

CHAPTER IV

THE PEACEMAKER

It was a comparatively easy task to keep the natives at peace, but this immigration of an ever-increasing multitude of ignorant and prejudiced whites, who regarded him as an intruder, an aggressor and an enemy, presented a new and difficult problem. The territory was still in dispute between England and the United States, and a joint occupancy had been agreed upon, but in three years the country which had been up to that a wilderness was invaded by 5,000 Americans, all of whom nurtured in their hearts an intense hatred of everything British. The war cry of "fifty-four forty or fight" had been uttered, and not only a failure to grasp the difficulty of the situation, but the slightest lack of prudence or even courtesy on the part of any of the employees of the Hudson Bay Company would have precipitated a war between the two nations. McLoughlin saw the danger, and again and again entreated the managers of the company, as well as the Home Government itself, to protect the interests of the traders, but he was told to shift for himself. It was fully six months after he had given the warning that two war ships entered the Columbia, ostensibly to give aid, but in reality to spy on the factor's actions. Even the loyalty of Douglas, whom he had been training for years to be his successor, could not be relied upon, and McLoughlin was denounced not only as being American in his sympathies, but as doing everything possible to hand over the territory to the United States. He was forbidden absolutely to render any assistance in the future to the immigrants, and when he indignantly protested that to do so would be a violation of the most fundamental principles of humanity and almost a declaration of war between the two countries, the order was nevertheless insisted on.