

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE DUEL

ETHERINGTON had arrived at York, worn and disheartened. He had received a terrible disappointment in the mutilated packet, which had reached his hands in so tragical a manner. He had not even admitted so much to himself, but the desire to know the truth concerning his father, had affected him more than was good for him; so that the disappointment, with the realization of the utter hopelessness of his love and the deaths of Brock and Macdonnell, had combined to make him a sad misanthrope. Though he performed the duties assigned him, yet he seemed to take little interest in life. Not even the gaieties of the old Capital could wean him from a melancholy habit he had fallen into.

Though he was still a young man, yet he was gradually coming to feel as though he had lived his life, and had done with the hopes and ambitions of human existence. As time went on, and he got no reply to his letter to Lydia Bradford, though he had never really expected one, the fact of her silence accentuated the reality of the impassable barrier which separated them.

Late in the autumn, he received news of the departure of the Philpotts family; and soon after, his mournful inaction was destined to receive a shock.