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Preface

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Rio Grande

INTRODUCTION

A river seems a magic thing. A magic, moving, living part of the very earth itself ¹/_{on} for it is from the soil, both from its depth and from its surface, that a river has its being. Beginning with melting snow and small bubbling springs, increased by shimmering brooks, which twist and turn and tumble, seeking always the shortest and quickest way down hill, the gathering waters multiply rapidly, converging at ^{the} a low point where a river is created. The very speed with which water accumulates from a high source is surprising. With each fold of hill and mountain, a new valley adds its contribution to the stream below. In few ways is the power of gravity so clearly seen as in this tumbling together of water from high slopes. A river finds its course with sureness, pushing aside whatever surface matter lies in its way, and as it gathers volume and resulting strength, nothing can withstand its progress. It carves canyons, moves great boulders, erodes the soil, moving insistently onward in its surging need to reach its final goal - the ocean.

It may be the movement of water, the fact that it travels, which has always been so fascinating to man, for the life of man leads inevitably to a river. Through countless decades he has followed streams, urged and beckoned by their movement to seek the unknown which lies beyond. Along the banks of rivers ^{we} have passed the pageantry of ages ^{and} the drama of human progress, and endeavor, and along these same banks we, today, seek knowledge of our forebears.

The Rio Grande Del Norte takes its place in the forefront of the world's ^{scenic and historic rivers.} most colorful rivers, both scenically and historically. Its landscape encompasses magnificent mountains and the broad, far-reaching sweep of desert. with a series of canyon areas along its lengthy course. It has seen the dawn of man's consciousness, his gradual development, his strife, his battles, his conquest ^{of} over his fellow man and of nature. It has felt the hand of man

* See Glossary for pronunciation of all Spanish names and words, and for definitions of Spanish words.

damming its waters for ~~his own~~ use. Sometimes it seems to have fought back, lashing out in fury, wiping out villages, destroying, inundating, then finally subsiding, often forming a new bed in which to run its course. In years of drought it shrinks to a mere trickle, even disappearing in places, hiding as it were from observing eyes and flowing beneath the surface, then emerging again to continue its travel. Because it traverses an arid country, the water of the Rio Grande is used today, almost to ~~its~~ ^{the} capacity ^{of its normal flow} for the purpose of irrigation, enriching the land ~~through which it flows~~, and magically transforming desert wastes into bountifully productive farm lands.

In the major valleys of the Rio Grande have lived peoples of varied origins. First came the Indians of whose remote past we have some knowledge. Coming from northern Mongolia across Bering Strait perhaps twenty thousand ^{or more} years ago, some few wandering tribes found shelter in caves near the river. Later, some time prior to the beginning of the Christian Era, came more Indians who developed into an agricultural people. They built ~~cities~~ ^{villages}, many of them, along the banks of the Rio Grande ^{and used} its waters to irrigate their crops of corn, beans, ^{pumpkins,} and cotton. Next came the Conquistadores, those ^{dauntless} intrepid explorers whose lust for gold and domain carried them ~~to~~ unbelievable distances through countless hardships. We know of their first futile efforts, brave as ^{this new land and its inhabitants, finally, they came} were their exploits, to conquer ~~the more ancient race~~, coming finally in such numbers and with such weapons that they succeeded in that conquest. Soon came the Spanish Colonists, settling many areas on both sides of the river, ^{and} building ^{towns} ~~cities~~, now more than three hundred ^{and fifty} years old, which still reflect the flavor of a romantic past. The last to come have been ourselves, taking much of the land along the way through strife and purchase, and finally establishing ^{of Mexico} that portion of the river from El Paso to the Gulf as the boundary between two now friendly nations.

In following the Rio Grande today, one's imagination is stirred to review the past with its ^{concent} colorful history as it unfolds along the river's

path where many traces of what has gone before may yet be found. We see the descendants of the first inhabitants of this western land, as they live side by side with the descendants of the Spanish colonists, and ~~with~~ the Anglo-Americans, and the Mexicans, ⁱⁿ this blending of peoples unique in the Western world. We see the great changes wrought by the agricultural development of modern science, which is turning desert lands to profit of many kinds. Let us forget historic sequence for the moment, and begin with the scenic wonderland of the river's source, following the ever-changing landscape through which it flows, letting history emerge as it is suggested by remnants and heritage from the past, until the river completes its course and joins the sea.