

be troubled about it," she said. "Stories are very wrong. But this only *sounded* like one. You are sure you see?"

"I'm trying to," said Rudd.

"Very well," said his mother. "Now go and ask Jane who it was. I hope it was no one I should have liked to have seen."

Rudd went, in a stupor.

When he was going to bed he related the incident to Sarah.

"It wasn't telling the truth, was it?" he said.

Sarah, who disliked Society and its pretences, agreed that it was not.

"Because mother was *in*," he continued. "She *was* at home. She was at home all the time."

"You must forget it," said Sarah. "It's a regular thing they say. Your mother didn't invent it, and I'm sure she doesn't like using it."

"What I think is," said Rudd, "that Jane ought to have said, 'Mrs. Sergison is at home, but she doesn't want to see you.' That would have been the truth."