

CHAPTER III

THE INVASION

Meantime the news of the Flathead petition had reached the Protestant missionary bodies. It was said that "the Indians had journeyed to St. Louis to obtain a Bible, but could not find one in that old Indian and papal city." Even Clark, the great Freemason, was unable to furnish one. Hence the parsons immediately started a movement to evangelize these forsaken red men and began to arrive in Oregon as early as 1834. McLoughlin received them most cordially, and as they were nearly always in a state of destitution, he provided lavishly for their wants. He furnished them with food, for they were often starving, advanced them money, which they usually forgot to repay, assigned them land for business as well as church purposes, and again and again protected them against the savages.

The missionaries, both Methodist and Presbyterians, immediately addressed themselves to the work of evangelizing the Flatheads. That was their object in coming from the East, but they soon gave it up in disgust. They could make no impression on these savages, who were expecting the black gowns, and had no success except with a few of the Cayuse tribe, who afterward turned upon them. They then fancied they had found excellent material for proselytism in the settlement of French Canadians which McLoughlin had established in the valley, but there again they were forestalled. The factor himself and his wife had been regularly instructing these expatriated Canadians in the teachings and duties of their Faith. The coming of the Catholic priests, their success with the Indians, McLoughlin's active work in preventing the perversion of the French settlers, and his pronounced Catholicity easily explain the bitter animosity of the Protestant missionaries towards him.