

Family's Lucky Escape

Shop and Dwelling Destroyed by Fire

A fire, with very nearly fatal consequences, occurred at the shop and dwelling occupied by Mr. M. M. Peel, of Morris street, Sunshine, in the early hours of Saturday morning last. Mr. Peel, who carries on the business of fruiterer and greengrocer in the premises mentioned, had risen at 2 a.m., and was preparing to leave for the market when the fire started. It appears that Mrs. Peel, who is a sufferer from Bright's disease and subject to kidney fits, had been attending to an invalid daughter all the previous evening. The girl, who is aged 16, and suffering from a curvature of the spine, and had only come from the Melbourne Hospital on the Friday after an operation from appendicitis, made some request to her mother. The mother hastened to minister to the daughter's wants, and was in the act of moving from one room to the other with a lighted candle in her hand, when she became overcome with a fit and collapsed, the candle meanwhile coming into contact with some wardrobe curtains, with the result that they were soon ablaze. Mr. Peel was about to go away in his motor van, when he heard his wife fall and saw the sudden glare of light. He rushed in and carried his unconscious wife out. By this time the house was well ablaze, and the danger to the two children was very great, especially as the elder one's leg was in irons and unable to move. Mr. Peel managed, with assistance of another man, to

unable to move. Mr. Peel managed with assistance of another man, to bring his youngest daughter, aged 14 years, out through the back door. The task of rescuing the invalid daughter was a serious one, and Mr. Peel plug-

kily entered the burning building, and picking the girl up endeavoured to force his way through the back. This avenue of escape was, however, cut off, and he made haste to get out through the shop door. The door was locked and the key misplaced. This necessitated him placing his daughter on the floor and smashing the door in. By this time the fire had got a strong hold, and it was found impossible to save any of the articles of furniture in the house.

Mrs. Peel was still unconscious, and conveyed to the home of Dr. Tonkin, when she revived after an hour's treatment. The contents of the house were insured for £250, whilst the building was owned by Mr. J. W. McGrath.

The unfortunate aspect of the case is that the daughter will have to again enter the hospital, as in the haste to leave the burning building the wound caused by the operation for appendicitis reopened, and necessitates further treatment.

Mr. Peel, who is a returned soldier, lost all his war records, including the Gallipoli star, Victory medal, British Service medal, and his discharge papers. The amount of insurance does not nearly cover the extent of the damage done. The doctor has ordered the eldest daughter away to a warmer climate for four months, but this, following the great blow the family has received, looks at present impossible. Mr. Peel is endeavouring to carry on his round of fruit and greengrocery.

greengrocery.

The brigades in attendance were under District Officer Cross.