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TOO STRANGE NOT TO BE TRUE.

BY LADY FULLERTON.

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

AFTER M. de Chambelle had left him, he remained out late, attracted by the beauty of the night. Though tired, he did not feel inclined to retire to rest. A musing fit was upon him. He had become conscious that evening that he was in danger of falling in love with Madame de Moldau. He had never yet been the better or the happier for this sort of interest in a woman. After the tragical end of the only person he had really cared for, he had made up his mind never to marry. But this resolution was not likely to remain proof against the attractions of so charming a person. It was the dread of suffering as he had suffered before; the fear of disappointment which had led him to form it, as well as the apparent hopelessness of meeting in the new world in which his destiny was cast with any woman capable of inspiring the sort of attachment without which, with what his friends called his romantic ideas, he could not understand happiness in marriage. It seemed the most improbable thing in the world that a refined, well-educated, beautiful, and gentle lady, should take up her residence in a wild and remote settlement, and yet such a one had unexpectedly come, almost without any apparent reason, as a visitant from another sphere. With her touching beauty, her secret sorrows, her strange helplessness, and her impenetrable reserve, she had, as it were, taken shelter by his side, and was beginning to haunt his waking hours and his nightly dreams with visions of a possible happiness, new and scarcely welcome to one who had attained peace and contentment in the solitary life he had so long led. In the Christian temple reared in the wilderness, in nature's forest sanctuaries, in the huts of the poor, by the dying bed of the exile, he had felt the peace he had sought to impart to others reflected in his own bosom. He had been contented with his fate. He had assented to the doom of loneliness, and foresaw nothing in the future between him and the grave but a tranqnil course of duties fulfilled and privations acquiesced in. If he sometimes yearned for closer ties than those of friendship and charity—if recollections of domestic life such as he remembered it in the home of his childhood rose before him in solitary evenings, when the wind made wild music amidst the pine branches round his log-built house, and the rolling sound of the great river reminded him of the waves breaking on the far-off coast, he would forthwith plan some deed of mercy, some act of kindness, the thought of which generally succeeded in driving away these troublesome reminiscences. He felt almost inclined to be angry with Madame de Moldau for awakening in him feelings he had not intended ever to in-