

From an open window overlooking Cashel Street he cried for help, expecting that the fire brigade would come to the assistance of those trapped. No assistance being forthcoming in this direction, he endeavoured to reach the Colombo Street frontage. Owing to visibility being practically nil, he was unable to reach the Colombo Street windows, and after describing his attempt to give assistance to a girl who had collapsed, he described how he ultimately found his way to the ledge of a window on Colombo Street. From this position he was rescued at not earlier than 4.10 p.m.—that is, not less than seventeen minutes after his first entry to the credit office. Then the whole area was being enveloped in flame.

64. An important part of the evidence of Miss Kennedy and Mrs. Nash was that, for five or six minutes while Mr. Kenneth Ballantyne was in the credit room, employees were placing books, ledgers, and bins in the strong-room.

Miss Kennedy said she found the stairway clear of smoke as she proceeded to the credit room, where Mr. Ballantyne had entered shortly before.

When she entered the credit room some one whom she thought was Mr. Hudson (officer in charge of the credit and accountancy office, and assistant secretary of the company) said, "We had better put the bins away." The staff then put in the strong-room about twenty-five bins, two typewriters; three or four adding-machines, and a number of boxes of records taking, she thought, about five to six minutes doing so.

After putting these items of equipment and records away she said they were standing around wondering what to do when Mr. Kenneth Ballantyne gave an order to get out by way of the fire-escape. They then moved to the fire-escape. She herself went on to the steps of the fire-escape and found too much smoke to allow egress that way. Some one, whom she thought to be Mr. Ken Ballantyne said, "You can't get down there."

She thought then that the general idea was that they should escape by the stairs and lift, but on reaching the passageway the lights failed, visibility was bad, and it then became the general opinion that escape by that means was impossible. The weight of evidence would show that the lights in the credit office failed at about 3.58, which would be some five minutes after the arrival of Mr. Ken Ballantyne in the credit office.

The girls then passed through to the accountancy office, which was still free of smoke. Shortly after, Miss Kennedy attempted to return to the credit office with the idea of again endeavouring to escape by the fire-escape, but that proving impossible as its roof was falling in, she made her way to a window and jumped to the veranda in Colombo Street at a time which has been estimated at shortly before 4.5 p.m.

65. Her story was substantially borne out by Mrs. Nash, who said that, when she returned from tea and was at the bottom of the main stairs, she noticed smoke coming from a fire-door. At that time she was with some other employees standing at the foot of the main stairs, and they were told by the floor-walker, Mr. Gaffney, to get back to work as they were getting the fire out. She saw no signs of smoke on the stairs when returning to the credit office.

She confirmed the evidence of Miss Kennedy that Mr. Ken Ballantyne was there; that coats were on the floor; the fact of being told the fire-escape was impassable; and that Mr. Hudson ordered the putting of bins away, which operation took five to six minutes.

Her evidence then conflicted with that of Miss Kennedy in that she said Mr. Ken Ballantyne and Mr. Hudson went to the door leading into the passage which, in turn, led to the stairs, and one of them said, "Everybody out." As she went in the direction of the passageway she heard one of the girls say, "The girls in the millinery are singing out for help." The girl in question and Mrs. Nash opened the door on to the fire-escape and proceeded some distance up towards the top floor of Goodman's, but the intense heat and smoke drove them back.