

CHAPTER XXIII

ALICIA'S DREAD SECRET

MR. PERRY had been unusually busy early that morning. He had had a visit from Detective Inspector Shagford, who had told him, among other interesting things, that he had discovered James Salmon, the ex-convict, who had been passing under the name of James Rookson since coming from Dartmoor. The coincidence of the name in the advertisement could not be overlooked, and the solicitor had promised to 'phone to Scotland Yard should "James Rookson" present himself. After the detective had gone Mr. Perry sat down to study quietly the originals of David Haggard's will, and the letter which had been forwarded to him the night before.

Half-an-hour's close scrutiny sent him to the telephone, but not to talk to Shagford. He rang up Dolamore, the famous handwriting expert. In answer Dolamore promised to call before lunch, and Perry walked back to his writing-table and was about to resume his examination of the documents, when one of his clerks entered the room.

"A young woman to see you, sir. She says her name's Jane Bassett."

Mr. Perry's impassive face lightened.

"I'll see her at once, Benson—and bring your note book."

Jenny was shown in. She had no need to assume her manner. Her nervousness and timidity were real. She was wishing that she had not come.