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TOO STRANGE NOT TO BE TRUE.

BY LADY GEORGIANA FULLERTON.

CHAPTER IX.

AT ~~last~~, one morning, the rain ceased ; the heavy clouds rolled away towards the west, and hung in heavy masses over the distant hills ; the birds began to sing ; the hares and rabbits emerged from their holes, and ran once more over the green-sward. The buffaloes came trooping down from the mountains to the prairies, and a hoary bison swam across the river, and looked out upon the world from one of the flowery islands on its bosom, like a conqueror taking possession of a kingdom. A burst of glorious sunshine gladdened the expanse of wood and water around St. Agathe, and the herbage and the flowers, and living things without number, seemed to exult in its light. The brightness of that first fine morning, after weeks of incessant rain, was like the first return of joy to a heart long oppressed by grief. It felt almost like a presage of approaching change in the lives of its inhabitants. It was a Sunday morning too, and d'Auban, who heard that Madame de Moldau had been longing to get to church, brought his horse ready saddled for her to the door of the pavilion, and prepared to conduct her in this way to the village. She consented ; he took the bridle in his hand, and the Indian servant and the negro boy followed them on foot. They crossed the wood between them and the river, which was sometimes traversed in a boat and

sometimes by means of a series of small islets forming a kind of natural bridge, the spaces between being filled with a network of floating verdure. Their progress was slow, for the ground, saturated with wet, was in some places almost impassable. D'Auban kept a little in advance of the horse, and tried at each step the firmness of their footing. The dripping branches over their heads rained upon them as they went along. But the scents were delicious, and the air very reviving for those who had been long confined within the house. For the first time for many weeks Madame de Moldau was in good spirits : she murmured the first words of the service of the Mass—"I will go to the altar of God, to God who rejoices my youth," and a sort of youthful happiness beamed in her face ; she made nosegays of the wild flowers which her attendants plucked for her, from the banks and from the boughs through which they treaded their way. But the flowers were not to adorn the altar, nor the little party, on its way to the church to hear Mass that day. The sound of the gong, which served as a bell, came booming over the water, but its summons was to sound in vain for them ; they were about to be stopped on their road.

D'Auban was just examining whether it would be possible to cross the river on the