

But during the pendency of this question, being in suspense whether to accept it or not, an incendiary set fire to the town of Paris which threatened its entire destruction. In this emergency, though he had not a cent at stake, he exposed himself in his exertion to arrest the fire, and save the property of others, to an extent that nearly cost him his life. A wall of hot bricks fell upon him; which not only broke, but literally crushed one of his lower limbs, from the effects of which he was confined to his bed and room for seven months, and left him a cripple the remainder of his life, causing him to limp as he walked. As though the cup of his affliction was not yet full, while his sufferings were intense, and his life despaired of, his ungrateful wife left him to be cared for by others and never returned to her duty in the relation of a wife. It will be seen hereafter, that there was no cause on his part for this desertion, and that both his and her friends justified and approved his suing for a divorce from her, at a subsequent period.

The disaster at the fire disabled him for business; his practice, of course, passed into other hands, and his funds were nearly exhausted. The idea of beginning anew to regain his practice being rather gloomy, he concluded to accept the office offered to him in the Indian Department, and arrived at Prairie du Chien in June, 1830. From some letters from his Kentucky friends, it would appear that this country, its then inhabitants, and the duties assigned him in his agency, did not exactly suit his taste, or meet the pre-conceived idea he had formed of it. But as he became better acquainted with matters and things connected with his residence, his duties, and the country, he became passionately attached to them all.

At the time of his arrival in the country, there were but two or three American families in the place, except in the garrison, Fort Crawford. But the major part of the inhabitants, some four hundred in number, were Canadian French and half-breeds, who spoke only French, with some Indian languages, all of which were to him unknown tongues.