

"NL DESPERANDUM;" OR, THE FORTUNES OF A LOYAL HOUSE.

(Continued from p. 159.)

CHAPTER XIII.

IN SHELTER.

"I her preserved from peril and from fear,
And evermore from villany her kept;
Ne'er was there wight to me more dear,
Than she, ne unto whom I more true love
did bear."

A FEVERISH attack, consequent on the fatigue and exposure of her long journey, saved Dorothy from the eyes of "that strange bright dreadful thing, a court." King Charles, Queen Henrietta, and all the principal people in Oxford sent to enquire for her, but Lady d'Aubigny admitted nobody to the sick-room, where she herself watched and waited tenderly. Her care, and the skill of the king's physician, soon brought Dorothy through the fever, but it left her very weak and tired, with no wish but to lie still in the peaceful place to which she had been brought. There was no sound but the bell for service, or the music and singing from the College Chapel, which was close to Lady d'Aubigny's apartments; and no sight more exciting than the quiet faces of the doctor and the servants, and her friend's dark soft eyes, which seemed to say so much, even when her lips were closed. Lady d'Aubigny would not let Frank see his cousin while she was ill; but she always went out herself and told him the last news, begging him to have perfect confidence in her, so that Frank always went away comforted.

The first day that Dorothy was able to sit up, she was moved into a little room adjoining her bedroom, and placed in a cushioned chair by the fire. She was a pitiful sight, and so Lady d'Aubigny thought, as she sat down close beside her; white and shadowy, her grey eyes sadder and larger than ever, and her thin little hands crossed patiently on her lap. But the lady only noted these things to herself, and spoke in a cheering tone.

"You are better now. We shall soon have you strong again!"

"Ah," said Dorothy, while a faint smile

came over her face. "I am almost sorry. It has been so peaceful, lying here, since my head has been quiet. And your ladyship has been only too good to me."

"Do not speak of that, my sweet friend. It has been a work of love, I do assure you. But there is no reason, that I can see, that the peace should pass away with your better health."

"One remembers everything. And it is blessed to forget."

"You are very young to speak thus, my child."

"I know my troubles are nothing to yours," said Dorothy, softly. "But your ladyship is so good, that I cannot help speaking of them."

"Say what you will," said Lady d'Aubigny, suddenly rising, and kissing her. "My troubles have taught me to sympathise. Only do not say 'your ladyship' any more. Call me Kate; that is my name, and I love to hear it."

"Then will you call me Dolly? it is my poor Marmaduke's name for me."

"It is a bargain, sweet one. And now—I will not tire you with talking,—but tell me a little of your old home, and the life there. I lived at a house in the country once myself, and I love to look back to that time. Some day, when you return to your Dering, and when all these troubles are over, I shall come and see you with my little d'Aubigny."

Dorothy smiled; she liked to talk of home, though she left it so sadly, and her mind wandered from the Hall to the Rectory, among bright summer days and merry winter evenings, till her eyes filled with tears; but they sprang from happy and peaceful recollections. The last scenes: the Rector's death, Mr. Corbet's coming, were painful to look back upon. Before mentioning that last name, she paused, and put one of her hands into Lady d'Aubigny's.

"Dear Kate, this is the trouble of my life; and yet it was not my fault: what could I do? I would not have spoken