

CHAPTER V.

MR. HAMPTON IS TOO LATE.

"OLD boy asleep, Gertie?"

"Mr. Saul, why have you come?" cried the frightened girl.

"Because I wanted to see you again; because I was tired of waiting down in that dreary old dining-room. Why, what a little tease you are."

Gertrude made a step to get on the other side of the bed, so as to place the old man between them; but Saul caught her wrist, and laughingly swung her round.

"Won't do, my coy little beauty," he whispered. "I want to settle that little matter."

"Uncle!"

"Ha!" ejaculated Saul in a fierce whisper. "Wake him if you dare! If you do I'll swear you asked me to come up and sit with you. Now look here—tell me, Gertie, the old man has left you all his money?"

"No, no, no," she cried eagerly, "nothing at all."

"Don't believe it, darling. Trick to throw me off the scent; but I'm on it safe, and I'm not going to be tricked."

"Then ask uncle when he wakes," cried the girl, flushing up angrily, as she snatched her hand away.

"No, thanks; don't want a bottle or jug thrown at my head. But I don't believe you, you artful little jade. It's all your cunning way to lead me on. He has left you all his money, darling, and you've played your cards splendidly; but it would not make any difference to me if you hadn't a penny. You are going to be my little wife."

"Never!" cried Gertrude, with a hurried glance at the sunken features on the pillow.

They both spoke in a low, quick, subdued whisper, and as if under the influence of the same dread lest the old man should awake.

"Don't talk stuff, my darling. Think of your position."