CHAPTER 4

The Young Lieutenant

[*1694*]

In December, 1693, Padre Kino set forth on a first brief visit to the Pima Indians of the Lower Altar Valley. These people were called the Sobas. Their chief was known as the great El Soba. In this unexplored country Kino found natives who were gentle and affable despite their fright at the white faces they had never seen before. The padre saw a great field for missionary work among them, but he needed time and official cooperation to prepare a second expedition down the Altar River to the Sea of California.

So he went to San Juan to ask the officer in command, General Jironza, to assign someone to travel with him as a representative of the Spanish government. The general agreed and decided that his own nephew, young Lieutenant Manje, should accompany Padre Kino.

On the first day of February, 1694, Kino, black robe

tucked up around his knees, bustled about the plaza at San Juan, shouting orders to his muleteers and urging them to finish their packing. As Jironza stood watching the preparations, young Manje strode across the plaza. In his hand were several light canes with multicolored ribbons fluttering from them.

"See, my uncle," he said proudly, "do these look important enough?"

Padre Kino hurried over. "We are almost ready, Lieutenant." And, with a look at the beribboned canes, "What are those?"

General Jironza said, "My nephew will distribute these canes to the chiefs of the villages, as symbols of authority, granted by the civil and military government of Spain."

Kino's eyes twinkled. "They will please the chiefs, you may be sure. Let us see how Coxi responds to such a gift," and he beckoned to the chief who stood beside some saddled horses. Coxi strutted toward them, a beaming smile on his brown face as Kino made a solemn speech in Pima language, then indicated to Manje with a nudge that he was to present the cane.

Coxi bowed, took it, waved delightedly to his watching friends and marched proudly back to his horses, holding the cane stiffly before him.

Chief Coxi received his beribboned cane of office from young Lieutenant Manje

Manje laughed and turned to embrace the general. "Adios, my dear uncle. We will count all the Indians from here to the Sea and tell them they are to be your loyal subjects."

"I wish I could go with you." General Jironza looked up at the blue sky, where towering white clouds sailed eastward above the mountains. It was a beautiful time of year to travel and Padre Kino was an excellent companion. The general felt he was doing his nephew a favor by sending him along.

Lieutenant Manje had not been away from Spain very long; he was young, and everything in this new country interested him. He wanted to know about deposits of gold and silver, why the canyons all ran from north to south and then all at once turned west, what kind of crops grew in the valleys and the name of each river and stream they crossed. His three-day ride to Dolores with Father Kino was a pleasant one and at the mission no time was lost in assembling supplies for the extended trip to the west.

"This is where we are going," Father Kino said to Manje, tracing a map on the hard-packed earth of the plaza at Dolores. "We will cross over a low mountain pass to the west, and follow the San Ignacio River until it joins the Altar."

Lieutenant Manje nodded. This river flowed south like the others, and then turned west. He watched as Kino showed how the Altar Valley came in from the north. Below the place where the rivers met was a town, he said, and lettered in the name, *Caborca.*

"I was there last December," said Kino. "There are many Pimas in that country, but two tribes keep fighting each other. Chief Soba is the warlike one. I hope on this expedition to meet him and persuade him to keep the peace. Then, perhaps, we can send a missionary to Caborca. It is a fine place for a mission. And it is very close to the Sea of California."

The next morning, riding west at the head of the pack train, Kino spoke again of California. "The poor Indians there," he said, "have never seen such fields as the ones around Dolores. It is my plan to gather food among these missions, to pasture many cattle and sheep, to let the herds and flocks increase, so that when the missions of California are once more established, we can send supplies to them."

"The Indians of California, are they Pimas, too?" asked Manje.

"No, they are entirely different tribes."

"They speak a different language?" persisted Manje.

"Yes."

"Will Pimas share their food supplies with strangers?" Manje asked bluntly.

Kino looked surprised. "Of course they will. The Pimas are a friendly, generous people."

Manje looked at him doubtfully. Most of the young lieutenant's experience with Indians had been obtained by riding with his uncle's Flying Column against the Apaches. Even the flying hoofs of the mounted troops were seldom fast enough to catch the marauders who swooped down on small settlements to plunder, kill and burn. Manje had begun to think of all the Indians of this new world as cruel savages. The Pimas at Dolores were a busy, happy group, but were all Pimas like that? Lieutenant Manje doubted it.

Padre Kino seemed to know how to handle them. He spoke in their own language and Manje marveled at how much they seemed to understand. It must sound like a strange story, he thought, leaning against a tall cottonwood tree the first night at Caborca and watching the intent brown faces upturned to Kino as he preached to them. What could they know of God and His Holy Law, and how did the padre find words in the Pima language to express such things? When he spoke of the burning fires of hell, the Indians showed

their horror. When he turned to description of rewards in heaven, Manje was amused to see their eyes turn to the cane with its bright ribbons which he had presented to their chief this afternoon.

"How do you know what to say?" he asked curiously the next morning as Kino rode west beside him toward the spot near the coast from which the padre had promised his young companion a view of the mountains of California.

Kino said, "It is not hard to tell about God and His Laws."

"In the Pima language?"

"Yes, even in Pima," said Kino. "When I first came to Dolores, one of the padres sent me a blind Indian who could speak Spanish and Pima as well. I learned from him how to begin. And, of course, you know Francisco, the interpreter who goes with me."

He was gazing ahead to the steep slopes of a mountain from the top of which he hoped to look again across the sea. "It was much harder in California. There we had to learn each word as we went along. It will be easier for the next padre who goes there, because we made a long list of words in Spanish and the California Indian language."

Again he talked of California and when they climbed

the mountain, Lieutenant Manje was thrilled as he looked out at the magnificent view before them. It was as the padre had said: the Sea was not wide at this point and beyond the blue waters of the gulf the towering peaks of California were clearly visible.

As they jumped and slid back down the steep slopes to the place where they had left the horses, Kino was full of enthusiastic plans to cross the sand dunes on the following day and go to the very edge of the Sea. Perhaps he would find new shells to add to his collection.

"I saw a big blue shell on your table at Dolores," said Manje. "Perhaps we will find more like it tomorrow. I would like one to take to my uncle."

Kino shook his head. "It is an abalone shell from the ocean to the west of California. When I was there we searched the beaches all along the eastern side of the island and found many beautiful shells, but no big blue ones like that. I think we will find none tomorrow, either."

And he was right. The next morning they went on foot across the remaining six miles to the Sea, sniffed the fresh salt air and congratulated each other that their expedition would go down in history, for they were the first to reach this shore in the sixty years since Sonora

had been settled. Although they picked up plenty of seashells, there were no big blue ones. Now Padre Kino would treasure the one he had more than ever. He doubted that he would find another unless he again crossed California to the Pacific Ocean.

"Do you know what the provincial writes to me from Mexico City?" Kino asked Manje as they turned back toward Caborca. "He would like to have me build a boat, carry it in pieces with oxen and mules to the Sea and put it together there, so we may explore around the top of the Island of California."

Manje laughed. It sounded like a wild idea, but he was beginning to think this Padre Kino could do anything he set his mind to. And his Pimas would help him!

Manje looked at the irrigated fields and the fertile lands around Caborca. The people grew corn, beans and melons. There was fine pasture land and much timber.

"If they had axes," Manje said, "they could clear enough land here to support three thousand Indians. And it is a temperate climate." Kino was right in thinking it an ideal place for a mission. But what about the warlike Chief Soba, who lived nearby?

He had his answer the day they left Caborca and were met by forty of Soba's men and the chief himself. All were unarmed, all were naked. So this was the great Soba! Truly you could not believe anything you heard in this country!

The chief had come to tell Kino he wished to be his friend. Beaming, Kino presented him with a pack-load of meal, only to find that the Indians had no container for it. At last Chief Soba commanded his wife and another woman to take off the deerskins which they wore. The poor women hid in a clump of bushes while the meal was poured into the skins, then the chief had his men gather it up and they all went off together, while Manje laughed until he had to hold onto his saddle horn to keep from falling off. What a story this was to tell his uncle!

The letter, when he sat down to write it after they had returned to Dolores, contained more than a funny story. True to his promise, young Manje had been counting Indians, nine hundred and fifty of them. Padre Kino had baptized fifty children and a few adults who were gravely ill. Others had been instructed in the Holy Faith and the whole area was now at peace. Manje could scarcely wait to get back to it.

At Dolores, Kino assembled his Indian carpenters

and began to make ribs and timbers for the boat. The keel and mast would have to be fashioned from the fine trees at Caborca. It did not bother the padre that none of this workmen had ever built a boat before. From somewhere he produced plans. He was justifying the lieutenant's confidence that he could do whatever needed to be done.

By the middle of March he was back at Caborca, and Lieutenant Manje with him. The lieutenant wanted to set out at once to explore the country to the south and west, but Kino needed all hands to fell the tall, thick cottonwood tree he had chosen for the boat and it was up to Manje to wield an axe with the rest.

They dug around the base of the tree, chopping off roots as they came to them. The taproot, however, went straight down and try as they might, they could not get at it. The tree refused to fall.

"I'll climb it," Manje said at last. "I will go up and tie a rope near the top, climb down again and let the Indians pull it over." Before anyone could stop him he swarmed up into the leafy branches. The tree swayed with his weight, but he kept on, pulling the rope after him as he stepped from one big branch to the next. Just as he looped the end around the trunk one of the Indians yelled and Manje felt the tree start to topple,

slowly at first, then with a swift rush of crashing branches as the taproot popped and let go. It was a good thing the limbs were big and leafy. They cushioned the fall enough to let Manje jump free and land on his feet, shaken, but without a scratch. The Indians laughed and applauded, as if he had done it on purpose, but Padre Kino went off by himself, sank down on his knees and thanked God for preserving the life of the rash young fellow to whom he had already become devoted.

When the tree was trimmed and ready for shaping, Manje took off with a few men and supplies enough to last several days. When he returned he found Kino ready to leave. The wood had to season, Kino said, before they could go on with the boat. So the pack train returned to Dolores.

By June, Kino judged that the timbers were sufficiently seasoned and took off with Manje on a third expedition to Caborca. There had been Indian thefts and raids all up and down the border. It was said that some of the Pimas had taken part in them. Kino decided to take a little different route from Dolores this time—through Tubutama on the upper Altar River.

The priest there had a gory tale to tell. Kino shook his head as he listened.

"This Lieutenant Solís who came here with the Flying Column," he interrupted before the priest had finished, "is it the same Solís who went to look for stolen horses in Arizona, earlier this year?"

"There is only one Lieutenant Solís," said Manje.

"Do you know what he did?" cried Kino. "He found racks of drying meat at a small village near Bac. His troops came down upon the people so swiftly they ran away. He hunted them down like wild animals and killed two of them. Then his soldiers discovered that the meat was venison, that the people of that village knew nothing of the stolen horses. It was a dreadful thing. The Pimas were not to blame. And you sent for this Solís to come here, Padre?"

"I sent to the fort for help." Unhappily the priest went on with his story. "My life was in danger. There were two troublemakers who kept saying bad things against me and stirring up all the Indians."

"What did Solís do?" asked Manje.

"Arrested the two men, let me baptize them and listen to their confessions and then hanged them."

"And since then?" prompted Manje.

"Everything is quiet." The padre of Tubutama looked at Kino. "What else could I do? I am here alone

in this great Altar Valley. The nearest mission is over a hundred miles away."

Again Kino shook his head. "Lieutenant Solís knows no other way to deal with Indians but to kill them."

Lieutenant Manje frowned. He did not admire Lieutenant Solís, but he considered him a brave soldier—and after you saw a few Apache massacres, you could understand the desire for revenge.

As the priest had said, all was quiet at Tubutama, so the next morning Padre Kino hurried down the river toward Caborca, while Lieutenant Manje went off on a journey of exploration to the northwest. He had replenished his supply of official canes and Kino furnished him with gifts and provisions. Francisco, the interpreter, went with the young man and the first night, at a village of four hundred inhabitants, Manje talked of God and His Law, as well as of obedience to the Spanish authorities. He concluded the lecture by presenting a beribboned cane and the chief in this place was as pleased as Coxi had been.

The next village was a disappointment, with poverty-stricken people whose only water supply was a pool green with slime. The Indians went about naked and lived in the middle of a dry, sterile plain. They had so

little to eat Manje gave them all the provisions he could spare. In return for his kindness, they warned him not to go any farther north, that a tribe of cannibals lived in great houses beside a big river.

Manje's guides, more and more frightened the farther they went from familiar territory, now insisted on turning back to the south again. But the venturesome Manje would not go the way they had come. He headed southwest through country so dry and forbidding they had to travel over eighty miles in one day before they found a water supply. It was not very good water, either, but they drank it. . . . And the next day Manje reeled into Caborca, burning with fever.

Padre Kino had been awaiting his arrival with some impatience, intending to leave for Dolores as soon as Manje joined him. Kino had received some bad news. The new Father Visitor thought it impossible to build a boat this far from the Sea and transport it overland to water. He had sent word to stop work on it at once!

One look at the young lieutenant's crimson face and Kino gave orders to unpack. For the next four days the fever raged. One night Manje was so gravely ill the padre thought he would not live until morning and administered the last sacraments.

"Take me out of this burning hot country!" begged

Manje, rallying a little, so the next morning they started up the river toward Dolores, the Indians carrying the sick man on their shoulders part of the way, holding him in the saddle when they could, to make better time. For six desperate days they traveled thus, covering only a little over a hundred miles in that period, the lieutenant delirious, unable to swallow more than a mouthful of gruel now and then.

At the mission of San Ignacio, Padre Campos, the Jesuit now in charge, came out to meet them. He took a look at the patient and urged Kino to leave him there.

"I know how to treat a fever," said Campos. "The patient is not allowed to drink water, not so much as a drop!"

So Kino went on to Dolores and Lieutenant Manje tossed from side to side on his hard bed, feeling somewhat better, but wildly thirsty. One night he lay there gazing up at the water jar which Campos had put on a high shelf, far out of his reach. He would reach it; he must! Inch by inch he dragged himself up, almost fainting with weakness, but just as he reached the shelf the jar tipped and cold water drenched him from head to foot. The jar crashed to the floor and Manje yelled. Campos stumbled sleepily into the room, scolding as he came. "You will kill yourself. You must not have

the cold water. Get back in bed—no, wait! I must give you some dry clothing."

Manje subsided, muttering, as thirsty as when he had made his try for the water, for not so much as a drop of it had gone down his throat. But something, perhaps the shock of the drenching, broke the fever. He woke next morning with a clear head, asked for food and within nine days was hurrying on to Dolores to inform Padre Kino that he had entirely recovered.

"You may think you are well." Kino put his arm around the young man's shoulders. "I think you must rest for a while. Go back to your uncle at San Juan. I am going to Bac, and north to the great houses you were told about."

Manje grinned. "I thought you did not believe my story, that you thought I had imagined the whole thing."

"So you remember what you said while you had the fever? Well, since then I have had visitors from the north. They too spoke of the great houses."

"And did they tell you the people there are cannibals?"

Kino smiled. "When I came to Dolores, they told me all Pimas were cannibals. If I believed half the things I hear about places I want to visit, I would never leave

Dolores. But when I go in spite of the stories, all along the way I find friendly people, eager to hear about God. So it will be this time. You will see."

At San Juan, Manje repeated the conversation to his uncle and General Jironza said with a troubled frown, "Do you think we should send soldiers with Padre Kino? We must not let anything happen to him."

"No." Lieutenant Manje scratched his head ruefully. Due to the fever, no doubt, his hair was coming out in handfuls. "No," he said again, "something may happen to others who go with him, but not to Padre Kino. I think God will not let anything bad happen to him—ever! He is one of the bravest men I ever knew and I have learned much from him that is for the good of Spain. I have put all these things down in my report to you, my uncle, and I thank you for letting me accompany him on those expeditions."