94. We have already had your percentages on flour and sugar. Then, of course, you have about thirteen hundred different lines in your shop ?—Yes, including various sizes and varieties.

95. Do you deal in tobacco and cigarettes ?—Yes, both of them.

96. I suppose you do a large business in them ?—No ; tobacco is a line which is not attractive in our stores.

97. It is, I suppose, in currants, raisins, sultanas, and everything a grocer would carry ?—Yes.

98. Would you put the proprietary lines at 25 per cent. ?—Yes.

99. Roughly, you pay £5,000 a year for soaps ?—Yes ; I am including Palmolive and other lines of soap.

100. Can you tell me the highest and lowest percentage of gross profit you make on any kind of soap ?—It varies from 8 to 28 per cent.

101. The 28 per cent. would be on fancy soaps ?—Yes.

102. Do you sell a greater proportion of fancy soaps, or the cheaper kinds ?—I think the average bar would be our medium for sales. We do not push the cheap one, because it is not one that will bring us friends all the time. I think we can put the majority of our sales at an average margin of 20 per cent. That, however, is purely assumption on my part. I will work it out for you, though, if you require it.

103. That £5,000 includes your soaps ?—Yes.

104. Can you tell me about what is your total purchase of all other proprietary articles—that is, patent medicines and the like ?—That £5,000 I spoke of does not include only soaps.

105. Well, what is it that you pay out for proprietary articles, including soaps ?—The £5,000 which I gave you just now.

106. That includes all your soaps ?—Yes, so far as I can recall from memory.

107. And it includes patent medicines ?—Yes, apart from those I mentioned I bought through the ordinary wholesale houses that we cannot dissect.

108. That would not amount to much ?—It is gradually growing, because, while we have been buying patent medicines on a better basis through a net-price house, the other wholesalers are now perfecting their operations and falling into line, which means that we buy more from them.

109. But it does not increase your total ?—The purchases I have mentioned for patents is of fairly recent date, and the other has been growing.

110. But if one set of purchases increases, the other decreases ?—Yes, naturally ; so that we need not go into those figures. I only want the Committee to know that my figures are assumptions.

111. Does your £5,000 include proprietary articles such as perfumery ?—We do not handle perfumery.

112. So that we may take it that the £5,000 represents proprietary lines apart from foodstuffs ?—Yes, I think it would.

113. You have told us that even on soaps you get 20 per cent. On other proprietary lines you average about 20 per cent., I suppose ?—I think in the main they are rather lower.

114. Very well, I will call it 20 per cent. That is on turnover. What would that be on cost ?—25 per cent.

115. If you take 25 per cent. on £5,000, that is £6,250 ?—Yes.

116. I would point out to you that £6,250 is only about 11 per cent. on your total turnover ?—Yes, that is quite correct.

117. So that the estimate you gave me before of 25 per cent. on proprietary lines being your total proportion to turnover is excessive ?—I rectified it.

118. It is more like 11 per cent. ?—Yes.

The Committee adjourned at 12.35 till 2. 30 p.m.

On resuming at 2.30 p.m.

Examination of ROBERT ABRAHAM WILKIE continued.

119. *Mr. Myers.*] I think you said that you sold Amber Tips at 3s. 4d. ?—Yes.

120. And Bell tea at the same price, did you not ?—Yes.

121. In other words, you adhered to the suggestion made by the proprietors of the articles ?—Yes, that is quite true.

122. At what price do you sell Woods' Great Peppermint Cure ?—At 1s. 7d. and 2s. 7d.

123. And, I suppose, of these articles that would be called proprietary articles you sold at the price suggested by the manufacturer or the agents of the manufacturer—that is, you sold at the fixed prices ?—There may be a few—that is, some special items—that I sold like that, but the majority would be less. We have tried as far as possible to give to the public the margin of difference between a cash business and a credit business.

124. Do you stock Taniwha soap ?—No.

125. Do you handle Velvet soap ?—Yes.

126. Labourlite ?—No.

127. Can you dissect the item of———per annum which you pay out in your business for all proprietary lines—that is to say, can you tell the Committee how much of that would be infancy soap, how much other soap, and how much proprietary lines other than those lines and foodstuffs ?—I cannot tell you.

128. They would not amount to a great deal ?—No.