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TOO STRANGE NOT TO BE TRUE.

BY LADY GEORGIANA FULLERTON.

CHAPTER VI.—Continued.

One of them instantly began searching the box and the drawers in the adjoining room. The picture and the trinkets were of course discovered, and one of the men nodded to the other, and said, "That's it." D'Auban was confounded at the strangeness of their position. His usual coolness and presence of mind almost forsook him in this complicated embarrassment. Under the weight of so plausible an accusation and such overwhelming evidence, the only defence that could be set up would of necessity appear an absurd invention, a preposterous lie. It seemed to him incredible at that moment that he had not more fully realized the danger hanging over them from the possession of those things. He felt stunned and bewildered. There was no time to confer with his wife on the steps they should take, or the answers they should give when separately examined, which he knew must follow. Would even his own friends believe his story? They had known him long and well, but her scarcely at all. Sooner than give credit to so improbable a story, they might deem that he had been taken in by an impostor. These thoughts passed through his mind with the quickness of lightning, for the whole scene did not last more than two or three minutes. He asked leave to write a few words to M. d'Orgeville. This was refused, with a hint that such a note might convey instructions for removing other stolen property. They scarcely allowed Madame d'Auban time to put up a change of clothes, and to kiss her daughter. She was taken too much by surprise to be able to collect her thoughts. She could only strain her to her breast. D'Auban called Antoine, who was standing pale and trembling at the door, and said, "Take care of her. Take her to the Hotel d'Orgeville. Tell them that through some extraordinary mistake we are

accused of a crime, and thrown into prison."

"No more talking, if you please," said one of the police agents, and hurried them down stairs. When Madame d'Auban had reached the last step she turned round to look at her daughter who was following her in silence; too agitated to speak, too terrified to weep.

"Mina!" she cried, as the carriage door closed upon her. What more she said the young girl did not hear. When it had disappeared she slowly went up stairs again. Antoine was frightened at her still composed look.

"Ah! Mademoiselle Mina," he cried, "for God's sake do not look so. You make my heart ache. But I am sure it is no wonder. To see monsieur and madam go off in such company, and to such a place, is enough to upset one. I am ashamed of my country, that I am. Let me get you some wine and water, mademoiselle, you are nearly fainting?"

"No, Antoine; I am thinking," answered the child, with her head resting on her hands, and an expression of intense thoughtfulness on her brow. The colour gradually returned to her cheeks, and she breathed a deep sigh. When Antoine had brought her the wine and water, she swallowed it, and said:

"Where are they gone, Antoine? I mean to what prison?"

The utterance of that word loosened the springs of sorrow, and Mina burst into tears. Then poor old Antoine was so anxious to stop her from crying, as he had been before that she did not cry.

"Where—where?" she sobbed, whilst he stroked her hand and kissed it.

"To the Conceirgerie," he said, in a low voice; and then he added, "It is all a great mistake. But we must do as your papa said, and go to the Hotel d'Orgeville."