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The travel accounts of Prince Maximilian of Wied have long been considered one of the finest early scientific and ethnographic descriptions of North American landscapes. Maximilian journeyed with the Swiss painter Karl Bodmer through the United States in 1832–34 to study its natural environments and Indigenous peoples. His keen observations were published in German in 1839–41, were translated into other languages in the following years, and have been harvested ever since for their factual information. Maximilian's publication, however, left out a good portion of his original observations.

With this, the second of three volumes of Maximilian's journals, Stephen S. Witte and Marsha V. Gallagher continue the monumental task of publishing annotated translations of a compilation of notes and data the prince used for the creation of his travel accounts. As the editors remarked in the first volume, published in 2008, such an undertaking was long overdue. Readers will be delighted to see a continuation of this project, further closing important gaps in our understanding of Prince Maximilian's America as seen through his copious notes and illustrations.

In this volume, Prince Maximilian starts in earnest his famed studies of the northern Great Plains Indians as he recorded their customs, languages, and cultures. Following in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark, and using the trade network of the American Fur Company, he left St. Louis on April 10, 1833, quickly pushed beyond the borders of early European settlements, and ventured deep into the Indian territories on the upper Missouri. After short stops in forts Pierre, Clark, and Union, the prince arrived at Fort McKenzie, the westernmost point of his expedition. Originally, Maximilian wanted to extend his studies farther upriver into the Rocky Mountains, but the hostility of the Blackfeet tribes forced him to reconsider this plan. After about five weeks of fieldwork around Fort McKenzie, the prince returned to Fort Union on September 29, 1833.

The second volume of The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied is clearly a masterpiece. It offers readers access to Maximilian's original notes with numerous footnotes that update, supplement, and even correct his observations when needed. Still, there is one important piece missing. The editors correctly decided to include text in their annotated translation that the prince had struck out of his journals in order to supply "relevant information or a significant change in Maximilian's meaning." Had they also decided to emphasize pertinent journal materials the prince later left out of his published travel accounts, thereby highlighting some fascinating editorial decisions, readers would have gained an even more complete understanding of the narrator and his creation.

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