

Lewis' "Mississippithal" in English

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MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY has passed since 1893, when the Minnesota Historical Society, as part of a wide and far-reaching program of collecting, purchased for less than five dollars a volume which is now one of its greatest treasures. It is *Das illustrirte Mississippithal* by Henry Lewis—a work of 431 octavo pages, handsomely illustrated with colored lithographs by the artist-author. The imprint of the society's copy reveals that the book was published by the German firm of Arnz and Company at Düsseldorf in 1858. The author and illustrator is identified on the title page as a landscape painter from St. Louis, Missouri, whose English narrative was prepared for publication in German by one George B. Douglas. Now, almost a century after its first appearance in print, the Minnesota Historical Society has acquired some of the original English text. The discovery of this long-lost bit of Americana has inspired renewed interest in the story of Henry Lewis and the publication of his book on the greatest of North American river valleys.

How did Lewis—an American artist of English birth—come to publish at Düsseldorf a work in German on the Mississippi Valley? Long before he wrote this descriptive narrative, he had attained fame in the United States in an entirely different field of endeavor. There, in 1849, he completed and successfully produced a huge moving panorama of the Father of Waters—a picture twelve feet high and some thirteen hundred feet long, proportions appropriate to the vastness of his subject.

To obtain sketches for his travel movie and notes for a lecture to accompany it, Lewis traveled extensively on both the upper and lower river between 1846 and 1849, using his vantage point at St. Louis as a base.¹ A preview in his home city in the summer of 1849 was followed by a successful and profitable run. At admission prices of fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children, Lewis' travelogue played to packed houses. Later he toured the eastern states with his picture, and then he took it abroad. After showing it in England, he crossed to the continent, touring chiefly in Holland and Germany. There Lewis, who was almost entirely

¹ Lewis' report of his trip on the upper river in 1848 has been edited by the present writer and published by the Minnesota Historical Society under the title *Making a Motion Picture in 1848: Henry Lewis' Journal of a Canoe Voyage from the Falls of St. Anthony to St. Louis* (St. Paul, 1936). The illustrated book of 58 pages is a reprint from *Minnesota History* for June, September, and December, 1936. Information on the artist's early life and on his panorama is given in the editor's introduction, p. 2, 8-13.

THE VALLEY
OF THE MISSISSIPPI
ILLUSTRATED

BY A

SERIES OF **80** VIEWS TAKEN ON THE SPOT

EXTENDING FROM

THE GULF OF MEXICO TO THE FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY

A DISTANCE OF 2,300 ENGLISH MILES,

BY

H. LEWIS,

LANDSCAPE PAINTER OF ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI. U. S.

ALSO THE MANNERS, HABITS AND CUSTOMS OF THE NUMEROUS INDIAN TRIBES STILL
FOUND UPON ITS UPPER WATERS.

ACCOMPANIED WITH HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTIONS IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN.

DUSSELDORF.

A R N Z & C O M P.

THE ENGLISH TITLE PAGE
[From the Minnesota Historical Society's copy.]

self-taught, decided to turn to the serious study of art, and for that reason, probably in 1851, he settled at Düsseldorf, then the center of a renowned school of landscape painters.

For one who knew the Mississippi Valley intimately, Lewis arrived in the Rhenish city at an auspicious time—the beginning of a decade marked by rapidly increasing emigration to the United States and especially to Midwest America. That area had wide interest and appeal among people throughout Germany and all central Europe. If the time and place presented advantages to the producer of a Mississippi panorama, it suggested opportunities also for one who could write about the fertile and prosperous valley in far-off America. A book on the region, illustrated after the style of the period with stone lithographs in color, could be expected to have a large and profitable sale.

Since Düsseldorf was a publishing as well as an artistic center, it is not surprising that before long Lewis signed a contract with a local publishing firm to write and illustrate a volume on the American valley he knew so well. That he had firsthand information about its entire course, from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Gulf of Mexico, was obvious to those who flocked to see his panorama. His publishers had every reason to believe that his name alone would sell a book on the Mississippi. The situation would be matched today if Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were to lend their names to a guidebook of the South Pacific islands.

As published in German by Arnz and Company, Lewis' book has long been known in America, though it has always been rare, and today it is a collector's prize much sought after. At least fourteen American libraries own copies, among them several that are incomplete and defective. Probably a like number could be found in the libraries of private collectors.² The work was so desirable that in 1923 a fully illustrated reprint, with an introduction by J. Christian Bay, was published at Leipzig and Florence. Even that work, however, has become a collector's item.

Throughout the years, the belief has persisted that Lewis arranged for and probably saw in print not only the German translation presented in these two editions, but at least some part of his original English text. Many were the bits of evidence and persistent the rumors pointing toward an English version, but until 1951 it has completely eluded collectors and bibliographers. Even the Library of Congress notes on its catalogue card for the German work that "no copy with English text has been located." Thus the finding of a fragment of the work in English is of prime importance for collectors and bibliographers and for those interested in Mid-

² A list of American libraries which own copies of the original German edition of Lewis' book is given by John Francis McDermott in connection with a note on the subject in the *Papers* of the Bibliographical Society of America for the second quarter of 1951 (45:155).

west history. This apparently unique item was added to the library of the Minnesota Historical Society early in September, 1951.³ With its discovery, one of the most puzzling book mysteries in the Americana field is approaching solution, for the newly found bit of text provides answers to many of the questions long raised about Lewis' book.

Although what the society has acquired is only a fragment, it is an important one, since it includes the English title page, the author's testimonials, and the preface. It is made up of seventy-two pages arranged in nine consecutively numbered, unsewed, and untrimmed signatures. Each consists of eight pages, and most of them are uncut. Unfortunately the illustrations have been removed, and there is nothing to indicate where they might have been placed. From other sources, however, we know that twelve lithographs were originally issued with this section of text. The fragment was presented to the society by the curator of its museum, Mrs. Esther Sperry, who found it in a New York print shop late in August. From the same shop, the society has since obtained seven prints which may well be among those removed from the English text. All have titles in English only, and all match the page size of the unbound forms.⁴

Following a popular publication practice of the period, Lewis' book was issued in parts. Part 1 was advertised for sale in the spring of 1854 by a New York book dealer, John Wiley. In the *Daily Tribune* of May 17 and 18, he announced that the work would "be published in twenty monthly numbers, each number containing four illustrations and from sixteen to twenty-four pages of letterpress, forming when complete a beautiful volume of eighty illustrations and 480 pages of reading matter." The first part was priced at seventy-five cents.⁵

As given by Wiley, the title of the work was somewhat puzzling, for it reads: "The Valley of the Mississippi, Illustrated by a series of EIGHTY VIEWS taken on the spot, extending from the Gulf of Mexico to the Falls of St. Anthony, a distance of 2,300 miles." Here is not only an English title, but one quite different from those used on the German editions,

³ A work by H. Lewis entitled *Valley of the Mississippi, and Customs of the Indians* (Philadelphia, 1858) is listed by Joseph Sabin in his *Dictionary of Books relating to America*, 10:308 (New York, 1878). Sabin said he took the title from the English catalogue of 1864. A letter from the Landes- und Stadt-Bibliothek of Düsseldorf, received just before this magazine went to press, reveals that it has a copy of the seventy-two-page English fragment bearing a double imprint — "Arnz & Comp. at Dusseldorf. Philadelphia, Weik & Wiewck."

⁴ The plates are entitled "Indian deputation," "The falls of St. Anthony," "The rolling prairies," "The valley of St. Peter's," "The little falls [*Minnehaha*]," "Red Rock Prairie," and "Medicine-Bottle Village." With the exception of the last, all are found in the first seventy-two pages of the Minnesota Historical Society's copy of the German edition. The latter ("Medizinflaschendorf") faces page 98 in the society's copy. In the 1923 reprint, however, and in copies in some other libraries it faces page 72.

⁵ The advertisement is reprinted in full in a note entitled "Henry Lewis' 'Das illustrierte Mississippithal': A Contemporary Advertisement" contributed by the present writer to the *Papers* of the Bibliographical Society of America for the third quarter of 1949 (43:344).

which read in every instance "vom Wasserfalle zu St. Anthony an bis zum Golf von Mexico." Wiley's title, in other words, suggests progress upstream, whereas the German titles suggest what the text actually depicts—movement downstream. This raises one question that now can be settled, for Wiley's advertisement follows almost exactly the wording of the English title page. What Wiley advertised in the *Tribune* for May, 1854, was Part 1 of the English edition of Henry Lewis' book.⁶

That part, we know from contemporary evidence, consisted of twenty-four pages, including the title page. It is listed and fully described in a *Messkatalog*, or bibliographical yearbook, issued by a Leipzig publisher for the German book fairs of 1854 and 1855.⁷ Lewis' work is announced for the first time in the catalogue issued at Easter, 1854. There we learn that Parts 1 and 2, comprising forty-eight pages and accompanied by eight lithographs in color, were available. By the time the Michaelmas volume of the *Messkatalog* was ready late in September, a third installment of Lewis' book, consisting of twenty-four pages and four illustrations, was ready for distribution. It is these three parts that are now in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society. Three more installments, containing sixty-four pages and twelve lithographs, and carrying the text to page 136, are announced in a single catalogue for 1855, which was published under a new title, *Bibliographisches Jahrbuch*. Instead of the monthly parts advertised by Wiley, it seems that only six were issued during the years 1854 and 1855, probably three each year.

To one who is interested in the English version of Lewis' work, the most significant announcement in these German book catalogues appears in reduced type at the end of each of the three entries. It is a statement that each of the six installments published "Ist auch mit englischem Texte zu gleichem Preise zu haben."⁸ If each of the six parts issued in 1854 and 1855 was available both in German and English, at least a hundred and thirty-six pages of the text appeared in English. At present, however, we cannot be certain that anything more than the seventy-two pages now in the Minnesota Historical Society's library were issued in both languages. After printing it once, the *Messkatalog* might simply have continued running its statement about the price of the English version.

Other sources seem to indicate that the work was not completed in Eng-

⁶Despite the title, the English text moves downstream from the Falls of St. Anthony. That Wiley's advertisement referred to the English edition was suggested by Dr. McDermott before the English text was found. See the Bibliographical Society's *Papers*, 45:152.

⁷The two volumes for 1854 were published by Avenarius and Mendelssohn; that for 1855 was issued by Eduard Avenarius. Although Avenarius was the publisher rather than the author, the work usually is associated with his name. The Library of Congress, from which the work was borrowed, has a file for the years from 1852 to 1855.

⁸Dr. McDermott quotes this statement from the Library of Congress catalogue card. See the Bibliographical Society's *Papers*, 45:152.

Das
Illustrierte Mississippithal,
bargestellt
in 80 nach der Natur aufgenommenen Ansichten
vom
Wasserfalle zu St. Anthony an
bis zum
Golf von Mexico,

(eine Entfernung von ungefähr 2300 englischen Meilen)

von
H. Lewis,
Landschaftsmaler aus St. Louis, in Missouri.

Nebst einer historischen und geographischen Beschreibung der den Fluß
begränzenden Länder, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die verschiedenen den obern
Mississippi bewohnenden Indianerstämme. (Deutsch und englisch.)

von
George B. Douglas.

Ausgeführt im lithographischen Institut von Arnz & Comp. in Düsseldorf.

Düsseldorf.
Arnz & Comp.

THE GERMAN TITLE PAGE OF 1854

[From the Newberry Library's copy.]

lish. Lewis himself stated in a letter written in 1902 that the book "was never completed from my *own* manuscript," which was, of course, in English. Corroborative evidence is found on the title page of the Minnesota Historical Society's German edition, which is dated 1858. By that time, as indicated on the facsimile given herewith, the pattern was set and the English version had been abandoned. This is one respect in which the 1858 title page is unlike both the English title page and that in German reproduced here from a copy in the Newberry Library of Chicago. The English version announces that the illustrations are "accompanied with historical and geographical descriptions in English and German"; and the German edition follows the title with the words "Deutsch und englisch" in parentheses. These are the title pages printed with Part 1 of the English and German versions when they were issued simultaneously in the spring of 1854. Obviously, at that time the publisher intended to carry both versions to completion. When the German edition was finished, probably in 1857, most of the copies bound retained the title page of 1854, thus greatly confusing librarians and bibliographers. Reports have been received on fourteen copies of *Das illustrierte Mississippithal* in American libraries elsewhere; without exception they have the undated title page of 1854. Apparently, the Minnesota Historical Society is the only American institution which has a copy with the 1858 title page.⁹

One matter long open to question that seems to be settled by the English text is the authorship of Lewis' work. The question stems in large measure from the obscure wording of the original German title page of 1854. It implies that Lewis, a landscape painter from St. Louis in Missouri, produced the lithographed illustrations, and that George B. Douglas wrote, both in German and in English, the accompanying narrative describing the Mississippi Valley and its Indian tribes.¹⁰ The wording of the entry in the *Messkatalog* for Easter, 1854—the first to list Lewis' book—follows almost exactly that of the original German title page.

By the time the autumn volume was issued, however, Lewis probably had protested, for the wording was changed completely. There the title is followed by Lewis' own name and a statement which, in translation, reads: "Rendered into German from the author's original English text by George B. Douglas." Substantially, this is the statement which appears in

⁹ Evidently Sabin saw a copy with the 1858 imprint, since the title of the work as he lists it (10:308) is like that of the society's copy. Sabin, however, records only twenty-four illustrations, whereas the society's copy has seventy-nine, including the half-title page.

¹⁰ In his introduction to the 1923 reprint of *Das illustrierte Mississippithal*, viii, Mr. Bay states that the text was "originally written by George B. Douglas" and "was translated into German." At least one bibliography lists the work under Douglas' name, thus crediting him with authorship. See Solon J. Buck, *Travel and Description, 1765-1865*, 233 (1914).

Das
Illustrierte Mississippithal,

dargestellt
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(eine Entfernung von ungefähr 2900 englischen Meilen).

Nebst einer historischen und geographischen Beschreibung der den Fluss
begränzenden Länder, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die verschiedenen den obern
Mississippi bewohnenden Indianerstämme.

Von
G. Lewis,

Landscapmalers aus St. Louis, in Missouri.

Nach dem engl. Original-Text von G. Lewis deutsch bearbeitet von George V. Douglas.

Ausgeführt im lithographischen Institut von Aruz & Comp. in Düsseldorf.

1858.

THE GERMAN TITLE PAGE OF 1858

[From the Minnesota Historical Society's copy.]

reduced type on the 1858 title page of the Minnesota Historical Society's copy: "Nach dem engl. Original-Text von H. Lewis deutsch bearbeitet von George B. Douglas." Doubtless it was to correct an injustice that this title page was printed. The paper stock is entirely different from that used in the rest of the book, and the border is unlike any other decorative motif used in the volume. Obviously, the page was inserted when the various parts were assembled and bound into a single volume. This must have been done abroad, since the society's copy was purchased from a New York dealer who obtained it through his Leipzig office.¹¹ Lewis probably insisted that he receive credit for his work and arranged for the printing of a new title page before it was bound.

For such portions of the English text as appeared in print, he found it unnecessary to argue about authorship. In that version Lewis did not have to compete with Douglas. One name only—H. Lewis—is printed in large boldface type on the English title page. The name of George B. Douglas is completely absent. Thus Douglas, who, incidentally, has never been identified, emerges not as an author, but merely as a translator—the arranger of a narrative written in English by the landscape artist from St. Louis.¹² That his translation was neither full nor entirely accurate is proved by collating the English original with the German text. Lewis had good reason to complain that the German version "was a great disappointment to me, as the translation left much to be wished."¹³

To one who makes even a superficial comparison of the available English sections with the German edition of the 1850's, it is entirely obvious that they were printed at the same time, by the same printer, in the same place. The decorative borders used throughout are identical in the two versions, with the single exception of the 1858 title page. A statement that the work was "Printed by C. H. Müller at Aix-la-Chapelle" appears on the reverse of the English title page, and this becomes "Druck von C. H. Müller in Aachen" in the German version. It is, however, missing from the inserted title page of 1858. But the publisher's imprint, "Arnz & Comp.," remains the same on the various title pages, as does the place of publication—Düsseldorf. The English version uses a somewhat

¹¹ In a letter of October 24, 1951, Mr. Albert Daub, general manager of the firm of Stechert-Hafner, Inc., from which the society obtained its copy of *Das illustrierte Mississippi-thal*, states that the item "came via our Leipzig office."

¹² Dr. McDermott presents the results of his unsuccessful attempt to identify Douglas in the Bibliographical Society's *Papers*, 45:154. Obviously, the English text fails to throw light on this question. The Library of Congress catalogue card for the original German edition credits Douglas with the translation into German of Parts 1 to 6, and with the authorship of both the German and English text of Parts 7 to 20.

¹³ This statement is quoted from a letter written by Lewis in 1902, which is cited in the introduction to *Making a Motion Picture in 1848*, 15. In comparing the English and German texts, the writer has received valuable co-operation from Miss Anna M. Heilmaier of the staff of the James Jerome Hill Reference Library of St. Paul.

larger type page than the German, indicating, perhaps, that an effort was made to present Lewis' longer text without adding pages. The printer succeeded in ending the twenty-four-page installments at the same point, though he made no attempt to match the content of individual pages. The fact that the English text is replete with typographical errors suggests that typesetters and proofreaders alike were unfamiliar with English. If, as he reported in 1902, Lewis corrected the proof sheets, his changes must have been largely disregarded.

For one interested in the history of the North Star State, the English text is far richer than the German. This is evident as soon as the testimonials advertising Lewis' panorama, appearing on page 4, are examined. There, in addition to the American statesmen, largely members of Congress, who signed a statement extolling the beauty and value of the Mississippi travel movie, appear a number of others, including "H. H. Sibley, delegate from Minnesota," and "Capt. S. Eastman, U. S. Army." That Lewis traveled and sketched with Seth Eastman, the artist-soldier who was commandant at Fort Snelling at the time of his 1848 visit, is revealed in his journal of that year. Now, from the English text we have proof that Henry Lewis actually drew upon his military friend's sketches, for a note on page 20 states that a lithograph picturing a "Deputation of Dacotah-Indians on their way to sign a treaty with the pale faces" is "From a sketch by Major R. Eastmann [*sic*]." One familiar with Eastman's numerous water colors of upper Mississippi scenes can readily trace his influence in many of Lewis' other views. Yet the references to this distinguished American artist and soldier were deleted from the German edition.

The English narrative indicates too that after visiting the upper Mississippi Lewis not only read widely in the works of explorers and others who wrote about the area, but that he kept himself well informed about events transpiring in the Minnesota country. On page 24, for example, Lewis relates that "The whole of the region West and North of the Fort [*Snelling*] has, by a treaty signed in 1851, by the Sioux Indians, come in possession of the government and is now rapidly filling up with an adventurous and hardy population. A small Indian trading post, called St. Pauls, which at the time this sketch was taken contained only some forty or fifty families, has now a population of more than 5000. St. Pauls has become the Capital of the new Territory called Menesotah, formed out of part of the new purchase and partly out of the state of Wisconsin." All this is missing from the German version, as is a footnote informing the reader that the new territory bears "The Indian name of the St. Peters river, signifying the '*troubled waters*.'" Still more information about the meaning of the name "Minnesota" appears later in the narrative, in a

section devoted to the St. Peter's or Minnesota River. There the name is said to signify "blear water." Again far more detail is presented in the English than in the German version.

A passage of interest which appears in both versions is among those giving evidence of Lewis' authorship. In a section describing "La montagne qui se trempe a l'eau"—Trempealeau Mountain below Winona—he refers to "other prominent cliffs" in the vicinity. Two of them, he relates, were called "Lewis Bluff" and "Solitaire-Peak" for "the author of these prints and his companion." Had Douglas looked upon himself as an author, he would scarcely have translated this passage to read "Herausgeber dieses Werkes." The name "Solitaire" was in honor of John S. Robb of St. Louis, who accompanied Lewis on his canoe voyage downstream in 1848. A journalist of some fame in his home city, Robb wrote for the St. Louis *Reveille* under the pseudonym of "Solitaire."¹⁴

At least one entire section—a description of Medicine Bottle's Sioux village, which appears on the final page of the English fragment—is omitted entirely from the society's copy of the German version. It does, however, appear in the 1923 reprint, and perhaps in some copies of the original German, indicating that some installments may have been revised before the various parts were assembled.

The fact that the work was bound only after appearing in parts over a period of perhaps four years doubtless accounts for the great variation in the arrangement of the illustrations. Of fourteen copies checked in other libraries, five were arranged exactly like that owned by the Minnesota Historical Society and three complete copies varied only slightly. Of the others some were incomplete, and at least three varied greatly. Many differences occur also in the 1923 reprint. In all copies, the title pages call for "80 Views Taken on the Spot," as the English version states the matter. But no copy has been found that contains more than seventy-nine plates, including the pictorial lithographed half title. Some writers believe that the view of New Orleans—a double folded plate—was counted as two illustrations. It may be also that a figure illustrating Indian picture writing, printed on page 163, was counted as a view or illustration. An advertisement of a German copy offered for sale by an Italian dealer in 1936 listed this figure among the illustrations. At any rate, when the 1858 title page was printed, the statement that the work contained eighty illustrations was retained. The "bi-lingual irregularity of the picture captions" has been discussed by another writer.¹⁵ Confused and variable as

¹⁴ Some letters written by "Solitaire" Robb from the upper Mississippi in the summer of 1848 are reprinted from the *Reveille* in the issue of this magazine for December, 1950 (31:209-221). They have been edited by John Francis McDermott.

¹⁵ Dr. McDermott, in the *Bibliographical Society's Papers*, 45:153.

they are, seven volumes among those checked follow the society's copy in every instance, and most of the others vary only slightly. It is evident that illustrations prepared for both the English and the German versions were inserted in bound copies of the German text without regard to the language of the accompanying narrative.

How Lewis intended to arrange his plates was at least suggested in his English preface, where he announced that "The four Illustrations in the first number, do not follow each other in regular succession, but represent points on the river, far distant from each other." This was done, he said, "in order to show at one glance the great variation of scenery on this magnificent river." And variety there is in the pictures appearing with the first twenty-four pages of the society's German version, for they span the course of the mighty stream from St. Louis to Fort Snelling, and thence to the river's mouth. Two other views, picturing a "Steamboat wooding at night" and an "Indian deputation" appear with this section of text, making a total of five rather than four. The second installment, wrote Lewis, would begin at the Falls of St. Anthony, and thence work downstream, with the illustrations following "each other in regular succession to the mouth of the Mississippi." Some discrepancies can be noted in the society's copy of Lewis' book, but in general the order follows his plan.

Probably the pictorial and decorative value of the separate lithographs and their interest as collector's items is one reason for the almost total disappearance of the English text, as well as for the rarity of the German. Evidently dealers have made a habit of removing the prints, especially from the unbound English forms, and discarding the text as wastepaper. Since only the German version was completed and bound, it alone has heretofore found a place in libraries and on collector's shelves.

The finding of the present English fragment should be the incentive for the publication of a complete English edition, for strangely enough, Lewis' narrative never has been retranslated. The book should embrace as much of his original version as can be found. Work has been started on the translation of sections that apparently never were issued in English. All this is in line with a suggestion made by a member of the Minnesota Historical Society's executive council only eight years after the society acquired its copy of the German edition. Speaking before a meeting of November 11, 1901, John Espy "urged that a translation into English should be made, bringing this important work of description and history to greater usefulness in such an American edition."¹⁶ It now seems that at long last his advice will be followed.

¹⁶ Minnesota Historical Society Minutes, 1901. Another project now contemplated is the publication of a facsimile reprint of the English fragment of Lewis' text.



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