

existed between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company, and which had cost many lives, was brought to a close by the amalgamation or absorption of the latter company by the former in 1821. The fur trade was now vigorously pushed in the far west, and in 1824 Chief Factor J. McLaughlin built Fort Vancouver on the lower Columbia, near the mouth of the Willamette; and this was for years the centre of trade and of authority, which the Hudson's Bay Company knew so well to wield. Russia had been active on the northwest coast of America for many years; her explorations were exclusively in the interest of the fur trade. Under Article III of the Convention of 1824 between Russia and the United States, Russia renounced all claims to territory north of 54 degrees, 40 minutes. Up to this time and for a few years more the strongest claim of Great Britain was that of occupation, for there were few Americans in the territory. The advent of four Indian chiefs from the Oregon country in St. Louis in 1832 stirred the missionary zeal for a new field of labour. The fertility of the Columbia valley, the wealth of the forests, the salubrity of the climate, became known in the east, and slowly a stream of immigration set in. As early as 1841 the Americans in Oregon began to feel the need of some form of civil government, other than that meted out by the Hudson's Bay Company, so that two years later we find a provisional government organized. Year by year the American immigration increased, till in 1845 some 3,000 arrived from the Missouri and Mississippi valleys. The Americans had undoubtedly possession of the territory now, more especially of the Columbia valley, and it was obvious that the day of settlement or adjustment of rival claims was at hand. Matters were somewhat aggravated by the democratic slogan in the presidential campaign of 1844 of "Fifty-Four or Fight." This meant up to the southern limit of the Russian possessions referred to in the Convention of 1824. The slogan served the Democratic party well, for Polk was elected President. Well, they didn't get fifty-four forty, nor did they fight. To the former the Americans had