

Mr. Myers : Is this not argument, sir ?

Mr. Collins : It savours very largely of it.

140. *Mr. Kennedy* (to witness).] You do not want to answer my question ?— I will answer any question.

141. *Mr. O'Leary*.] Has bulk tea varied in price during the last six or seven years ?— Yes.

142. Is it cheaper now or dearer than it was ?— It is about the same—that is, for the last couple of years.

143. What is the highest price that you have sold Amber Tips tea and Bell tea at, say, during the last three or four years ?— 3s. 4d.

144. How long is it since that price operated ?— I should say that that is during the last three or four years.

145. Three or four years since it was 3s. 4d. ?— Yes.

146. You tell us that you are selling it at 2s. 11d. : when was it sold at 3s. 4d. ?— I cannot say exactly.

147. **When** you sold Amber Tips tea at 3s. 4d., what did you sell your best bulk tea at ?— 2s. 10d.

148. Do you remember a little while ago answering *Mr. Myers* this question : If it was not for the cutting in tea or in other lines you would be able to sell bulk tea at much less ?

Mr. Myers.— I did not say that. I put the general question of recovery lines.

Witness : General lines.

149. *Mr. O'Leary* (to witness).] Then, you would be able to sell general lines at less, except for cutting ?— That is so.

150. According to your figures, the public get no benefit in tea when you sell your Bell tea at 3s. 4d. ?— We are cutting so many other lines that we cannot afford to.

151. I suggest, *Mr. Hook*, that that is a very good answer. You heard the suggestion that the public would not be overcharged in the other lines if it was not for cutting ?— Many say that it was as bad months ago as it is to-day.

152. *Mr. Walker*.] I believe that when you opened up business on your own account you opened up in a notoriously bad spot ?— I did not think so when I bought the lease.

153. You did not know that your two predecessors went into bankruptcy ?

Mr. Myers : I want to know, sir, whether my friend is asking a question when he is referring to bankruptcies, or making a statement, which he is not entitled to do.

Witness : I should say that it was a good place, and I would like to be back there again.

154. Did you know about the bankruptcies ?— In one case it was only a woman selling hats.

155. What rent did you pay ?— £7 10s.

156. Did you pay the same rent as your predecessors paid ?— Yes. It is £12 10s. now.

157. It was not that when you went there ?— No.

158. Did you not advertise yourself as a price-cutter ?— I do not think that I ever used the words " price-cutter."

159. When *Wheeler* opened you closed down, did you not ?— I did not close down when he opened.

160. You closed down some time after then. You found that you were both cutting prices ?— And both doing no good.

161. He was, in your opinion, the bigger price-cutter of the two ?— I was the same as him.

162. Were you not a price-cutter in those days, as the expression is understood ?— Yes. I had to be.

163. Was that so before *Wheeler* opened ?— No.

164. How long had you been in business before *Wheeler* opened ?— Twelve months.

165. Had you not been a price-cutter before that ?— I may have told the public I was a price-cutter, but, all the same, I was getting good prices for my goods.

166. *Mr. Myers*.] During the first year you were in business in Courtenay Place did you or did you not make a profit ?— Yes, a good profit.

167. At that time you say you used to sell cheaply, but when lines were subject to fixed prices did you sell below that price ?— Yes, some of them.

168. Did you reduce to anything like mere cost ?— Yes.

169. Before *Wheeler* came on the scene ?— No.

170. Did you do any cutting in that connection prior to his starting business ?— Not any bad cutting.

171. You told *Mr. Gresson*, in cross-examination, that the returns of the present business where you are situated are satisfactory ?— Yes.

172. Would they be satisfactory if you did not charge an increased margin of profit on your so-called recovery lines ?— No.

173. *Mr. Collins*.] Is your business—namely, the one you are at present managing on behalf of *Mr. Hurney*—continuing to make progress from year to year ?— I cannot talk about another man's business. As a matter of fact, I have only been there eighteen months. Prior to my going there it was a business run down.

174. I suppose you are proud enough to claim that this improvement which you speak about is due to your present management ?— I am no better than the other man, but I have always been looked upon as competent.

175. You do not sell below cost at any time ?— Not below cost.

176. With respect to the question of tea, do you sell a greater proportion of bulk tea than proprietary tea ?— Not as much.

177. Could you put it in percentages ?— It varies so.