

M O T H A N D R U S T

—a lottery—that is what it is—a lottery—so I thought it would all come right in time; I never thought—I never guessed—” Jos’ voice broke. “I see now, I helped to push her into it—but—I didn’t know. . . . If only you had known that last afternoon, and could have pleaded with her If only you had known, and could have held her back—my white lamb, my little Elsa.”

He ground his heel against the polished floor.

There was a long silence.

Then he got up and went away.

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It was not until the end of July that Mary saw him again. She had heard nothing of him. She only knew that he had left London. He came in one evening late, and Mary’s aunt discreetly disappeared after a few minutes’ desultory conversation.

He looked worn and aged, but he spoke calmly. And this time he noticed Mary’s existence.

“You look pulled down,” he said, kindly. “Has the season been too much for you?”

“It is not that,” she said. “I have been distressed because an old friend of mine is in trouble.”