

not academic: it was terribly intimate and vital. And Sarah was out.

"Oh, mother," he cried, bursting into Mrs. Sergison's room, "such a dreadful thing's happened."

"What is it?" Mrs. Sergison asked in alarm.

"Why," said Rudd, "somebody called to see you, and Jane said you were not at home, and you *are*!"

"Who was it?" Mrs. Sergison inquired.

"I don't know," said Rudd. "But Jane said you were not at home, and she knew that you were, and it's a story, a dreadful story. And Jane says you told her to tell it."

Mrs. Sergison drew the boy to her. "'Not at home' means I don't want to see any callers," she said.

"But it was a story," said Rudd.

"No, not a story. It's a regular form of words meaning that."

"But if you *are* at home," said Rudd, "it must be a story."

"Listen," said Mrs. Sergison. "You don't think I'm a story-teller, do you?"

"No," said Rudd.

"Nor Jane?"

"N-n-no," said Rudd, with less confidence.

"And we're not. 'At home' means ready to see callers. 'Not at home' means not ready to see them. That's all. Now you understand?"

Rudd looked the picture of perplexity.

Mrs. Sergison kissed him. "You are quite right to