



Mr. Lewis, Supercargo of the "Tonquin."
(From a miniature.)

of a vast emporium of commerce whose operations would explore and civilise the entire western coast of the continent, bringing its expanse within the influence and control of the American Government.

The first incidents of the settlement of Astoria, as graphically set forth day by day in the manuscript journal of its existence in my possession, were not fortunate. The ship *Tonquin* sailed from New York with an equipment of all that the infant colony could require and a company of experienced men to establish a fortified post at the mouth of the Columbia. The voyage was marked by bitter altercations upon questions of privilege, or rather personal vanity, between the captain and the agents and supercargoes. These disputes assumed proportions that made harmonious action difficult,

and impaired the discipline of the ship even before her destination was reached, in March 1811. The entrance into the Columbia River was accomplished in a heavy gale, with the sacrifice of eight men sent out with two boats to take soundings. Amid renewed altercations between Captain Thorn and the agents, whom he stigmatised as "the most worthless beings that ever broke ship-biscuit," the site of the settlement was fixed upon a tongue of land named by earlier explorers "Point George." Goods were landed, the angles of the fort traced, and acquaintance made with the Chinook Indians and their one-eyed chief, Comecomly, a shrewd and daring savage of whom mention is frequently made, and who welcomed the voyagers with barbaric hospitality. After a feast of fish and game, Comecomly's wives and daughters danced for the solace and diversion of their guests, having previously painted their swarthy bodies with gaudy stripes and anointed themselves with cod-liver oil. One infers that these nymphs, with their aboriginal charms thus heightened, must have produced a captivating impression, for we presently learn that Duncan McDougall, a canny Scot, and the chief agent of the settlement, was married soon after to one of the Sachem's daughters.

Three months later, the *Tonquin* set sail with twenty-three souls on board for Vancouver's, where Captain Thorn's irascible temper was not improved by the tricky methods of the Indians, till, in a moment of spleen, he struck a chieftain in the face and kicked his peltries overboard. Such an affront was not likely to pass without bloody retaliation. The next morning the Indians approached in their canoes, offering furs, and apparently unarmed. In violation of Mr. Astor's written instruction that the savages were to be allowed on shipboard only a few at a time, they were suffered to clamber up the sides of the ship in large numbers. Mr. Lewis, the supercargo, called Captain Thorn's attention to the throngs putting off from shore, and expressed the suspicion that they carried concealed weapons beneath their tunics. The answer was a taunting sneer, and it was the last word the skipper uttered. Perceiving that their intended treachery was discovered, the