

personæ: Mrs. Sergison (aged 36), Rudd Sergison, her only child (aged 7 that day).

The comfortable scent of crumpets, which Rudd had been toasting and his mother buttering, still lingered.

"Now," said Rudd, seating himself on a hassock at his mother's knee as she opened a book. His small grave face shone with a double glow: with the firelight and the anticipation of pleasure. A new book of stories was to be begun! A wonderful book. He had his mother's word for it.

"Are you quite settled?" she asked.

"Yes," said Rudd.

"Which shall it be?" she asked. "A funny one or a pretty one?"

"Are there both kinds?" Rudd asked.

"Oh yes," she said.

"It's *really* a good book?" he asked.

"Really," she said. "It was my favourite when I was a little girl, and I have been keeping it till you were seven, which was when it was given to me. Now which shall it be, a funny one or a pretty one?"

"Won't you choose for me?" said Rudd, "or," he added on a sudden and splendid inspiration, "couldn't we have one of each?"

"Two?" she asked, affecting to be alarmed by his greed.

"Yes, two; and then" (taking courage from her tone) "two more!"

His mother laughed in a shocked voice.