

Just as Rudd had decided to run the risk of an encounter with Oran, and was emptying his pockets by way of precaution, the bell rang. This was always an event, and Rudd withdrew into that convenient hiding-place, the overcoat recess, to hear who it was.

In the course of a minute or so Jane tripped along the passage and opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Sergison at home?" Rudd heard a voice inquire.

"I'm sorry but she's not," Jane replied.

Nothing kept Rudd from bursting from his lair and setting right this monstrous error but the circumstance that he had been forbidden to eavesdrop, as he was now doing. But of all the whoppers! Why, Jane had but just taken up Mrs. Sergison's tea.

"Are you quite sure?" the voice asked.

"Quite, ma'am," said Jane, and was not struck dead. Rudd tremblingly listened for the fall of the corpse; but it never came.

The voice murmured acquiescence, and Jane shut the door.

Rudd all unstrung and dismayed tackled her.

"Jane," he said in reproachful tones, "Jane! how could you?"

"Lor', how you made me jump!" said Jane.

"How could I what?"

"How could you tell such a story? Mother's upstairs. You know she is."

"Of course I know she is," said Jane, "but she's not at home to anyone. She told me herself."