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# **Good Luck**

L. T. Meade

# Imprint

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GOOD LUCK

BY

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Author of Polly, A Sweet Girl Graduate, Etc.

M. A. DONOHUE & COMPANY  
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# GOOD LUCK

## CHAPTER I.

Amongst the crowd of people who were waiting in the Out-Patients' Department of the London Hospital on a certain foggy day toward the latter end of November might have been seen an old cherry-cheeked woman. She had bright blue eyes and firm, kindly lips. She was a little woman, slightly made, and her whole dress and appearance were somewhat old-fashioned. In the first place, she was wonderfully pretty. Her little face looked something like a russet apple, so clear was her complexion and so bright and true the light in her eyes. Her hair was snow-white, and rather fluffy in texture; it surrounded her forehead like a silver halo, adding to the picturesque effect of apple cheeks and deep blue eyes. Her attire was quaint and old-fashioned. She wore a neat black dress, made without the least attempt at ornament; round her neck was a snowy kerchief of somewhat coarse but perfectly clean muslin; over her shoulders a little black shawl was folded corner-ways, and pinned neatly with a large black-headed pin at her breast. A peep of the snowy handkerchief showed above the shawl; the handkerchief vied with the white of her hair. On her head was a drawn black silk bonnet with a tiny border of white net inside. Her hands were clothed in white cotton gloves. She stood on the borders of the crowd, one of them, and yet apart from them, noticeable to everyone present by her pretty, dainty neatness, and by the look of health which to all appearance she possessed. This had evidently been her first visit to the Out-Patients' Department. Some *habitués* of the place turned and stared at her, and one or two women who stood near—burdened, pallid, ill-looking women—gave her a quick glance of envy, and asked her with a certain show of curiosity what ailed her.

"It's my hand, dear," was the reply. "It pains awful—right up to the shoulder."

"It's rheumatis you've got, you poor thing," said one of the women who had addressed her.

"No, I don't think it's exactly that," was the reply; "but the doctor 'll tell. I can't hold my needle with the pain; it keeps me awake o'

nights. Oh, we must all have our share," she added cheerfully; "but ef it were the will of the Almighty, I'd rayther not have my share o' pain in my right hand."

"You does needlework fer a living, I suppose?" said a man who stood near.

"Yes. I only 'opes to the Lord that my working hand isn't going to be taken from me – but there, I'll soon know."

She smiled brightly at these words, and addressed one of her neighbors with regard to the state of that neighbor's baby – the child was evidently suffering from ophthalmia, and could scarcely open its eyes.

It was cold in the out-patients' waiting-room, and the crowd became impatient and anxious, each for his or her turn to see the doctors who were in attendance. At last the little woman with the white hair was admitted to the consulting-room. She was shown in by a dresser, and found herself face to face with the doctor. He said a few words to her, asked her some questions with regard to her symptoms, looked at the hand, touched the thumb and forefinger, examined the palm of the hand very carefully, and then pronounced his brief verdict.

"You are suffering from what is equivalent to writers' cramp, my good woman," he said.

"Lor', sir," she interrupted, "I respec'fully think you must be mistook. I never take a pen in my 'and oftener nor twice a year. I aint a schollard, sir."

"That don't matter," was the reply; "you use your needle a good deal."

"Of course, and why shouldn't I?"

"How many hours a day do you work?"

"I never count the hours, sir. I work all the time that I've got. The more I work, the more money there be, you understand."

"Yes, I quite understand. Well, you must knock it off. Here! I shall order you a certain liniment, which must be rubbed into the hand two or three times a day."

"But what do you mean by knocking it off, sir?"

"What I say—you must stop needlework. Johnson," continued Dr. Graves, raising his eyes and looking at the dresser, "send in another patient." He rose as he spoke.

"I am sorry for you, my poor woman," he said, "but that hand is practically useless. At your age, there is not the most remote chance of recovery. The hand will be powerless in a few months' time, whatever you do; but if you spare it—in short, give it complete rest—it may last a little longer."

"And do you mean, sir, that I'm never to do sewing again?"

"I should recommend you to knock it off completely and at once; by so doing you will probably save yourself a good deal of suffering, and the disease may not progress so rapidly—in any case, the power to sew will soon leave you. Use the liniment by all means, take care of your health, be cheerful. Good-morning."

The doctor accompanied the little woman to the door of the consulting-room; he opened the door for her, and bowed as she passed out. He treated her almost as if she were a lady, which in very truth she was in every sense of the word. But she did not notice his politeness, for his words had stunned her. She walked slowly, with a dazed look in her eyes, through the crowd of people who were waiting to be admitted to the different physicians, and found herself in the open street. Her name was Patience Reed, she was sixty-eight years of age, and was the grandmother of six orphan children.

"Good Lord, what do it mean?" she murmured as she walked quickly through the sloppy, dark, disagreeable streets. "I'm to lose the power of this 'and, and I'm not to do any more needlework. I don't believe it's true. I don't believe that doctor. I'll say nothing to Alison to-day. Good Lord, I don't believe for a moment you'd afflict me in this awful sort of way!"

She walked quickly. She had by nature a very light and cheerful heart; her spirit was as bright and cheery as her appearance. She picked up her courage very soon, stepped neatly through the miry, slippery streets, and presently reached her home. Mrs. Reed and the six grandchildren lived in a model lodging-house in a place called Sparrow Street, off Whitechapel Road. The house possessed all the

new sanitary improvements, a good supply of water was laid on, the rooms were well ventilated, the stoves in the little kitchens burned well, the rents were moderate, there was nothing at all to complain of in the home. Mrs. Reed was such a hearty, genial, hard-working woman that she would have made any home bright and cheerful. She had lived in Whitechapel for several years, but her work lay mostly in the West End. She belonged to the old-fashioned order of needlewomen. She could do the most perfect work with that right hand which was so soon to be useless. Machine-made work excited her strongest contempt, but work of the best order, the finest hand-made needlework, could be given over to her care with perfect satisfaction. She had a good connection amongst the West End shops, and had year after year earned sufficient money to bring up the six orphan children comfortably and well. Alison, the eldest girl, was now seventeen, and was earning her own living in a shop near by. David was also doing something for himself, but the four younger children were still dependent on Grannie. They were all like her as regards high spirits, cleanliness, and a certain bright way of looking at life.

"I'll not be discouraged, and I'll not believe that doctor," she murmured, as she mounted the long flight of stairs which led to the fifth floor. "Aint I always 'ad good luck all the days o' a long life?" She reached her own landing at last, panting a little for breath as she did so. She opened her hall door with a latch-key and entered the kitchen. The kitchen was absolutely neat, the stove shone like a looking-glass, the dinner was cooking in the oven, and the table round which the entire family were soon to dine already wore its coarse white cloth.

"There, I'm not going to murmur," said the old woman to herself.

She went into her bedroom, took off her shawl, shook it out, folded it neatly, and put it away. She took off her bonnet and dusted it, pinned it into an old white cambric handkerchief, and laid it beside the shawl on a little shelf. Her white gloves and white handkerchief shared the same attention. Then she brushed her white hair, put on a neat cap, and returned to the kitchen.

Ten minutes afterward this kitchen was full of noise, life, and confusion. The four younger children had come back from Board

school. Harry, the eldest boy, had rushed in from a bookseller's near by, and Alison, who served behind a counter in one of the shops in Shoreditch, had unexpectedly returned.

Alison was a very tall and pretty girl. She had dark blue eyes and an upright carriage; her hair was golden with some chestnut shades in it. She had a clear complexion like her grandmother's, and firm lips, with a sweet expression. As a rule she had a cheerful face, but to-day she looked anxious. Grannie gave her one quick glance, and guessed at once that something was troubling her.

"Now, I wonder what's up?" she thought. "Well, I shan't burden the child with my troubles to-day."

"Come," she said in a hearty voice, "sit you all down in your places. Kitty, my girl, say your grace. That's right," as the child folded her hands, closed her eyes, raised her piping voice, and pronounced a grace in rhyme in a sing-song tone.

The moment the grace was finished a huge potato pie made its appearance out of the oven, and the meal—good, hearty, and nourishing—began. Grannie helped all the children. She piled the daintiest bits on Alison's plate, watching the girl without appearing to do so as she played with her dinner.

"Come, Ally, you are not eating," said Grannie. "This will never do. It's a real pleasure to have you back in the middle of the day, and you must show it by making a good meal. Ah, that's better. Help your sister to some bread, David."

David was between fifteen and sixteen years of age, a fine well-grown lad. He looked attentively at Alison, opened his lips as if to say something, caught a warning glance from her eyes, and was instantly silent. Alison forced herself to eat some of the nourishing pie, then she looked full at Grannie.

"By the way, Grannie," she said, "you were to see the doctor at the London Hospital this morning, were you not?"

"Yes, child; what about it? I'll have a piece of bread, David, if you will cut it for me."

David did so. Alison detected some concealment in Grannie's voice, and pursued her inquiries.

"What did he say?" she asked.

"Oh, what didn't he say. Nothing special – the old kind of story. I never thought much of plaguing a doctor for a common sort of thing like this. I'm to rub the hand with liniment three times a day. There's the bottle on that shelf. I 'spect I'll be all right in a week or a fortnight. Now, children, hurry up with your dinner; you'll have to be off to school in less than ten minutes, so there's no time to lose."

The children began to eat quickly. Alison and David again exchanged glances. Harry suddenly pushed back his chair.

"You say your grace before you go," said Grannie, fixing him with her bright blue eyes.

He blushed a little, muttered a word or two, and then left the room.

"Harry is a good lad," said the old lady when he had gone, "but he is getting a bit uppish. He's a masterful sort. He aint like you, Dave."

"I am masterful in my own way," answered David.

He crossed the room, bent over the little old woman, and kissed her on the forehead.

"Harry and I will be a bit late to-night," he said. "We've joined a boys' club in Bethnal Green."

"A club?" said Grannie. "You're young to be out at nights by yourself. What sort of club?"

"Oh, It's a first-rate sort. It has been opened by a good man. He's a right down jolly fellow, though he is a swell. There's boxing and all kinds of good games going on there."

"It's all right, Grannie," interrupted Alison. "Boys must grow into men," she added, in a quick voice.

"Dear me," answered the old woman, "I don't know nothing, I suppose! When I was young, boys in their teens stayed at home. But there! you are a good lad, Dave, and I'll trust you to keep Harry out of mischief."

"Harry is well enough, Grannie, if you'd only trust him."

"Well, I suppose I must. Give me a kiss, Dave, and be off. Children, loves, what are you pottering about for?"

"We're ready to go now, Grannie," said the little ones.

They shouldered their bags, put on their hats, and left the room with considerable clatter, only first of all each small pair of legs made for Grannie's chair, each rosy pair of lips bestowed a vigorous kiss upon her apple-blossom cheeks. She patted them on their shoulders, smiled at them with happy eyes full of love; and they rushed off to school, grumbling a little at her quick, abrupt ways, but loving her well deep down in their hearts.

Alison stood up and began to put away the dinner things. Alison and Mrs. Reed were now alone. The old woman looked anxiously at the girl. Alison's figure was very slight and graceful. She wore her shop dress, too, a neat black alpaca. The young ladies in the shops in High Street, Shoreditch, could not afford black silk, but the shop in question was a good one, and black alpaca, neatly made, had quite as good an effect. Alison's hair was put up stylishly on her head. She wore a little bit of cheap lace round her throat, and a bit of the same came from under the neat wrists of her dress. Two or three small chrysanthemums were pinned at her bosom. Grannie thought her quite the lady.

"I wish, child, you wouldn't slave yourself!" she said at last impatiently. "What's the old woman for if it isn't to wash up and put in order? and I'm quite certain you ought to be back at the shop by now."

"I'm not going back," said Alison, in a low tone.

Grannie had guessed this from the first. She did not speak at all for a minute, then she chose to dally with the evil tidings.

"It's a holiday you are having most like," she said. "I didn't know they gave 'em at this time of the year, but I'm real glad. I expect you let Jim Hardy know. He'll be sure to be round bimeby when his work's over, and you'd like the kitchen to yourselves, wouldn't you?"

"No, Grannie, no," said Alison abruptly. "There's no Jim for me any more, and there's no work, and—and—I'm in *trouble*—I'm in trouble."

She crossed the room impulsively, went on her knees, swept her two young arms round Grannie's frail figure, laid her head on the little woman's sloping shoulder, and burst into tears.

Grannie was wonderfully comforting and consoling. She did not express the least surprise. She patted Alison on her cheek. She allowed the girl to grasp her painful right hand and swollen arm without a word of protest.

"There, lovey, there, cry your heart out," she exclaimed. "You 'a' lost your situation. Well, you aint the first; you'll soon get another, dearie, and you'll be a rare bit of comfort to me at home for a few days. There, set down close to me, darlin', and tell me everythink. Wot's up, my pretty, wot's wrong?"

"I thought I wouldn't tell you," said Alison, stopping to wipe her tears away, "but I can't keep it back. They have accused me in the shop of stealing a five-pound note out of the till. Yes, Grannie, no wonder you open your eyes. It is true; I am accused of being a thief. They are all sure that I have done it. A five-pound note is missing; and you know how Mr. Shaw has sometimes trusted me, and sometimes, when he has been very busy, he has allowed me to go to the desk and open the till and take out change. Well, that was what happened to-day. A customer came in and asked Mr. Shaw to change a five-pound note for him, and Mr. Shaw went to the till to get the change, and then he shut it up, but he left the key in the lock, meaning to get back to his place at the desk in a minute; but business kept him, and I was the very next person to go to the till. I locked it after I had taken out the change, and gave him the key. He went back in a minute or two to take out the money to carry to the bank, and the five-pound note was missing. He asked me out sharp if I had taken it—you know how red I get when anyone suspects me. I felt myself blushing awfully, and then the other girls stopped working and the men, even Jim, stared at me, and I blushed hotter and hotter every minute. Then Mr. Shaw said: 'You were overcome by temptation, Alison Reed, and you took the money; but give it

back to me now at once, and I'll promise to forgive you, and say nothing more about it.'

"Oh, I was so angry, and I said they might search me, and Mr. Shaw got angry then, and he got one of the girls to feel me all over and to turn my pockets inside out, and he called himself real kind not to get in the police. Oh, Grannie, of course they couldn't find it on me, but I was searched there in the shop before everyone. How am I ever to get over the shame? I was nearly mad with passion, and I gave notice on the spot, and here I am. I told Mr. Shaw that I would never enter his shop again until I was cleared, and I mean to keep my word.

"Mr. Shaw seemed more angry with me for giving notice than he was at the loss of the note. He said he was certain I took it, for no one else could, and that I had hid it somewhere, and that I was afraid to stay, and he said he wouldn't give me any character. So here I am, Grannie. I have lost my eight shillings a week, and I have lost my character, and I am suspected of being a thief—here I am, good for nothing. I have just got my neat shop dress and that is all."

"And does Jim Hardy know?" asked Grannie.

"He was in the shop, of course, and heard everything. I saw he wanted to speak, but they wouldn't let him; if he asks me again to be his wife, I shall say 'no' to him. I never was quite certain whether I'd do right or wrong in marrying him, but now I'm positive. Jim's a right good fellow, but he shan't ever have it to say that his wife was accused of theft. I'm going to refuse him, Grannie. I suppose I'll bear all this as well as another. I'm young, anyway, and you believe in me, dont you?"

"Believe in you? of course!" said Mrs. Reed. "I never heard of such a shameful thing in all my life. Why, you are as honest as the day. Of course that note will be found, and Mr. Shaw, who knows your value, will ask you to go back fast enough. It 'll be all right, that it will. I know what I'll do, I'll go straight to the shop and speak about it. I'm not going to stand this, whoever else is. It aint a slight thing, Alison; it aint the sort of thing that a girl can get over. There are you, only seventeen, and so pretty and like a real lady. Yes, you are; you needn't pertend you aint. Me and my people were always gen-

teel, and you take after us. I'll see to it. You shan't be accused of theft, my dear, ef I can help it."

"But you can't help it, Grannie dear. Whatever you say they won't believe you. There is a girl I hate at the shop, and only that I know it is impossible, I could believe that she had a finger in the pie. Her name is Louisa Clay. She is rather handsome, and at one time we used to be friends, but ever since Jim and I began to keep company she has looked very black at me. I think she has a fancy that Jim would have taken to her but for me; anyhow, I could not help seeing how delighted she looked when I went out of the shop. Oh, let it be, Grannie; what is the use of interfering? You may talk yourself hoarse, but they won't believe you."

"Believe me or not, Mr. Shaw has got to hear what I say," answered the old woman. "I am not going to see my girl slighted, nor falsely accused, nor her good name taken from her without interfering. It is no use talking, Alison; I will have my way in this matter."

Grannie rose from her chair as she spoke. Her cheeks were quite flushed new, her eyes were almost too bright, and her poor hand ached and ached persistently. Alison, who had been sitting on the floor shedding tears now and then, rose slowly, walked to the window, and looked out. She was feeling half stunned. She was by nature a very bright, happy girl. Until this moment things had gone well with her in life. She was clever, and had carried all before her at the Board school. She was also pretty, and, as Grannie expressed it, "genteel." She had got a good post in a good shop, and until today had been giving marked satisfaction. Her earnings were of great value to the little home party, and she was likely before long to have a rise. Mr. Shaw, the owner of the haberdasher's shop in which she worked, talked of making Alison his forewoman before long. She had a stylish appearance. She showed off his mantles and hats to advantage; she had a good sharp eye for business; she was very civil and obliging; she won her way with all his customers; there was not a girl in the shop who could get rid of remnants like Alison; in short, she was worth more than a five-pound note to him, and when she was suddenly accused of theft, in his heart of hearts he was extremely sorry to lose her. Alison was too happy up to the present moment not to do her work brightly and well.

The foreman in Shaw's shop was a young man of about four-and-twenty. His name was Hardy. He was a handsome fellow; he had fallen in love with Alison almost from the first moment he had seen her. A week ago he had asked her to be his wife; she had not yet given him her answer, but she had long ago given him her heart.

Now everything was changed; a sudden and very terrible blow had fallen on the proud girl. Her pride was humiliated to the very dust. She had held her head high, and it was now brought low. She resolved never to look at Hardy again. Nothing would induce her to go back to the shop. Oh, yes, Grannie might go to Mr. Shaw and talk as much as she liked, but nothing would make matters straight now.

Mrs. Reed was very quick about all she said and did. She was tired after her long morning of waiting in the Out-Patients' Department of the London Hospital, but mere bodily fatigue meant very little to her. One of her nurslings—the special darling of her heart—was humiliated and in danger. It was her duty to go to the rescue. She put on her black bonnet and neat black shawl, encased her little hands once again in her white cotton gloves, and walked briskly through the kitchen.

"I'm off, Ally," she said. "I'll be back soon with good news."

Then she paused near the door.

"Ef you have a bit of time you might go on with some of the needlework," she said.

She thought of the hand which ached so sorely.

"Yes, Grannie," replied Alison, turning slowly and looking at her.

"You'll find the basket in the cupboard, love. I'm doing the feather-stitching now; don't you spoil the pattern."

"No, Grannie," answered the girl. Then she added abruptly, her lips quivering: "There aint no manner of use in your going out and tiring yourself."

"Use or not, I am going," said Mrs. Reed.

"By the way, if Jim should happen to come in, be sure you keep him. I have a bit of a saveloy in the cupboard to make a flavor for

his tea. Don't you bother with that feather-stitching if Jim should be here."

"He won't be here," said Alison, compressing her lips.

Mrs. Reed pattered down the long steep flight of steps, and soon found herself in the street. The fog had grown thicker than ever. It was very dense indeed now. It was so full of sulphuric acid that it smarted the eyes and hurt the throats and lungs of the unfortunate people who were obliged to be out in it. Grannie coughed as she threaded her way through the well-known streets.

"Dear, dear," she kept muttering under her breath, "wot an evil world it is! To think of a young innocent thing being crushed in that sort of cruel way! Wot do it mean? Of course things must be set right. I'll insist on that. I aint a Reed for nothing. The Reeds are well-born folks, and my own people were Phippses, and they were well-born too. And as to the luck o' them, why, 'twas past tellin'. It don't do for one who's Phipps and Reed both, so to speak, to allow herself to be trampled on. I'll soon set things straight. I've got sperrit, wotever else I aint got."

She reached Shaw's establishment at last. It was getting well into the afternoon, and for some reason the shop was more full than usual. It was a very cheap shop and a very good one—excellent bargains could be found there—and all the people around patronized it. Alison was missed to-day, having a very valuable head for business. Shaw, the owner of the shop; was standing near the doorway. He felt cross and dispirited. He did not recognize Mrs. Reed when she came in. He thought she was a customer, and bowed in an obsequious way.

"What can I serve you with, madam?" he said. "What department do you want to go to?"

"To none, thank you, sir," answered Mrs. Reed. "I have come to see Mr. Shaw. I'll be much obleeged if I can have a few words with him."

"Oh, Mr. Shaw! Well, I happen to be that gentleman. I am certainly very much occupied at present; in fact, my good woman, I must trouble you to call at a less busy time."

"I must say a word to you now, sir, if you please," said Mrs. Reed, raising her eyes and giving him a steady glance. "My name is Reed. I have come about my grandchild."

"Oh," said the owner of the shop, "you are Mrs. Reed." His brow cleared instantly. "I shall be pleased to see you, madam. Of course you have come to talk over the unpleasant occurrence of this morning. I am more grieved than I can say. Step this way, madam, if you please."

He marched Grannie with pomp through the crowd of customers; a moment later she found herself in his private office.

"Now," he said, "pray be seated. I assure you, Mrs. Reed, I greatly regret — —"

"Ef you please, sir," said Grannie, "it is not to hear your regrets that I have come here. A great wrong has been done my granddaughter. Alison is a good girl, sir. She has been well brought up, and she would no more touch your money than I would. I come of a respectable family, Mr. Shaw. I come of a stock that would scorn to steal, and I can't say more of Alison than that she and me are of one mind. She left her 'ome this morning as happy a girl as you could find, and came back at dinner time broken-hearted. Between breakfast and dinner a dreadful thing happened to her; she was accused of stealing a five-pound note out of your till. She said she were innocent, but was not believed. She was searched in the presence of her fellow shop people. Why, sir, is it likely she could get over the shame o' that? Of course you didn't find the money on her, but you have broke her heart, and she 'ave left your service."

"Well, madam, I am very sorry for the whole thing, but I do not think I can be accused of undue harshness to your granddaughter. Circumstances were strongly against her, but I didn't turn her off. She took the law into her own hands, as far as that is concerned."

"Of course she took the law into her own hands, Mr. Shaw. 'Taint likely that a girl wot has come of the Phippses and the Reeds would stand that sort of conduct. I'm her grandmother, born a Phipps, and I ought to know. You used rough words, sir, and you shamed her before everyone, and you refused her a *character*, so she can't get another place. Yes, sir, you have taken her character and her bread

from her by the same *hact*, and wot I have come to say is that I won't have it."

Mr. Shaw began to lose his temper—little Mrs. Reed had long ago lost hers.

"Look here, my good woman," he said, "it's very fine for you to talk in that high-handed style to me, but you can't get over the fact that five pounds are missing."

"I 'aven't got over it, sir; and it is because I 'aven't that I've come to talk to you to-day. The money must be found. You must not leave a stone unturned until it is found, for Alison must be cleared of this charge. That is wot I have come to say. There's someone else a thief in your house, sir, but it aint my girl."

"I am inclined to agree with you," said Shaw, in a thoughtful voice, "and I may as well say now that I regret having acted on the impulse of the moment. The facts of the case are these: Between eleven and twelve o'clock to-day, one of my best customers came here and asked me to give him change for a five-pound note. I went to the till and did so, taking out four sovereigns and a sovereign's worth of silver, and dropped the five-pound note into the till in exchange. In my hurry I left the key in the till. Miss Reed was standing close to me, waiting to ask me a question, while I was attending to my customer. As soon as he had gone she began to speak about some orders which had not been properly executed. While I was replying to her, and promising to look into the matter, a couple of customers came in. Miss Reed began to attend to them. They bought some ribbons and gloves, and put down a sovereign to pay for them. She asked me for change, and being in a hurry at the moment, I told her to go to the till and help herself. She did so, bringing back the change, and at the same time giving me the key of the till. I put the key into my pocket, and the usual business of the morning proceeded. After a time I went to open the till to take out the contents in order to carry the money to the bank. I immediately missed the five-pound note. You will see for yourself, Mrs. Reed, that suspicion could not but point to your granddaughter. She had seen the whole transaction. To my certain knowledge no one else could have gone to the till without being noticed. I put the five-pound note into the till with my own hands. Miss Reed went at my request to get