

CHAPTER IV

SHORTLY before eleven o'clock the expected visitors arrived, Dr. Haldane and the clergyman riding abreast, and followed by the latter's two armed servants, one of whom led a packhorse. Lathom met them at the steps and bade them welcome, and the two attendants were sent off to the servants' quarters, where they would have ample opportunity to exchange gossip and talk about their respective masters.

"Come in, gentlemen, come in," said the commandant, as he shook hands with his guests. "Mrs. Lathom begs of you to come to her first, before going to your rooms. She will not detain you longer than is necessary for you to take a little refreshment, of which I am sure you stand in need after so long and so hot a ride."

"Indeed, Lathom, it is most thoughtful of her; for, unlike our reverend friend here, I can never restrain my carnal longings when I know that liquid refreshment is near;" and Haldane, a huge, broad-shouldered, flowing whiskered man, slapped Lathom on the shoulder, and laughed boisterously.

"The weather has indeed been most ungracious," said the clergyman in slow, harsh, ponderous tones, as he walked towards the dining-room, "but yet we must not presume to question the decree of an all-wise Providence. Hum, ha!"