.

To take care of these multitudes he collected enough corn, wheat, cattle and clothing to feed and keep them warm. The forests furnished timber for framework, sills and flooring. Thousands of adobe bricks were made "and high and strong walls erected for two large and good churches, with their two spacious chapels, which form transepts, with good and pleasing arches." So Padre Kino described them.

During the year required to build the churches he rode each week over a hundred-mile circuit and when they were ready for dedication he added up the cost: "Five hundred beeves for consumption during the construction of the buildings, five hundred bushels of wheat and about three thousand dollars worth of clothing." He had obtained money for the latter by selling surplus ranch products at towns and mines all over the province of Sonora. Perhaps it was no wonder the Spanish shopkeepers and mine owners and ranchers looked covetously at his resources.

A wealthy Spaniard watched Kino's pack train plod into the plaza at Bacanuche one afternoon, marked the skill with which the mules were packed, saw the silver

paid him for the loads of wheat and corn he had brought from Dolores. Kino himself looked like a refugee from an Apache attack, his black robe worn and dusty, his flat, wide-brimmed black hat out of shape and stained by sudden rains.

"This Kino is a fool!" said the Spaniard to a companion. "Thousands of dollars worth of goods pour out of the mission properties. Kino spends every centavo on the Indians—great churches, prosperous ranches, houses better than my creole servants have to live in—"

"Certainly he has a corner on all the free labor in Sonora," said the other wryly. "You and I could build beautiful houses for ourselves if there were only some way to get around this order protecting the Indians."

"It is not right." The wealthy man's face darkened with anger. "Indians were born to be slaves. We Spaniards are a superior race. We are supposed to conquer and subdue the natives."

"Have you ever tried to tell Padre Kino that?" said another voice and the two whirled to see Captain Manje smiling at them, a smile that broadened as he saw their expressions. "My friend, the padre," he went on blandly, "contends that an Indian is a man with a soul, that he is not to be enslaved, but converted

by the preaching of the Gospel, and that those of us who are more powerful should be his friends!"

"And you agree with him, I suppose!" said the wealthy Spaniard hotly. "How did you feel about slaves last week, when you could not find enough workers in all Bacanuche to make adobes for your new store?"

Manje's dark eyes narrowed. "And when I did find laborers, I had to pay them twice as much as I expected. No doubt you know that, too? Well, it is like this: when I go to Mass on Sunday, I can see that Padre Kino's argument is reasonable, that I should treat the Pimas with Christian charity. On Monday I grow impatient with the slowness of the work and I think a little slavery—just a little, mind you—might be a good idea!"

"You might as well stay in the church all the time." The wealthy Spaniard laughed shortly. "As long as the Pimas live near the missions the padres will pamper them and defy any of us to do anything about it."