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I-Mary and Me
The Chronicle of a Friendship

By INA SIZER CASSIDY

WE ARE in camp on the edge of a *playa*, under a *palo verde* tree, a golden canopy in its spring bloom, at the eastern gateway to Papagueria—Mary Austin, the I-Mary of this sketch, Dr. McDougal, her friend, director of the Desert Laboratory at Tucson, who has come to escort us through this desert stretch, Gerald, and I.

The *playa*, a flat desiccated lake bottom, the last remnant of that primordial sea which once covered this Southwest land, spreads, acre upon acre, across the valley, the desert sun having sucked all moisture from it, leaving nothing but vast deposits of salt, affording the Indians a source of livelihood. The *playa* is now partially covered with scattering desert vegetation and bloom, bee-balm giving it a purple haze.

The Arizona sun is almost lost behind the western horizon, poising for its dip under the Pacific on the path to its "House of the East." Our supper is finished. I-Mary and the Doctor are in deep discussion, Gerald busily sketching in some last color nuances before the light fails; I have cleared away the supper things and tidied the camp ready for the night. Pigmy owls, watching cat-like, call from their nests in the *cholla*, ready for night's adventures. Mocking birds suddenly dart up into the violet sunset sky, singing in ecstatic joy, almost bursting their small throats with inexpressible happiness, trilling, now shrilly, now softly from the tips of scattering smoke tree and *palo verde*, where they nest. A wary chaparral cock thrusts his beak through a clump of creosote to discover, if he can, the source of the strange noises he has heard. Green striped lizards dart, lightning-like, across a sandy clearing, hurrying to their night refuge.

204] *The* NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

It will not be long until the kangaroo-rat will venture forth from his *cholla*-fenced runway to hunt an evening meal, with only the owl to dispute his right. No sound of human voice reaches me in the hush of coming dusk, other than the slow murmur of serious discussion between the Doctor and I-Mary. The evening star will soon become visible as the sun hides his forehead and only the voices of the desert are audible.

Were I inclined to be superstitious I would give myself to fear, for I-Mary is not well, the desiccating heat has been almost too much for her. The desert is no place for illness. Instead of yielding myself to fear I shall call upon the gods of the Ancients for her protection. Perhaps there still remains among these lost hills a medicine man or an herb woman steeped in the knowledge and virtues of the mystic rites of healing and the curative values of desert plants, who will come to her aid. We shall see.

This is Papagueria, the Land of the Papagos, ancient beyond our knowing, the loadstone of our journeyings. Here I-Mary is to find that for which she seeks, the *Land of Journeys' Ending*. The northern boundary of the migration of certain tropical and semi-tropical species of bird, of animal, and of plant, for in common with mankind they, too, migrate, climate and soil determining the limits of their domain. Plants dependent upon climate and soil, soil and climate dependent upon vegetation, birds and beasts dependent upon both, plant migration at the mercy of the wind, the insects and the birds depending upon these for their advance.

"I am going to take you to the *portal* today where you make your first offering to the Papaguerias," Dr. McDougal had said as he joined us this morning. "Tomorrow we enter and go into the very heart of Papago Land." This enticed us.

As we drove along this morning, Mary Austin enlightened us. "The Papago are a tribe," she tells, "closely allied to the Pimas, whose home originally was in the tributary valleys of the Rio Santa Cruz, south and west of Tucson."

I-Mary is always well prepared on any subject she investigates.

"Their dialect," she goes on, "government, religion, and mythology, as well as their history, is similar to and interwoven with that of the Pima to such an extent that it is really very difficult to separate them. For this reason very little has been written of them as a separate tribe." She informs us as we bump along over the primitive road-way. The role of mentor is a favorite one of I-Mary's, and, with her remarkable memory for the printed word, she really is a rich source of information. Whether this role is prompted by a spirit of generosity, a desire to share her knowledge, a subconscious prompting of her old "teacher" habit, or an exposition of egotism, one is never sure. Her friends commend her for it; her enemies condemn.

"The Pimas were always at war with the Apaches," she continues, "and were often joined by the Papagos. Bancroft says that the Papagos were always foes of the Apaches and the friends of the Americans, yet they have received very little aid from the United States. He also says that they have always been regarded as the best Indians in Arizona and the most peaceful. The Papagos claimed, and the Pimas allowed them, the country south of Tucson and on into Sonora, Mexico, then west to the Pacific, but the Mexicans drove them out of Sonora before the American occupation in 1847, and the Americans drove them back from the Pacific.

"Going back in their history, Father Kino began his missionary work among them in 1687, and our own pioneer trapper, James O. Pattie, with a company of Americans, trapped here in the autumn of 1825. This will give you a picture of the Papagos and a little of their background," she concludes. Sometimes I-Mary, in the absorption of her subject, forgets that she is not on the lecture platform, bless her! But she does make it interesting, and more understandable.

On our way to the crest we drove through a dense forest

206] *The* NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

of the stately *sahuaro*, the king cactus. Old-timers know it as the desert policeman, a very suitable name, as it stands watch over the terrain. Here hundreds of these stately candelabra stand, battalion after battalion, on the hill-slopes and the flats, with giant arms thrust skyward, like green Roman columns reaching to support the arched sky, their ribbed arms pockmarked by woodpecker nests and occasional very tall ones crowned by the brown hawk's scraggly nest. The buds on the tips are fat and swollen, almost ready to burst into fragrant bloom. Its ripened fruit is later to be gathered by the Papagos, the luscious juice to be cooked down into a rich syrup and stored for future use in *ollas* buried in the ground. Some of it will be made into wine.

"The *sahuaro* harvest," the Doctor tells us at supper, is perhaps the oldest food festival of the cactus deserts, for in the buried cities of the Great House People we found little brown jars of *sahuaro* wine hermetically sealed with clay just as the Papago women seal their syrup jars today. Whether it was syrup when they buried it, which later turned into wine, no one knows, of course."

The gathering and preserving of the *sahuaro* fruit—Indian figs—by the Papagos is similar, at least in spirit, to the early New England Pilgrims' "sugaring off" among the sugar maple trees, but much older. It culminates in a religious festival with a tribal dance of thanksgiving for the present supply, and offerings to the gods for future abundant harvests.

It is a community enterprise, the group including the men, women, and children, for each has a share in the work and the rejoicing. Brush shelters are built to be used year after year, with the great brown cooking *ollas*, after the harvest is completed, cached for the next year's use. These caches are never molested by the Papagos from year end to year end. We came upon two or three such harvesting camps with the empty *ollas* piled in a corner of the brush shelters awaiting the fall harvest, and although they were miles away from human habitation and no sign of any re-

cent visitors other than the little animals of the *abras*, still there was a feeling of human presence, a mystical atmosphere enveloping the spot which held us, as though human eyes, hidden in the mesquite and smoke trees were watching us, ready to pounce out at any sacrilegious touch we might inadvertently make.

It was a temptation hard to resist for a collector to leave these lovely syrup jars so easy to take from their cache, so difficult to buy from their owners.

"The tribal gods watch here and protect these important caches," I-Mary declares as I voice my temptation.

Whatever it may be, the tribal gods or our own consciences, we leave the campodie without a souvenir. Virtue is its own reward, however, for tonight near our camp I found two perfect jars in the sand wash, evidently carried down from some other campodie by the fierce desert rain floods. These I will have no compunction about packing with our camp things. I-Mary and the Doctor assure me it will be no violation.

We stopped on our way to admire and examine a magnificent organ cactus marking the northern boundary of its migration, from its far southern Mexico origin, its Journeys' Ending, the first monument to I-Mary's quest. She is delighted with this find.

"The virtue of all cacti," she explains to us, "is that they represent the ultimate adaptations of vegetative life on its way up from its primordial home in the ancient sea shallows to the farthest, driest land. This clump of organ pipes is a pioneer of its species."

"Was this the only one that managed to travel this far?" I want to know, for it seems strange there should be only this one group.

"Perhaps not, but there is now no way of telling how many of them came or how many perished before conquering the new environment as this one has," I-Mary explains, as she leads us around the great clump, pointing out the scars of its battles against the weather, the birds, and ani-

208] *The NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY*

imals as well as against humans, for there is evidence of many of the pipes having been chopped off by man.

"This is the only specimen of the organ cactus—*Saguaro*—we have ever found in this vicinity," the Doctor tells us. "A few more clumps, but not many, are found near the Sonoran border, but this is the farthest it reached in Arizona."

There are oceans of the *Opuntias* (prickly pears), surrounding us, just coming into bloom, pink, cerise, and yellow spotting the greening landscape, with grey-headed Old Man cactus (*Cereus senilis*) (I-Mary insists that I use the correct names) tottering about among the thorn-studded carpets of the desert.

And I-Mary continues: "Here in this southwestern corner of Arizona, the main business of plants, that of making the earth a livable place for us, goes on uncovered by dense growth as in the tropics."

Here I had to interrupt, for I have never understood why man should think that he was the tip-top of nature's scheme of life to which all else in the world had to bow. But I-Mary ignored my query and continued with her instruction:

"Here in the desert," she said, in the tone one uses to a child who asks a foolish question, "you can see the path it has followed from the first filmed protoplasmic cell in the swampy places, along the devious paths of nature's choosing, on up to the simplicity of the great *sahuaro*, the king cactus, made up as it is of a bundle of woody semi-detached ribs, filled in and cushioned by a spongy mass designed to hold water during the dry seasons, and all held together by a tough green hide, covered with millions of protecting spines."

Robles Pass is at the crest of a blackened volcanic ridge. We stopped at its summit to make our obeisance to this mystic land.

"The place I shall take you to," the Doctor now explains, "is the place to which I take all distinguished artists.

Ritchell has sketched there, and Butler. So has Maynard Dixon and others." This was meant for Gerald. "All of my scientific friends are taken there first, too." This was for I-Mary. "You haven't seen the beauties of the Tucson desert if you haven't been to this spot," he concluded. This I take for myself, not wanting to be ignored.

Within the scorched rim framing our vision in a ramparted circle, we discover a far-stretched valley, the parched plain of this primitive land bordered on the southeast by the Sierra Ritas, the mountain boundary line between the United States and Mexico, its ragged rim combing the fringes of the sky, the valley floor carpeted in brown velvet, a great Oriental rug spread in an Arab's sky-roofed tent.

Tall Bobaquivera, sacred mountain of the Papa-Ootam, the People of the Bean, as they call themselves, *Frijóleros*, as the early Spanish Conquistadores called them—its giant thumb upthrust to the turquoise vault, became our southeastern landmark. Few white men have scaled its heights but, regularly, pilgrimages are made to its summit by the Papago, who go with prayer plume offerings to the Great Sky Father, the Pima's Prophet of the Earth, and on its high side lies the inaccessible cave dwellings of their herogod who killed the mythical giant to right the wrongs of their people.

The peculiar odor of a land long humanly inhabited fills the air, mingling with the smell of sun-scorched sand unwashed by recent rains.

The Papago are well named The People of the Bean, for their principal article of food consists of the seed of the many varieties of wild-bean-bearing trees and shrubs, mostly of the mesquite family, growing profusely over the *playas* and the low lying hillsides, known by many names, all carrying the suffix "bean": locust bean, mesquite bean, screw bean, Indian bean, catalpa bean, and others.

We drive on down into the valley for our first night's camp in this desert waste known as Papagueria, and find an attractive spot under a *palo verde* tree, laden with its

210] *The* NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

spring bloom of golden balls. Scarlet tipped, urn-shaped *ocotilla* nod their flaming serpent tongues in the breeze now starting across the *playa*. Thistle poppies, their tall arms filled with fluttering white doves, distil a delightful fragrance through the sunset air, to be absorbed by the smell of barbecued kid ribs prepared over the camp fire by the Doctor-Scientist-Cook.

Supper over, we smoke our modern peace-pipe around the smouldering ashes of the dried-cactus fire, with conversation and discussion of tomorrow's plans for dessert. I-Mary tells the Apache story of the stewed beans, involving Spotted Horse, his wife, and Two-Comes-Over-the-Hill, proving that this legume can be a betrayer of man as well as a savior.

"This story I mean to use in a collection I am making, which I shall call *One Smoke Stories*; so Ina, you musn't use it, for I've 'put my mark' on it."

This sounded interesting, for we had heard many of I-Mary's unwritten-down stories, and they were always entertaining.

"I shall call my collection *One Smoke Stories*," I-Mary continued, "as each can be told while one smoke lasts. This is one of the ways the Indians have of marking time."

Because of this I can only say now that it is the story of an Apache triangle with the bean betraying the guilty man.

"But Mary, the Puebloños tell it differently," I interrupt in the interest of truth and scientific folklore.

"How is that?" she wants to know. And I explain: "In the Pueblo version the story goes back to the Cliff Dwellers with the guilty man hidden in a deep recess of the cave. Perhaps this is the first of the 'hiding in the closet' episodes. In this story when all is quiet and the aroused suspicion is allayed in the mind of the unexpectedly returned husband, suddenly the exploding beans betray the hidden visitor and all is lost," I conclude.

"Human nature hasn't changed very much throughout

the ages," sagely remarks the scientist as we finish our smoke.

Slowly the dusk melts into the black velvet mantle dropped from the star-studded sky and we settle for the night in our bed-rolls on the soft hot sand, and are lulled to sleep by the song of nocturnal desert life.

Tomorrow we are to visit the heart of this ancient land where lies the Shrine of the Children who were sacrificed to the flood.

In Conflict

By JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

Would we no longer see
 The foe before us and behind.
 Would we no longer be
 In conflict with our vacillating mind.

Would we no longer fill
 The self with hunger and alarm;
 And cease to join the kill,
 We would not feed the mind that lifts the arm.

Nor would we glorify
 The beast within us and below;
 And we would hush the cry.
 And let the heart hear songs that it would know.