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TOO STRANGE NOT TO BE TRUE.

BY LADY FULLERTON.

CHAPTER I.

The woods! O solemn are the boundless woods  
Of the great western world when day declines;  
And louder sounds the roll of distant floods,  
More deep the rustling of the ancient pines,  
When dimness gathers on the still air,  
And mystery seems on every leaf to brood;  
Awful it is for human heart to bear  
The weight and burthen of the solitude,

*Mrs. Hemans.*

IN the earlier part of the last century, through one of the primeval forests of the New World, northward of the region which the French colonists called the Eden of Louisiana, a man was walking one evening with his gun on his shoulder, followed by two dogs of European breed, a spaniel and a bloodhound. The rays of the setting sun were gilding the vast sea of flowers lying to his right beyond the limits of the wood through which he was making his way, impeded every moment by the cords of the slender liana and entangled garlands of Spanish moss. The firmness of his step, the briskness of his movements, the vigor of his frame, his keen eye and manly bearing, and above all the steady perseverance with which he pursued the path he had chosen, and forced his way through all obstacles, indicated a physical and moral temperament well fitted to cope with the many difficulties inherent to the life of a settler in the Nouvelle France.

Henri d'Auban had been a dweller in many lands—had lived in camps and in

courts, and held intercourse with persons of every rank in most of the great cities of Europe. He was thirty-five years of age at the time this story opens, and had been in America about four years. Brittany was his native country; his parental home a small castle on the edge of a cliff overlooking one of the wildest shores of that rude coast. The sea-beach had been his playground; its weeds, its shells, its breaking waves, his toys; the boundless expanse of the ocean and its great ceaseless voice, the endless theme of his secret musings; and the pious legends of the Armorican race, the nursery tales he had heard from his mother's lips. Brittany, like Scotland, is "a meet nurse for a poetic child," and her bold peasantry have retained to this day very much of the religious spirit of their forefathers. Early in life Henri d'Auban lost both his parents—the small-pox, the plague of that epoch in France, having carried them both off within a few days of each other. He saw them buried in the little churchyard of Kier Anna, and was placed soon after by some of his relations at the college of Vannes, where he remained several years.

On leaving it he began life with many friends, much youthful ambition, and very little fortune. Through the interest of a great-uncle, who had been a distinguished officer in Marshal Turenne's army, he was appointed military attache to the