

THE BOMB-SHELL

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ness. "It did not sound a bit real. I suppose it was true what you told them?"

Mrs. Rodney sat up suddenly, offended by the tone of her daughter's voice as well as by the nature of her remarks.

"True! It is perfectly true! That was Mr. Andrew Underwood, of the firm of Holt and Underwood, solicitors in Bloomsbury. It seems they have a corresponding firm in Melbourne who wrote to them to make inquiries about us."

"And Uncle Edgar really has left a fortune, then?"

"He has. A very great fortune! Mr. Underwood spoke of two hundred thousand pounds, and there is the sheep-farm besides."

"Good gracious! Two hundred thousand pounds!" exclaimed Estelle. "Then daddy will be able to get a rest at last!"

Her voice softened, and it was easy to gather from that where the tender spot in Estelle's heart was.

"But, mother, was all that true that you told them about the way in which Uncle Edgar left England?" she questioned. "I never heard the story before."

"It was quite true that he stole away in the middle of the night, and, if he hadn't done so, he would have been in gaol next morning," replied Mrs. Rodney with a strange snap in her voice. "And it is true about the money as well. I had to give it to him because he made me. I didn't want to in the very least! So, if it's the truth you want," she said indignantly, "there, you have got it, Estelle! I never saw such a creature for revelling in disagreeable facts! I suppose you think I ought to have told them all that without varnishing it in the slightest degree."

"I don't think you should have told them anything," Estelle answered quickly. "Everybody in Denmark Hill and right down in Camberwell will know all about